



Summer Playlist

Part 5 – The Walking Dead

Paster Alex Himaya

How many of you have seen Top Gun? How many of you loved it? Yeah, I loved it. I love coming back to movies. We have had a void for a long time. It wasn't just COVID, by the way; it was about ten years before COVID. They just quit trying. They put all these agendas in movies. My 18-year-old boy saw it a couple days or weeks before we saw it. He went to like the 9:00 show and when he got home, he came and woke us up. He said, "I just have to tell you it was the best movie I've ever seen in my whole life." I thought that was a big statement, and then I thought *well, he's only 18*. I said, "What did you love about it?" He said, "No agenda. There was no political agenda; it was just a story."

I went to see it and I remember thinking... In fact, because I walked out, and this was the thought I had – the old formula still works. Create a climax, a hero, a villain, and turn it. That story works without trying to create some agenda that is being forced down my throat or your throat. I don't know if you noticed this about movies, but genres have seasons. A few years ago, superhero movies... When my boys were little like elementary school. I could count on days I could skip them out of school and go see a great superhero movie with the boys. They've run out of ideas. Now, the superhero movies are all not good. But it will come back in a few years. They'll figure it out and they'll go back to the old formula and the old stories.

But one genre that happened for sure is Zombie movies. Back in the 50s and 60s, it was giant. I wasn't alive in the 50s and 60s, but I saw Back to the Future and those were the movies they were seeing, right? But the 80s and 90s that went away, but then there was the hit television show the Walking Dead. Did anybody watch The Walking Dead? It's about zombies and what if they're real and how would you kill them and all that. The truth is I never really got into it. I have discovered I like alive things, not dead things. There was one movie in that genre that I did love. This movie about dead people. You remember Weekend at Bernie's. It was a whole thing, right? They show up to the party and he's dead and instead of calling the police, they pretend that he's alive the whole movie and their waterskiing and parties. If you had HBO in the 80s, you saw it because it was on seven times a day.

Then there was another movie about dead people that happened about that time a few years later that rocked all of our worlds. It was the Sixth Sense. Do you remember that one? Biggest twist ending of all times in the history of movies up until that point was found in that particular movie. We loved the movie, and it blew our minds. Those of you who haven't seen it, I'll spoil it for you. Bruce Willis is dead the whole movie. You wonder why I spoiled it for you? You're 25 years behind. That's like me saying to you, "Adam and Eve ate the apple." You should have paid attention and you should have seen it before.

By the way, we didn't know he was dead. But there were hints there. It was all over. In the first scene, he was shot with a gun. We should have seen that he was dead, right? His wife didn't speak to him for two hours of the movie, which covered a year in their lives. We just found it more plausible she was giving him the silent treatment for the year that he was dead. That's the power of you women that we believe that you could do that for a whole year. But there was a line in that movie. Do you remember the line? "I see dead people." That line just blew our minds. We got out of that movie... In fact, the follow up line to "I see dead people" is not nearly as famous as "I see dead people." And it's "I see dead people and they don't know they're dead."

I don't know if you do this or not, but as a parent... I grew up a legalist, like in the Baptist church. I grew up a legalist and got set free, but there are still some roots there in me and every once in a while, I visit legalism. So, when I go see movies, I'm afraid we have wasted our time or filled our hearts with something. So, I do discussion questions with my kids after the movie to redeem it and to focus their hearts, like did you see any biblical themes? Is there anything...? So, we do these questions, but coming out of that movie, it was like Revelation, right? That I see dead people. And it hit us. The director is not talking about zombies; he's talking about real people who are walking around dead who have no life in them. And when you understand that, Revelation you can turn into your Bible to the Book of Revelation and in Chapter 3, Jesus is walking among his churches and he says, "I see dead people. I see dead people in the church."

Revelation 3: 1 – Let's look at it together. By the way, this is to the seven churches. Last year, in our church, we studied all seven of these letters and walked through them. The big vision is found in Chapter 1. John gets this big vision and then he writes a letter to seven specific churches. He takes a snippet from the big vision in chapter one and puts it in each of these seven letters the part of the vision that's most apropos to that particular church. That's what he's doing in this one to the Church at Sardis.

To the church at Sardis. To the angel... By the way, most scholars think the angel of each church is the pastor. Amen? You laugh at that, but that's actually what scholars think. They think this is the pastor of the church. Every church has an angel, and it is the one called to shepherd it. The messenger is a better word if you're choking on angel. ***To the letter of the messenger of the church in Sardis write: This is the message from the one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars...*** Now, it's a bit confusing, okay. So, you have to really study to dive into this particular book of the Bible. But the sevenfold Spirit of God, people read that and they say, "Pastor, do we have seven spirits, seven Holy Spirits. As if the Trinity is not confusing enough, right? That now we come to the sevenfold Spirit of God.

No, we only have one Holy Spirit. Rest, take a deep breath; I'm not a heretic. One spirit... But he does have seven facets. In fact, Romans 12 lists the seven motivational gifts. Here's what we know. Jesus, the Holy Spirit, all seven, but because we are fashioned in the image of God, we are given one of those motivational gifts because we are fashioned in the Spirit of God. And that's the place, by the way, where we are most easily attached to the Spirit of God in our lives, that he flows like water flows down the path of least resistance, the Holy Spirit flows into our lives through that motivational gift, but it's one of the seven facets.

Now, when the body comes together, the church comes together, we are all of them. And we are a reflection of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 11 talks about these seven spirits. In Your Bible in Revelation, it appears a couple of times and the S is capitalized because it's talking about the Holy Spirit. So, this is what is playing out in this text. He says, ***"I'm writing to these things that I want you to know these things and I want you to know these things."*** So, Jesus is concerned about the fact that he see's dead people in the church. That's not what he lived for. That's not what he came to earth for. That's not what he died for. That's not what he rose again for. He rose to set the church free and to mobilize the church. ***"I know all of the things you do..."*** That is a little weird, right? That can come across scary. This is what we do with Santa Clause." He sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake, which is a freaky thing to tell children. But the spirit of God is saying, ***"I know all the things you do and that you have a reputation for being alive— but you are dead."*** This is the message to the church at Sardis from the Holy Spirit, and to the pastor. And Jesus is concerned about this because this is not what he wants them to be and that's not what he died for. Now here is the tidbit I want you to write down.

Going through the motions will just make you tired. I don't know if you know that or not. But going through the motions actually makes you feel more tired. When you're not making progress, you're just pretending, you're just going through the motions. Let me talk about a noncontroversial subject for a second. Let's talk about vaccines. You say, "You're a guest preacher and you're going to bring that up? You'll offend some people in the room." I will offend all of you, I assure you, by the end of this time together. I'm no respecter of men; I'll offend all of you. But let's talk about vaccines for a second. Because it's been in the news, and a little bit mentioned in the media, but let's not talk about COVID vaccines because that will freak you out. Let's just talk about vaccines before COVID vaccines. What is a vaccine? Now, I 'm on the phone a few months ago with a pastor friend like Ted who is a friend and a confidant and sometimes pastors in this culture need to have safe moments where we can vent and flesh out and ask questions and say I don't know about that.

We know that elsewhere, we're being recorded, demon bloggers are alive and well, and all of this stuff happens, and we're going to be taken out of context. All of those things are going to happen, so we need safe conversations and I'm dumb enough to tell you about one of my safe conversations. I'm talking to this pastor, and I said, "What is a vaccine anyway?" We Googled it while we were on the phone, and we looked it up. Here's what we found – ***"A vaccine is a dead version of a live thing designed to keep you from experiencing the live thing."*** Do you agree with that? Nod your head if you agree with that. If you're not nodding your head, you're not listening. What I just said is not controversial. A vaccine is a dead version of a live thing designed to keep you from experiencing the live thing. Here's the revelation. Religion is a vaccine. It is a dead version of a live thing designed to keep you from experiencing the live thing. That's why Jesus hates it. Somebody should write that book – Jesus Hates Religion. I did, by the way. That was a Joke. You're slower than the earlier service. He hates it. Why? Because it ruined all of the opportunity that you and I have to experience intimacy with him.

Some of you are wondering what this piece of equipment is doing up here (treadmill). We found this in Ted's basement. It had clothes hanging on it. How many of you have had one of these things before? How many of you don't use this thing? It ends up in a basement, we hang clothes on it, and it become something that collects dust. This one has clearly collected dust. I think they got it on the Showboat Branson Ship. These things are good for exercise and they are good for breaking a sweat.

You get on and you begin to take a walk. I need to be careful because I got winded in the first service and struggled the rest of the sermon.

But here's what happened in the latest industry with these or bikes or whatever. People have walked through city streets with GoPros and have filmed these things so that you can put this in front of you while you're on a treadmill or while you're on a bike, and you can pretend you are on the streets of Paris, seeing all the exotic locals and all the shows and all the things. And you can pretend that you're actually going somewhere, but the truth is you are not going anywhere. You're just going through the motions, you're not actually going for a walk. And you can break a sweat but you're not really making any progress.

The church was never designed to go through the motions. It's not in our DNA. And when we enter seasons where we're just going through the motions, it actually exhausts us and makes us tired. The church was never meant to run in place; it was meant to go into the world and to make a difference. Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." We don't wait for gates to come to us, we storm the gates and kick them in, in the name of Jesus Christ. And if we sit around, we are in danger.

The people in Sardis knew this. By the way, Sardis was the richest of the seven churches. And the richest of the seven cities. They had the money. Gold was discovered there. So, prospectors came, kings came, rulers came. In fact, the king of the whole region set up his capitol in Sardis. But then they got complacent. There is a famous story in history books. All the history books talk about Sardis. Not just a biblical book, but history that talks about Sardis include this one famous story where the Persians came to attack Sardis. Sardis is up on a big hill. You can see it from forever away. There are three walls around the ancient city of Sardis. You say, "Why three walls?" Because on the fourth side, there is a massive cliff, so they felt like they had the advantage of height and distance and time, and nobody could ascend that.

The story goes that there was a soldier from Sardis standing on that cliff. The Persians had surrounded them and they were sieging the city and waiting them out. They saw this soldier up on the cliff drop his helmet. His helmet went banging all the way down the cliff and then a few minutes later, this soldier appeared at the bottom of the cliff, collected his helmet, and then, a minute later, appeared again at the top of the hill. The Persians knew there was a way in on the side of the cliff. And because they didn't watch their backsides, Sardis fell to the Persians. The message for us as the church is we don't get comfortable, we don't get complacent, and we certainly don't avoid watching our backside. If we get complacent, we will be taken out from the inside out. And this is the message that Jesus is trying to communicate here in this text. If we think we are impervious or we think we are impenetrable, we will become vulnerable. But when we move, we'll see gates fall before us.

The church is called to be a movement not a monument. Do you understand the difference between those two that one is about the past and one is about the future? We have seven campuses, six campuses in Tulsa, and then we have one in Cairo, Egypt that now runs between three and four thousand people a week. It's crazy actually. We have one in Alexandria, Egypt that we started during COVID that now runs four to five hundred people.

I remember those days when people were saying, as we entered COVID, “Hey, we need to not spend, we need to quit...” In a meeting, I said, “We need to remodel every campus.” Our people were like, “That’s going to appear to be insensitive to the times.” I was like, “They won’t know; they’re not here! But when they come back, let’s just finish it all. How do you displace all these people in a church anyway? Let’s take advantage of this; let’s go, go, go.” They were more like, “You’re crazy, crazy, crazy.” Now, they are all like, “We should have listened to the angel of our church.” But in all of this remodeling and all of these buildings and all of this stuff that we’ve done, and we’ve been involved in a lot of it over the time... We have one in Amman, Jordan as well that is filled with refugees, like three or four hundred families of refugees – Iraqi, Sudanese, and Serian refugees. It will blow your mind to watch covered women come in and lift their hands and sing praise songs to Jesus.

But never once, in all of this building stuff, have we spent the majority of time talking about colors or tile or carpet or whatever. Our people are actually working hard and spending countless hours on how to move people. That’s what they are thinking about. How do we get people in the parking lot? How do we get people from the parking lot into the children’s area to drop off babies or drop off elementary kids or drop off teenagers? And then get to the worship center? And, believe it or not, a whole lot of energy is spent on how we get them out of the worship center, back into the parking lot, and out into the streets to be the church and to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ out there? We don’t spend the majority of our time talking about color or fabric or whatever. Now, we do spend some time on that and after 20 years, our buildings are actually beautiful. But if our walls were any other color, I wouldn’t care. I care more about where people are going and where they are going to spend eternity than I do them loving the beauty of the building.

When we think about monuments... By the way, look at this picture. There is an acropolis in Sardis. Now this is not the one in Sardis; you’ve seen this one before. It’s a replica. It looks exactly like the one in Sardis. The one in Sardis is kind of crumbled and you can’t see the shape of it, but this is what it looks like. That’s exactly what it looked like on a hill just like that. But they had three walls on the other side. There is a synagogue found in Sardis in the ruins the size of a football field. Now synagogues in that day were not big. They were about the size of this stage, the whole synagogue. But there is one that is so big that it’s the size of a football field. And do you know that there are churches that are more concerned about how they look than where they’re going? They exist all over the world.

We travel and pay to see them. The Sistine chapel is an example. Have you been there? I’ve been there; it’s fascinating. You should pay the money and wait in line for hours and go. But what you will see is that people walk in, pay the money, look up at the amazing ceiling, and leave. And that’s all. It’s kind of sad. You say, “Why is that all? They walk in, look up, and leave.” It’s because there is nothing else going on there. It’s a monument. It is all about the past. It’s not a movement. They’ve forgotten to be about the future and to charge the gates of hell and to knock them down.

As you go through the Book of Revelation, that’s what it’s all about, the fact that we actually are going to charge the gates, we are going to win this battle. Revelations 12: 11, I’ve preached this here before that it talks about the battle between Satan and Jesus and Satan delivers the initial blow and Jesus delivers the final, fatal blow on the cross and through the resurrection, but the writer of Revelation, John, tells us, in Chapter 12, how we win this things.

He says, ***“I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, it has come at last – salvation and power, and the Kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser... that’s what he is by the way. He’s the accuser of the brethren. And when death and hell were taken away as weapons for him, he had to find another one and the one he found was accusation. And he will accuse the brothers, the saints, day and night. ...of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to the earth – the one that accuses them before God day and night. And they have defeated him... In other words, we win! We win! We win this thing. They have defeated him. How? by the blood of the lamb and by their testimony.***

We just sang about the blood of the Lamb. The blood of the Lamb, if you are a believer, covers you. It is covering you. It is washing you. The blood of the Lamb... You have the blood applied to your life if you are a believer. The second thing that is true about you is you have a testimony. You have a story of who you were before you came to Christ, how you came to Christ, and what difference he has made in your life. But we get complacent with the blood. We’re just okay with it just being there and not cleansing us anymore or moving us forward or challenging us. We just get okay with it. We get complacent with our testimony. Here me today. Your testimony is not a marketing tool. And it is not a church growth instrument. Your testimony is a weapon that is used to knock Satan’s teeth out. It is a weapon. When you begin to share it, hell starts to shutter. When you begin to share it, the enemy gets nervous. When you begin to share it, demons start to run and flee because it is the weapon that is used by the bride of Christ to knock the enemy out.

This church in Sardis, they got stagnant and here’s what Jesus told them. Back to Revelation 3 – ***Wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost dead. I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God.*** So, let me just give you three things practically. Write these down if you will. By the way, you’ll remember them better if you write them down. That’s just true about all human psychology. If you involve another sense, you’ll remember. So, get something to write this down with if you would, okay. If you don’t have anything, use your lipstick or mascara. Write this down. **The first thing is wake up!** It’s found right there in the text.

Weeks ago, or months ago, on Facebook, I saw this picture (picture of an alarm clock) and the caption was “Who had one of these?” Let me ask you that. Who had one of these? You still have it. I still have it too. I can afford another one, but it still works. Why do I need another one? The down side is if you're setting the alarm and you go one minute past, you have to go 24 hours around to get back to the time that you wanted to set. I don’t know what your personality is to alarms. I had a roommate in college who it was like the cold war the Russians are coming. It would wake the whole dorm up. But within three minutes, he had had a shower and was already studying. The most disciplined human being I’d ever met at that point.

I like to come gradually into the world. You know, coffee and Diet Coke and coffee... sometimes at the same time. I like for white noise to start, the blinds to gently open. I like to come into the world softly. Some of you need to be awakened violently, some of you like it soft. But Jesus is sounding an alarm. And he’s saying to the church, “Hey, you need to wakeup from your slumber, wake up from your sleep. There is a couple in our community group... The whole time we’ve been a church, Meredith and I have attended community groups. In fact, when we started the church, I think in the initial stage we had six

community groups. I think today we have 350 community groups. When we only had six, one of my staff members was like, "You need to visit each one." I'm like, "I'm not visiting each one." He asked me, "Why not?" I said, "Because I need a group. For me to preach that everybody needs a group and then not have a group is a bit hypocritical, right? And so, for 19 years in this church, we've been a part of at least one community group at a time and I've never led one of them. I just want to be a human. I just want to be in the group. I don't want to perform. I don't want to teach. I just want to have people hold me accountable and I want to hold other people accountable. I have some parameters. It needs to be the good food groups. I don't want pigs in a blanket and all that nonsense. Go to some effort to make the meals. The first couple of weeks, the meals were terrible. I told Meredith, "You've got to change the standard. Raise the bar. Bring it. We brought it and we changed the standard for all of our community group from that point forward. Fillet mignon every week.

But this young couple in our group struggled with infertility for a long time. If you've not been through that chapter, you do not relate to that chapter. Meredith and I went through that chapter for about five years. It's awful actually. There are moments where the whole thing feels like a science experiment, and it's no longer intimacy and it's no longer love. It's an awful chapter. And it's depressing. There are moments where you cry, moments when you're excited, and then you are let down. They went through all of that.

We were so passionate about this for them. In fact, it's because of our story that it has become a passion for our church. We have prayed for couples for 19 years. Dozens and dozens and dozens of times God has answered that prayer in our church. I don't know why, but he has answered that prayer in our church over and over again. In fact, every Mother's Day, we pray about that. We have couples stand and we pray over them that are struggling with infertility, and God answers. In fact, this last year, seven couples on one campus told me last year, you prayed for us and all seven of these couples were given a baby and they were all like, "We're afraid you're going to pray for us again this Mother's day."

God answers, but he did again in this couple's life. They went through IBF and all of that failure, failure, failure for years. They finally got pregnant, and had a baby. She is the sweetest little thing. Our whole group prayed this baby into existence, so we think it's our baby. Eva Kate... In fact, I kid you not, about a month ago, this couple sent out in a community deal, "Somebody needs to come get Eva Kate. Mary Catherine said Kay's at work and we need to get her to preschool." I did it. They were like, "We never expected the Senior Pastor of this mega church to do that, but I was like, "I am going to get her. Now, I did not know anymore how to put a car seat in and all of that, but we listened to some crazy music on the way and she's talking... She calls me Aboo. She can't say Alex; she says Aboo. And she loves me. She's a very discerning baby. She loves everybody. She loves everybody that holds her.

Two weeks into this baby being born, we went to their house. We took them dinner and we were loving on them and praying for them. He said, "I want to show you something." He took me into the baby room. There's this bed thing. It looks like a bassinet, but it's not a bassinet. It's a piece of technological genius advancement. There is a button you push on the end of the bassinet. Now, there's a thing on the mattress that's like a diaper that we all learned how to swaddle. You swaddle the baby into this thing, but then you have a straight jacket that you put around the baby and the baby is velcroed to the bed. Her hands are free, so don't get freak out. She's lying in the bed, but when she starts to wrestle...

We sat there and watched it. When she starts to wrestle, the mattress starts to move gently back and forth. It lulls her back to sleep. It's called a Snoo. Has anybody in here ever heard of Snoo? You have one? No. Yeah, you wish, right? They are like \$1,500.00. What I would say to you is you should save your money. It is worth every penny of this \$1,500.00. Do a GoFundMe. Listen to me. This thing will... And when she begins to get more restless... You can rent it by the way for a few months and pay just a few hundred. When the baby gets restless more, the bed starts doing more. There's a whole escalated noise in the speaker. It starts with white noise and then it goes to wind and then it goes to rain. The last level is called subway. When the baby is really restless, it's really going back and forth, and the noise is going loud like shaken baby syndrome. But here's what they are finding. A pedestrian designed this thing and here's what they found. Babies are sleeping 12 hours at six weeks old. We would have had ten babies if that had existed when we were having babies. We were delirious. I didn't sleep one night for two years. In fact, I'm not responsible for a single sermon I preached during those two years. I didn't sleep at all. But it's putting babies to sleep for 12 hours at 6 weeks old. I thought this guy is a genius.

As I walked out the house that night to get in the truck, the Holy Spirit began to speak to me and said, "The devil has got the church in a Snoo." The Devil has the church in a Snoo. "Shhh... It's okay. Take you pacci." I don't know if you have kids that called it pacci. One of mine called it bobby, and one of them called it pacci. But the one who called it pacci had a love affair with that thing. He couldn't even say it out loud because he was so affectionate toward it. When he would say it, he would talk in a whisper. It was amazing. At two years old, we told Eli, "Hey, Eli, you can't have the pacci except for in the bed." That's the stage we used. Only in the bed." Every once in a while, we'd look around and go, "Where's Eli?" We would turn the corner into his bedroom and he's sitting in the middle of the bed, Indian style, sucking on that thing like a crack addict; he is just after it. But he knew it was the bed so he would go get in the bed to suck on this thing.

The devil is like "Take your pacci. Take your best friend." He's singing a lullaby to the church of Jesus Christ. And we need to wake up. We need to wake up to the fact that we are actually in a war. And we have a real enemy who has come to kill, steal, and destroy.

2. Go Back. The next thing we need to do is go back. Look at what the text says in Verse 3. ***Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again.*** Go back to what you believed at first. By the way, going back... Some people misinterpret that Greek language as go take a review course. That is not the Greek language. The Greek language there is go till up the land again. It's a violent thing. It's a sweat, laboring thing. Till up the land and go back. Go over and retill the land so that you never forget.

The ruins at Synagogue and Sardis, the mosaic on the floor indicates all kinds of syncretism, all kinds of "Hey, okay, we'll accept this way now." "We'll accept this way." "It no longer has to be faith in the Father." "This way, this way, this way," which sounds exactly like our culture, right? And if that was the message in that culture, wake up and go back, maybe that's the message from the Spirit today. Go back and wake up. By the way, the only hope for a dead person, the only hope for a dead church is the power of the sevenfold spirit of God. It's the only hope.

3. Turn around. Repent. When you came to Christ, he covered your sins. His blood had covered all you were doing, all you had done. Now listen to this theological truth. And all you would ever do, he covered you. By the way, when he died on the cross, you hadn't committed any of your sins. So, when he died to provide for that, it provided for all of your sins... all of them. And when it was applied to your life at salvation, it was applied to all of your life. What does that mean? Jesus doesn't need you to say, "I'm sorry" ever again. Yet there is scripture that talks about the children of God should repent. When we screw up, we should repent. But here's the point. Repentance is not for God. It's for us. He doesn't need you to say "I'm sorry" for him; he's fine. You are not holding him up, so you can't let him down. He's fine.

This is about you and me. And what he does want is he wants you to walk in freedom. And he knows the way the children of God walk in freedom is through a lifestyle of repentance. But we think that word is such a negative word because some mean, ugly preacher yelled at us to repent. Freaks take out \$1,500.00 a month billboards to write one word – Repent – on a black background with a red font and all caps and exclamation points. That is not the context of that word. The context of that word is a very invitational word from your Father. He's saying turn around, come back, change your mind, repent. Come on to the truth of who you are. That word is not a religious word. That word is a very invitational word from your heavenly Father. He wants you to live free.

What happens if we stay stagnant, if we don't wake up, if we don't realize we're dead in some areas, if we don't move to repentance. Look at what Jesus says. ***"If you don't wake up, I will come to you suddenly as unexpected as a thief."*** You've heard that before – unexpected as a thief. That's Second Coming kind of stuff. Out of the mouth of Jesus, Matthew 24 or 1 Thessalonians Paul picks it up. Tim Lahey didn't come up with that by the way. That's Jesus. Jesus came up with that, but I don't think, even though Second Coming and the Messiah and all those things are all over the Book of Revelation, I don't think that's what this is about. I don't think he's talking about his Second Coming. He says, "If you don't wake up, I'll come." So, the advice would be if you want to keep screwing around, don't wake up. But he's coming like a thief in the night, but that's not what he's talking about here. I think he's talking about he's coming with his judgment. He's coming and he will remove the lampstand and he will take his Spirit and put it somewhere else where it's effective, where the mission is going forward, where they're not just going through the motions anymore.

He goes on to say, ***"Yet, there are some in the church in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes... I wish I had time to talk about that because that's such an image. "...with evil. They will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. All who are victorious (or overcomers) will be clothed in white."*** We know who the overcomers are. It's the believers. Galatians talks about we're clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Revelation 9 talks about the saints being clothed in fine linen. Look at what he says. ***"I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine."*** That sounds familiar to another passage that is a Second Coming passage about if you deny me, I will deny you before my father. ***"Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches."***

Now, scholars are completely divided on what it means "I will not blot their names out of the Book of Life." One interpretation is that at conception, God writes every name in the Book of Life. And when it becomes apparent they will not accept Christ or turn to Jesus, their name is blotted out. Another translation says he predestines the elect. He knows who they are. Their names are written in the Book of Life and of course their names will never be blotted out. There are two or three other major interpretations of that, but scholars are divided. But what all scholars agree on are two things. There is a book and what we do with Jesus in this life affects it. The question is will you be there? Will you be there?

The prompting I had yesterday from the Spirit, down on The Landing, is that God wants to save some church people today. Not just people who wandered in. I think he's going to save some who wandered in and some who are guests and some who have just been here a short time. But I think he wants to save some people who have been sitting in church maybe for years but never have been alive, never been connected to the life source.

Listen to me. Is it the devil or is it the Holy Spirit that causes you to doubt, causes you to wonder? There is a whole lot of debate around that. The Holy Spirit doesn't cause his children to doubt their salvation. That would be foolish. But what the Holy Spirit does do is convict of sin. But the devil causes believers to doubt. And he causes believers to doubt because if you doubt, you become ineffective in your walk. You won't share your testimony, you won't walk with freedom. But here's something I've never understood. People believing in a moment like this that the Holy Spirit is not the one speaking to you. It's crazy to me to think that. That in moments like this, why would the devil cause you to doubt your salvation? By causing you to doubt, he may kick you actually into the kingdom and into heaven because you're about to be given a chance to respond.

So, would you bow your heads, close your eyes, open your hearts. I just want to ask this question today. Will you be there? Will you be there? Today, I think the Spirit of God is moving. He did in the first service already and several trusted Christ, some of which I believe were not only part of the church but were servants in the church. It's possible to be in the church and not have real salvation. Today, if you've wandered in, you're a guest, and this is going to be the day of salvation for you, praise the Lord for that divine appointment. But I think there are some of you who have been hovering around church for a long time and have never had assurance of salvation. When you lay your head on your pillow at night, you don't live in a sea of assurance, you actually live in a sea of doubt. That's not appropriate for the children of Christ. There are drops of doubt from time to time, but we swim in a sea of assurance when we walk with God, and we know him, and he talks to us and he walks with us.

So, today, if you're here and you'd say, "Pastor, I think you're talking to me, and I think the Spirit is calling me today. I don't know for sure that Jesus is my Lord and Savior, I don't know for sure if he comes tomorrow, he's coming for me. I don't know if I die this week if I'm going to heaven, but I want assurance of salvation in my life." If that's you in the Chapel, in the Courtyard, online, here in this room, would you just raise your hand and say, "Pastor, that's me." Just put your hand up and say, "Pray for me. I don't know for sure. I don't know that Jesus is my Lord and Savior." Anybody else, just raise your hand and say, "Pastor, that's me."

You say, I prayed that prayer before. Yeah, it's possible to pray the prayer and not have true salvation. I was reading yesterday, by the pool, Acts 9 and Acts 22 where Paul gets saved. Saul becomes Paul and he gets saved. At salvation, he says to the Lord, "What should I do? What would you have me do?" Listen if that has not become the attitude of your heart after you accepted Christ – Lord, what do you want from me? Not my will but your will. You want to take this from me. You want to give me this. You want me to move away from that. You want me to correct this. If that's not the spirit you inherited, I don't believe it's true salvation. We have this notion that says, "Hey, I can just pray this prayer, fill out this card, walk this aisle, join this church and live however I want to live with no connection to the Holy Spirit of God, that's not true salvation. That's not biblical conversation.

Today, I want to lead you in prayer helping you receive Christ. Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth. I want to encourage those of you who already know Christ to pray with those who are doing this today for real as an encouragement.

If you want to trust Christ, pray and say, Dear God, I know I'm a sinner, but today, I ask you to forgive me for all my sin. Jesus, come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior and my Forgiver. In the best way that I know how, I receive you Jesus. Regardless of what I've done before, today, I receive you. Give me assurance of salvation.

Now before we look up and before I say amen, if you prayed that prayer and you meant it with all of your heart, if you just trusted Jesus Christ to save you and you know that you meant it with all of your heart, would you just raise your hand across the room and say, "Pastor, that's me. I prayed it and I meant it." Raise them high and let me see it all across the room. There are hands in almost every section. Just raise your hand and say, "I meant that with all my heart."

Here's what I want to ask you to do. If you just raised your hand, would you stand up. The rest of you stay seated, your eyes still closed, your head still bowed. If you just prayed that prayer and you just raised your hand, stand up. Front row, back row, middle section every section. "I prayed that prayer and I meant it with all my heart." Just stand up. Can I say to you, congratulation! In fact, if you're standing, I want to ask you to step out into the aisle. I want one of these people to pray for you. We have prayer counselors right here, we have some in that room. So, if you would just make your way around the perimeter of the room. Just step out and say excuse me and come on. You don't need to look but you can celebrate with angels in heaven. Men and woman and children are moving right now.

Father, we love you and we give you glory and honor for moving in us, with us, and through us. Make us an alive church at Woodland Hills Family Church. In Jesus name we pray and together we all say Amen.