

Hillside Fellowship Church  
Christmas Eve 2021  
The Medium is the Message

Pastor Dave: Heavenly Father, we come and we celebrate because you are worthy of all our celebration. The fact that you loved a rebel, a broken sinner like myself and sent your Son to write me, to write us back into your story is worth celebrating. And so, I admit, I have nothing to offer these people. And so I ask that you would strengthen me to serve and love and encourage and equip these people for your glory.

I pray that those that are here who are writing their own story, they've gone off script, that you'd encourage them through your word to surrender their lives to your great story. You're an incredible storyteller. And so I pray that you would show us, open our hearts and our eyes and our ears, to hear of the wonders of this story that you're telling us big enough to fill eternity. Would you give us grace to respond and hand over the pen of our lives and allow you to write our story for your glory? In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Well, welcome. Man, there are a lot of people here.

[Chuckling]

I was going to tell you guys, squeeze together because we've got people standing, but you're already squeezed together. How many tried to go to the 1:00 and couldn't get in? Okay. So this is just the 3:00 crowd. Did not expect that. Figured you'd be making Christmas dinner or something.

Welcome. You found yourself at Hillside. I want you to leave with one thing. We believe Jesus changes everything. And so, that is not just a tagline for us. It's a lifeline. It's how he changes everything that is amazing. And that's what we're here to celebrate today. We call him Emanuel, God with us. Jesus changed everything by becoming nothing. By becoming powerless, an infant, to show us that, man, even in his powerlessness, his love could overcome this dark world.

And so, my name's Dave. I'm a recovering addict, alcoholic, changed by Jesus. And so, I really don't care what your background, what your story is. I've never met anybody worse than me. And so, if you're here, I know Jesus can save you. He can change you and you can write a brand new, beautiful story with your life. And that's what I want you to walk away with.

Now, how many of you have ever heard this saying? The pen is mightier than the . . .

Congregation: Sword.

Pastor Dave: Okay. You've heard it. Edward Lighten. 1839. None of that matters. The pen is mightier than the sword, and we kind of just accept that from poetry. What I'm going to show you today is that God is writing a beautiful story and in the story, he showed us that the pen is truly . . . hey, Miss Dee. Hey, Miss Dee.

[Laughter]

Hey, Miss Dee. [Throws a kiss.] Love you. We got another one. Op! Yes.

[Chuckling]

There you go. This is why you show up early. Kidding. You know I love you. Don't text me. Because I did that because I love you.

[Chuckling.]

God showed us the pen truly is mightier than the sword. You see, if you -- and you know this -- if you write a compelling story with your life, rags to riches, that compelling story is a moving story, isn't it? We love compelling stories. If you compel people with the sword, you only increase hate. Jesus' story is one of humility and he invites us to join him in humility. And so I'm going to show you how this plays out today. I'm going to do it through Luke chapter 2. If you'll open your Bibles, and if you're here and don't have a Bible, I love giving Bibles

away. It will be my Christmas present to you. Just hang out after. I got 'em up here in front and we'll give you a leather covered Bible for Christmas.

So if you're here, never had a Bible, have a Bible, want a Bible, it's yours. Here's where we're going to start out. Watch this. You're not going to believe this, but it's true. Luke chapter 1, verses -- no. Luke chapter 2, verses 1 through 7. God says, Luke writes this:

"Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.

2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

3 And everyone was on his way to register for this census, each to his own city.

4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,

5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.

6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.

7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 In the same region there were some shepherds . . . "

Oh, that's verse 8. I'm only reading through verse 7. Sorry.

Here's what I want you to see. Here's what I'm going to unpack for you. God's writing -- here's the big picture. If you read from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible, you would walk away with this truth. God's

writing an epic story. It's a story big enough to fill eternity with "wow" and "wonder." It truly is an amazing story filled with plot twists. It's a love story. It's a war story. It's a hero rescue story. God is an amazing storyteller, and he's writing a story.

Now, there's also a small theological picture in here if you read through the Bible. Sin is also writing a story, but it's gone off script. Sin says, you know what, since Genesis 3, God's story isn't a very good story. God's story is withholding. God's put down a lot of rules. You should write your own story. You can write a story better than God's. And so because of sin's entrance into the world, many people have walked away from God's story. They've sought to write their own stories. They've gone off script. It's called improv. Anybody ever done improv?

Everybody is telling their own story hoping that everyone else will join their story. Right? Michael Scott did a lot of improv, didn't he?

Member: Yep.

Pastor Dave: The Office? Michael Scarn. Ruined every scene. This is post-modern secular humanism. I'll write my own story. I'm going to go off script from what God's writing, and I want you to follow my lead. I have my own truth, by the way. And that's what sin does. It's not a compelling story. It's a chaotic story. Every story that's gone off script, gone off God's script, it's not compelling. Nobody cares that you want a new car. Nobody cares that you bought a new car. That's not a big enough story to fill eternity, is it?

So this book tells this beautiful, beautiful story of a God that's so loving that He left heaven. He made a way to join us in our improv acts. He joined us on this earth in order that He might rewrite us into God's story. I don't want you to miss this. My aim, my goal this afternoon is very simple. I want you to know and be convinced that Jesus is the Son of God. And I want you to consider and ponder laying down the pen of your life. If you're writing your own story, it's exhausting, isn't it? Improv's exhausting. It's chaotic because people won't do what you want.

The Christmas story is an invitation to join God's story. To lay down the pen of your life and say, "Jesus, would you write a better story with my life?" I want you to know Jesus and I prayed for you and I want you to consider laying down the pen of your life. We're going to see today -- I get a lot of studies, a lot of surveys. The number one growing group in America are those who've walked away from God. They've given up on God's story. It's the largest growing group in America. Those who say, nah, I've given up on God's story.

I want to walk through the Christmas story today and show you four reasons why I'm tempted to give up on God's story, why I'm pretty sure you're tempted to give up on God's story and where Jesus meets us in that to encourage us to lay down our pens in humility. So let's jump in.

Pull up chapter 2, verses 1 through 3. Let's start where the narrative starts. Watch this. This is a mess. And I want to show you what a mess this is. Verses 1 through 3. Luke doesn't want you to miss how messy the mess is, so he's going to highlight the mess. I'll show you.

Verses 1 through 3. "Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.

2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city."

It's amazing to me, because in this world, and I think if I took a survey, all of us are pretty convinced this world is a mess, amen?

Members: Amen.

Pastor Dave: Okay. There's some of us. I'm shocked by the mess. Every day I wake up I look at the news, read the news, get the news headlines. I'm always shocked by the mess. I'm like, this is such an epic mess. This world is a goat rodeo.

[Chuckling]

Like it's a clown show. Isn't it? And then I read the stuff. I'm like, I wonder if they're going to think I'm going to believe this. Like this is an epic clown -- how does it get this messy? And then I watch as we try and fix it, and our fixes only make it worse. Epic goat rodeo. You can write that down in your theological notes.

[Laughter]

And it shocks me that we're actually shocked by the mess. And some of you tell me, Dave, it's never been this bad. You've thought it, haven't you? Especially the republicans.

[Laughter]

It's never been this -- what? No, up here -- I've been here 20 years. Depending on who's in office, 50% says, oh, it's never been this bad. And I wonder if we've ever read history. Like every history book that I read, I'm like, oh, it's always been a goat rodeo up in this mug. It's always been an epic mess. And Luke doesn't want you to miss it.

See? Some of us have given up on God's story. Some of us give up because the world is so messed up. Anybody? We get up and we're like, if God is good and God is powerful and this world is such a goat rodeo and such a mess, I'm inclined to just give up and write my own story, because God's not doing anything about it and I don't think like -- I don't feel like I can make a difference.

So we give up because the world's so messed up. I want to show you. Luke doesn't want you to miss it. He's going to highlight it for you. You saw it in verse 1, and I'm going to walk you through and I'm going to show you. The world's always been like a clown show, like mutton-busting, like goat rodeos. Watch this. Pull up verse 1. It says this:

"Now in those days a decree went out from . . . " whom? You see it?

[Whispering]

You see, I've got whispers. Let's say it in an outdoor Texas rodeo voices. A decree went out from . . . ?

Congregation: Caesar Augustus.

Pastor Dave: Now, Luke doesn't want you to miss this. He wants you to know this. But because most of us don't even know who Caesar Augustus is. We went to public school and we don't even know.

[Chuckling]

Joking. Kind of, right?

[Laughter]

Kind of. I went to public school and got a combined 720 on my SAT.

[Laughter]

I'm going to walk you through this so you see how epically messy, because of sin, how epically messy life has always been. I'm going to walk from Caesar Augustus and I'm going to begin and end with Caesar Augustus. Okay? That's my binary, linear timeline. Caesar Augustus to Caesar Augustus.

So Caesar Augustus, he took over for this cat named Julius Caesar. Ever heard of him?

Members: Yes.

Pastor Dave: Aedes of March. Et tu, Brute? Latin? Okay. Julius Caesar was assassinated by the Senate. Now, Julius Caesar didn't have any kids that amounted to anything. And so, what the Senate did was they started this thing called the Triumbrates. Specifically the second triumbrate was made up of three dudes. Octavian, Marc Antony, and Marcus Lapetus. Now Marcus Lapetus doesn't show up much in history. He's like the forgotten Spice Girl. Nobody talked

about him.

[Laughter]

But, Octavian and Marc Antony started this thing where they're like, we're going to figure out who assassinated Julius Caesar. And so they're like, let's make this leadership pact really tight. Octavian, why don't you marry my sister and I'll marry your sister and as we intermarry families, it will make all the holidays wonderful.

[Laughter]

And so they did it. And it went well for a while. I just covered like 30 years. But then, Marc Antony, he went on vacation in Egypt and he saw . . .

Member: Cleopatra.

Pastor Dave: Yeah, Cleopatra. The VII to be specific. Because there are a bunch of Cleopatras and apparently they're all beautiful. But he saw Cleopatra the VII and he was like, uh-huh. I'm building a vacation house in Egypt.

[Chuckling]

Then he decided to vacation there and Octavian was like, dude, my sister -- like, you're like -- I'm going to keep it rated G. A lot of kids. You're not being faithful. And so Octavian was like, all right, that's it. We're going to war. So Octavian gathered all of the ships, all of his armies. He went and he fought Marc Antony. That was the battle of Actium. Like 30 BC. You can look it up. Octavian won! He came back and everybody was like, you know what? Octavian is awesome. Octavian should be our new Caesar. Octavian was like, accepted. And he said, you shall now call me Caesar . . . ?

Congregation: Augustus.

Pastor Dave: Augustus. Which means, I am the son of god. Isn't that interesting? Now, I just covered like 70 years of history, but what

I wanted you to see is that all of this history was like a cover page for the National Enquirer. It was an epic goat rodeo. It was a nonstop episode of Jerry Springer.

[Laughter]

It was like -- anybody? Before Geraldo Rivera was on Fox News and was like a "news commentator," he actually had a show.

[Whoops and comments]

Remember that show? He invited the KKK and the Black Panthers?

[Chuckling]

And chairs were flying and fists were flying and Geraldo's nose was bleeding. And even as a 9-year-old, I was like, what did you think was going to happen, dude?

[Laughter]

This world has always been like a bad episode of Geraldo Rivera or Jerry Springer. It truly has. Don't underestimate the presence and power of sin. It has been ruining things since Genesis chapter 3.

Now, here's why I'm so grateful. Please do not give up on God's story because the world is so messed up. Luke writes verses 1 through 3 because he wants you to know the world's always been jacked up. The world has always been messed up. And Luke wants you to know God is in control even when everything seems out of control. God really is in control-- I don't care how bad and messed up politics, the nation, the world. I don't care how bad your life is. If you would surrender the pen of your life to him, he says, I want you to know. I am in control when everything seems out of control. When the whole nation seemed out of control, he's like -- I'm just going to give you three verses. I'm not going to go into the history of Rome because I want you to see where my focus is.

Now watch this. So number 1, don't give up because the world's so

messed up. It's always been messed up. And don't think you can't make a difference. So many of us give up on God's story. We're like, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if I love my neighbors. It doesn't matter if I love my community. It doesn't make a difference.

Who told you that? Who told you that the smallest act of love is not a thing of absolute power when handed over to God and his sovereignty? Watch. You don't believe me? Watch how shocking verses 4 and 5 is. You're not going to believe this. So he goes from Caesar and his palace. Now watch where the focus is. Verses 4 and 5. Scriptures say this. This will bring intellectual whiplash. So buckle down before I read it.

[Chuckling]

Verse 4. "Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child."

See, you didn't even see it because it was so common. I didn't get any "whoas!" He just went from Caesar and his palace to a whole bunch of nobodies from nowhere. What do we know about Joseph?

Member: Carpenter.

Pastor Dave: Yeah, carpenter. From?

Member: Nazareth.

Pastor Dave: Nazareth. And you can't even -- even on the Google machine, you can't Google Nazareth. People are like, we don't know. It's really, uh, it's not an important place. Never has been. In fact, in Jesus' ministry, people were like, can any good thing come from Nazareth. Yeah. It was work than Luckenbach.

[Laughter]

Like it was below -- I'm so sorry. Anybody from Luckenbach? We love Luckenbach. Luckenbach's awesome. But it's not a destination -- like, anyway. Doesn't matter. Foot in mouth.

[Chuckling]

Apologize to Luckenbach. It's in Texas, so it's awesome. Amen?

Congregation: Amen!

Pastor Dave: Nazareth is not in Texas, so it's not awesome.

[Chuckling]

That's all I needed to say. We know nothing about Joseph. We really don't. What do we know about Mary? Nothing. And they're from nowhere. Here's what the world tells you. Many of us give up on God's story because we don't feel like we measure up. Some of us have walked away from God's story because we're like, I don't measure up to what God loves, likes and uses. In fact, many of you, even coming today, thought, I don't know that I should go to church because God might strike me with . . . ?

[Chuckling]

. . . lightning. I hear it all the time. People literally walk in and they're like, I don't know if I should be here.

[Laughter]

I'm afraid for the people around me.

[Chuckling]

Because the wrath might spill over. Many of us give up on God's story because we don't feel like we measure up. And I would tell you that the church perpetuates this. And let me apologize for all pastors in all places that have communicated to people that God loves smart people. God loves driven people. God loves dynamic people. God

loves A-types. God loves extroverts. God loves people who get stuff done and can make a difference. Anybody following me? Because most pastors feel like we need to be dynamic, need to be A-type, need to be driven and we feel like we're doing a good job if we put guilt on you to do more. So many people give up on God's story because they don't feel like they measure up.

Now, this is super encouraging to me, because what the scriptures do is it holds out Joseph. What do we know about Joseph? Almost nothing, except that an angel of the Lord came to him and said, "Joseph, the child that Mary's going to give birth to, it's of me. So don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife." And Joseph said? "Okay." And he did it. That's really all we know about Joseph. He was going to secretly put her away, divorce her, the Lord came and said, no, marry her. It's okay. The child's from me. And he said, okay.

What do we know about Mary? Almost nothing, but an angel of the Lord came to her and said, hey, you're going to be with child. And Mary was like, whoa, whoa, whoa. Um, hey, I took health class and that's not -- like, I need to know how this is going to work. Valid question, right? She's like, how is this going to work? The angel of the Lord explained it to her and she said? Okay. Your bondservant. I'm yours. And they left Nazareth, which was a nowhere place and they simply obeyed.

You see, many of us give up on God's story because we don't feel like we measure up, because we feel like God loves very dynamic, driven, type-A extroverts that get stuff done. Which leaves most of us, who are the retiring type, we're average. Where are my average people? I'm below average.

[Chuckling]

No, genuinely. This is why I'm so grateful for this part of the story. Do you know when I applied to colleges because out of high school they said, you need to apply? You gotta do something with your life. I applied to colleges. I already told you what my combined SAT score was.

[Chuckling]

I had colleges respond with, "Um, rejected and we're surprised you even knew how to fill one of these out."

[Chuckling]

"We're actually surprised you're still alive, because you've got to remember to breathe, and with a combined 720, you're below average."

I got rejected from every college. I almost didn't get into community college.

[Chuckling]

So I gave up on God's story because I didn't feel I measured up. And God comes and says, no, no, no, no. Please, look at the story. I used Joseph and Mary from Nazareth. I don't look for the successful. I don't look for the powerful. I look for the available and the faithful. Will you say okay? Will you lay down the pen of your life when he says, I love you. I've come to save you and I've come to set you free from the tyranny of having to write your own story. Will you lay down the pen of your life and allow me to write your story? All he requires is for you to say okay. You see, he doesn't look for the powerful and the successful. He just looks for the available.

Watch what comes next. Verses 6 and 7 are potentially, possibly the most shocking verses -- I'll show 'em to you. And they're shocking because of what they don't contain. Verse 6. "While they were there, the days were completed for [Mary] to give birth.

7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and she wrapped him in cloth, and she laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

Some of us have given up on God's story because we feel beat up. Anybody ever come to church and feel judged? Anybody ever come to church and feel condemned? Anybody ever come and you can

just feel the eyes burning through you? People looking at you. These people are all -- they think they're holy and here I am a sinner. We give up on God's story because we feel beat up, but I want you to see God understands that and feels that and knows that.

He entered this world despised and rejected. He entered this world judged, condemned and beat up by the very people who were supposed to welcome Him. Did you see this at the end of verse 7? Go ahead and pull up verse 7. "She gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

This is so strange. You see, everybody was on their way home for the census. So Joseph was on his way home. He wasn't from Nazareth. He was from Bethlehem. And so he was making the 80 mile trip from Nazareth to go home to Bethlehem. So this was his homecoming where he got to see his buddies from high school that he played football with.

[Chuckling]

This was his homecoming where he got to see his family. Now, in the Old Testament scriptures, your family is to welcome you. There should've been a baby shower. There should've been joy and there should've been celebration. Even if they didn't know anybody in Bethlehem, Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 14, they were supposed to be welcomed because it was part of the law to be hospitable. They shouldn't have even been asking an innkeeper if they could stay there. You still with me?

Joseph and Mary show up and all doors closed and all windows shut. They knocked on their door at home, no answer. Mom and dad wouldn't let them stay. Cousins, brothers, sisters wouldn't let them stay. As they walked down the road, moms would grab their children and walk away and would say, don't be like her. You see, the story is shocking because our God humbled himself and met us and was judged and condemned from birth to death. Many of us give up on God's story because we feel beat up.

But God says, I didn't come to judge you. I came to join you. You understand that, don't you? John 3:16? God so loved the world, He sent His only begotten Son so that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might. Life through Him." You understand, he didn't join us to judge us. He joined us to say, I get it. I was despised and rejected.

Too often, the church has not represented Jesus well in this. Especially religious people. See? Me and my religion, I think I'm super duper awesome and God loves me. And therefore, I'll judge and condemn others just to make myself feel better. Because we need people to -- anybody else like judging people? Three of us. Oh, you were removing your glasses. Two of us.

[Laughter]

It's one of my favorite past-times because I'm insecure and I'm empty and I need somebody to compare myself to, and I'm not going to compare myself to people who are better than me. So we find somebody a little bit less and we judge them. This has driven people away from Jesus Christ for years, decades. They come to church and feel judged. I think this is one of my favorite things about Hillside Fellowship. Because when I was at my lowest and my least, over -- we were meeting in Bill Brown Elementary School and I could not stop drinking.

Do you know before I got up and preached, I had to drink because my anxiety, my fear was so great? When the Lord finally forced me, lovingly, kindly to deal with it, I went to your elders and said, I'm sick. I tried to stop and I can't stop. Do you know what I love most about you is Hillside Fellowship did not judge me and condemn me. In fact, you joined me in the hurt. You sent me letters in rehab over and over and over and over. You didn't judge me. You, in fact, loved me and said, Dave, keep pressing on. Jesus isn't done with His story. Don't pick back up the pen and try and write your own story, Dave. He's for you. He's with you.

This is one of the favorite things about Hillside to me. Is that you

understand the deep truth of Jesus. He didn't come to judge us. He came to join us. He was despised and rejected so that you might be delighted in and received. He was despised and rejected from his birth. While he was still in the womb people were shunning him and shutting him out.

But watch what comes next. I got 2 minutes and like 18 verses.

[Chuckling]

I can do it though. God's a God of miracles.

[Chuckling]

Watch this. Some of us give up because God doesn't show up the way we want. Some of us give up on God's story, we pick up the pen and start writing our own narrative, our own story because God doesn't show up like we expect him to show up. Watch this. Verse 8. Verse 8 makes no sense, nor does 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, clear through 20. It just doesn't make sense. I'll explain why in just a minute.

Verse 8. "In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.

10 But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;

11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger.'

13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

14 'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.'

15 When the angels had gone away from the into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, 'Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has hipped which the Lord has made known to us.'

16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.

17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.

18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told the by the shepherds.

19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.

20 The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them."

[Scoffs.] Makes no sense and let me tell you why. What we just saw in verses 4 through 7 is the biggest news the world has ever heard. The Creator of all things, the Master Storyteller has just took on human flesh and joined His story. The One who created the cosmos, the universe, the stars, the One who upholds all things by the spoken word of His power, humbled himself, emptied himself, took on human flesh and was born as a baby. Biggest news this world has ever, ever heard.

Any communications experts? You took communication in college? Nobody? That's like one of the favorite degrees. Thanks, Amanda. There's one of us and that's all I need to run with.

[Chuckling]

Two. Three. Can I see four? Five. Okay. There's a bunch.

[Chuckling]

There's a bunch of y'all. Listen, pick up a book on communication and any communication plan will tell you, you've gotta know your audience. You've gotta know your target audience. You've gotta know the context in which they're going to receive it, the context that informs them. You've gotta know how to reach them, what time to push that information out. You have to know, you have to control the message. The medium is the message. This is why we love powerful people. We'll get The Rock. Oh, if the Rock were just a Christian. Then the gospel would really go forward. Amen?

[Chuckling]

We chuckle about it, but we think, man, if we just had a movie star or more sports stars, then they would be our messengers and people would flock to Christianity because the messengers would be right.

God's about to give the greatest announcement the world has ever seen. We understand communications and how to get a message across. When God is about to make His greatest announcement of all times, verse 8. Pull up verse 8. He uses, "In the same region there were . . . ?"

Congregation: Shepherds.

Pastor Dave: Not just shepherds. There's a word before that.

Congregation: Some.

Pastor Dave: Yeah! Well, what were their names?

[Laughter]

They made it into the book. They're in the Bible. It's a big deal. What are their names? Some.

[Chuckling]

I'm sure when Luke was like, no, no, no, no. Who were they? We don't know. We don't care. It would be like having Joe Dirt, Cousin Eddy and Larry the Cable Guy show up at the manger. This is not a good communication plan! This is the worst ever. You see, some people give up on God's plan because God doesn't show up the way he wants the to. I want you to know, many people will miss the gospel message, many people will continue to hold onto the pen of their life and they'll continue to write their own story for their own name, own fame and own glory because God doesn't show up the way they want. We all have an expectation of God. If he created everything, he should show up in a big way, should He not?

He should show up and "wow" us. Like, just peel the sky back and be like, yoohoo, I'm here, and shock everybody and everybody would be like, oh, God is real. Friends, the medium is the message. Many of you will continue to write your own story because God hasn't shown up like you wanted him to.

Have I ever told you about my wedding night?

[Chuckling]

Not like that. Sickos. The things that happened the day I got --

[Chuckling]

So my wife and I, we rented Trinity Chapel down at Trinity University. Beautiful place. Had everything lined up perfectly for the perfect wedding. Everything was supposed to come together perfectly. My videographer was Russian and he showed up drunk. And he kept telling me, I'm not drunk. I'm like, dude, I'm a recovering alcoholic.

[Chuckling]

It's vodka. It's Grey Goose. I even know what kind of drink you had.

[Chuckling]

That's how bad I am. So I had to put him -- we put him in the

balcony. We said, you're not going to ruin our wedding. Our video of our wedding is hilarious. Instead of watching us, he was looking at the side of the room. We're watching this. We're like, what is this guy -- oh, that's right. He was drunk.

I had a dude pass out. My groomsman. He hit hard. I turned around. They were dragging him off. I said, let's keep going. Keep going.

[Chuckling]

There's blood on the carpet. It's all right. They can clean it up later.

[Chuckling]

The worst thing happened though, and this is where the story is going. Everybody left Trinity Chapel and they went down to Saint Anthony's. That's where our reception was going to be. It was just going to be a beautiful party. We were going to celebrate. And so people left one by one and Brooke and I were waiting for the limo guy to show up. And we waited.

[Chuckling]

And we waited. And every single one of our wedding guests had left, but one. And I said, man -- there was no Uber, there was no Lyft. I mean, this was early 2000. So those things didn't exist. My buddy who had passed out, he was still there, making sure he was okay to drive. He's like, listen, you guys. You can borrow my car. I said, which car did you drive? He said, it's my wife's. It's a '92 Civic. It's all beat up. It's got a huge, pink, fluffy steering wheel.

[Chuckling]

Your tux will probably have pink fluffy stuff on it. It's got dangly dice in the window.

[Chuckling]

I was like, you're kidding me! Yeah, the limo driver didn't show up, so my wife and I in our tux and her beautiful dress, we climb into this old, 1992 Honda Civic with a pink fluffy wheel. And I told her, I said, babe, I told you I'd take you places.

[Laughter]

This is good. This is just day one.

[Laughter]

Like, we're four hours married. It gets better.

[Laughter]

And we drove through town. We arrived at the St. Anthony. Very fancy place. And they were waiting for the limo. So when I pulled up in the '92 Civic, they just waved me on. No! Get out! We're waiting for a limo! What are you doing? Go!

And I said, no, it's us.

No, go! Go! So we got out and they were like, what are you doing driving that? You see, most of us will hold onto the pen of our life and write our own story because God doesn't show up like we want him to. We wave him on. You see, God doesn't show up like you expect. When he shows up, we want big, we want astounding. He shows up in a '92 Civic with a pink, fluffy wheel and we're like, no! No!

When God shows up, it tends to be in mangers and misfits. You see, the medium is the message, friends. The medium is the message. Our God is a God of humility who says, I only require one thing from you if you want to join me. If you want to come to my kingdom, if you want to be with me, it only requires humility. That you would lay down the pen of your life and say, yes. And because it requires humility, it's the toughest thing you'll ever do. But the medium is the message. You see, because he requires humility of you, he joined us in humility and said, follow my lead. I'm not going to ask you to do something I am unwilling to do.

And so he shows up in unexpected times, unexpected places and in unexpected ways. Like mangers and misfits like shepherds. And he says, come. Would you lay down the pen of your life and let me write a story for your life? I love the Christmas story and I'll end with this.

I love the Christmas story because it reminds me, Christianity, the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ did not spread and take over the face of the world because we are smart. The gospel didn't spread because we are powerful. The gospel didn't spread because of powerful spokesmen. The communication plan is all wrong. He already told Joseph and Mary. They already know they were having the Son of God. Now he told shepherds but had them go tell Joseph and Mary. This is a circular communication plan. It doesn't work.

The gospel didn't spread because we're terrific. The gospel spread because it is true. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus was born of a virgin. Jesus lived an absolutely sinless, miraculous life. Jesus gave sight to the blind. Jesus caused the lame to walk. Jesus raised the dead. Jesus walked on water. Jesus calmed the storm. Jesus lived a life you and I could not live. Jesus died in our place for our sin because all sin has to be paid for, and Jesus bore our guilt on that cross. And Jesus was buried and Jesus rose victoriously and Jesus conquered the grave and Jesus now gives salvation by grace through faith to anyone who would lay down the pen of their life and say, would you write my story? I've made a mess out of mine.

[applause]

Jesus Christ is who He said He is. And he only asks one thing. Would you join me in humility? Would you lay down your pen that you've written the story of your life with and allow me to write a story? You see, my name's Dave and I approve this message because he's written a story --

[Chuckling]

I didn't mean that as a joke. Was that funny?

[Laughter]

Oh, that's a political statement. Y'all are political pundits.

[Chuckling]

I mean it though. My name's Dave and I actually do. I don't need notes because Jesus has changed my life. I'm a recovering addict and alcoholic and the greatest prayer I could pray after three days strung out was, help me, God. And He did. Because he loves to draw near to the humble. Would you consider laying down the pen of your life and allowing Jesus to write the story? He will write a story for His name and His fame and His glory that will bring great joy to your life.

Let's pray and let's sing to him together.

Father God, thank you so much, so much that you loved me while I was yet a sinner, while I was rebellious and while I hated you and told you I wanted you out of my life. That you continued to pursue me and love me and invite me to lay down the pen and allow you to write the story. I pray for those here whose stories are a mess. I pray today would be that day that they lay down the pen and say, Jesus, would you write a better story? Would you give us grace to function in humility? Would you strengthen us to love one another fervently from the heart so that you're glorified?

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[End of sermon]