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GOOD MORNING – Bobby Schuller (BS) and Hannah Schuller (HS)

BS: This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

HS: And welcome church family. We are so grateful for you, and to have you here with us. We love you. And today, may you know that no failure has to truly be a failure. It can be a learning experience. And if you've had a learning experience recently, do not give up on your dream. You are now more experienced than you have ever been. Take a breath and try again.

BS: Amen. Let's pray together. Father we thank you and we love you. We just thank you for Jesus. Thank you that into a very dark, hurting, suffering world finally Christ was born to lead us into the kingdom of God. Thank you that ever since then, the kingdom of God has been present around us and in us who believe and we pray that today you'd help us be clothed in Christ and in hope and joy and compassion and love. We thank you, Lord, for all you've given us, and we trust in His name, amen.

HS: Turn around and shake the hand of the person next to you and say God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – Isaiah 11:1-10 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for Bobby's message, the words of our Lord found in Isaiah 11:

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse. From his roots, a branch will bear fruit. The spirit of the Lord will rest on him. The spirit of wisdom and of understanding. The spirit of counsel and of might. The spirit of the knowledge and the fear of the Lord and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears, but with righteousness he will judge the needy; with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked, righteousness will be his belt, and faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together, and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. In that day, the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples. The nations will rally to him and his resting place will be glorious.

It doesn't matter how much you've been cut down, child of God. The Lord can raise up something incredible. Amen.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Friends, will you hold your hands out like this as a sign of receiving, and we're going to say this creed together:

I'm not what I do. I'm not what I have. I'm not what people say about me.

I am the beloved of God. It's who I am. No one can take it from me.

I don't have to worry, I don't have to hurry, I can trust my friend Jesus and share His love with the world.

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "Resilience: Dreams Get Attacked"

Well we're in the season of advent. Advent is actually, strictly speaking, not the Christmas season. It's waiting for the Christmas season. But advent is more of the hopeful time, hoping for Christmas, hoping for Christ, the coming of the Lord.

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And it was my feeling that during this time, it would be good for us as a congregation to align our own hopes and dreams with the advent hopes of Israel. Many of us have had dreams or things we've wanted to do, or maybe we've been sitting on our hopes and dreams for awhile but haven't acted on them. Maybe you're here today and you need a big change in your life. Maybe you got some bad news and you're scared about your health. Maybe you have a child or grandchild that you want to be saved and become a Christian. Maybe there's a financial change you need in your life, or maybe you're caught up in a horrible lawsuit with an old business partner or something like that.

And it's during this time in advent that I think one of the calls of the Christian church is not only to hope for Christ, but build hope in general. To align the fact that what God said He would do by bringing His son into the world, He did. And to remember that when God says something, He does it. That when God makes a promise, He's faithful.

And so it's during this time I want us to be encouraged, and to build up our hope, and to recapture some new dreams or hope for some new things in our lives. And that is an appropriate and good thing to do during advent.

The thing I want to talk about today specifically is that if you do have a hope in your heart, if you do have a big dream, that big dreams come under attack. The better the dream, the more it will come under attack, and that's okay. Think of anytime anybody, any great dreamer did something great, whether it's secular or Christian, think about how the incredible amount of attack, vitriol, lies, digging, all the horrible things that happened to them to get from A to Z. That might happen for you, as well, if you want to accomplish something great in your life.

You can think in the secular world of guys like Walt Disney. We think Disneyland is great now, but you look at some of the newspaper articles and the things that people said about him, he came under a lot of harsh criticism. You look at my grandpa when he built a Crystal Cathedral and wanted to build a glass church. You know men and women of God and what the secular world said about him in the newspapers. And yet people don't really say those things anymore, do they, now that it's been done. There's something about the journey from when you begin to getting to where you need to go that seems to attract a lot of negative attention.

And the thing I want to talk about today, that the better your dream is, the greater your dream is, the greater the attack on that dream will be and to brace yourself for it. And the biggest thing I want to encourage you of is that not only will it come under attack, but that that attack in the long run is going to be good for you. I'm a big believer in this. That being safe, being comfy, being well fed may not be good for the soul.

Now this makes sense. Advent, by the way, is a Latin word from *adventus*. It means the arrival. And of course we're talking about the arrival of Jesus Christ, Israel's messiah. But it has the same root, *adventus*, as *adventurus*, which is the Latin word for adventure. They're kind of the same word. Adventure or *adventurus* means it's about to happen, and *adventus* means it's happened or it's arrived. And what I want to tell you today is whatever your advent is, aside from of course Christ arriving, whatever your hope is, your dream is, the arrival of the thing is, that between you and that thing lies *adventurus*, that is lies an adventure; lies a struggle, a long journey. It is good for us to recognize that the dreams we have don't fall in our laps. That's why winning the lottery is a bad dream and it actually turns into a nightmare statistically for a majority of people who win it. But building a business and making money in that way over a struggle for years is a good dream, and one that is typically good for a person's character, as long as they stay within a moral paradigm.

All that to merely say that the struggle that lies between you and your dream is also part of the gift that you get by getting to the other side.

And maybe you're caught up in a hardship right now, or a difficulty, you think you can't survive, you think you're dealing with a hundred percent, and I want you to know that you will get through this and you'll be fine, and you'll be grateful when you get to the other side of what the struggle did in a positive way to your character.

So, I think that within every advent, within every hope, with every advent there's an adventure and I think that's a very hopeful thing because I think most of us crave a little bit of adventure in our lives. There is no advent without adventure. I mean you look at the Christmas story, in general, and it was an adventure that led up to it. I mean you talk about a pregnant teenager, Mary, looking for a place to have a baby in Bethlehem and what an adventure that must have been.

Isn't it funny how like when you've had like.. if you come from a long day of work, and your husband or wife or roommate or friend says to you, how was your day? You say well it was an adventure.

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You know what that means – it was hard! Or weird. Or a bunch of stuff unexpected happened. Well that's what I mean when I say adventure.

We also look at the Magi. What a strange story, the Magi is. That God called a group of.. Magi is the root word for magic – magician, so they were wizards or something like that from the far east, maybe somewhere in former Babylon or Persia. We really don't know. It could be India. And then there's like all this theory in literature about were they Zoroastrian or were they descendants of like the Jews that were under Daniel during the exile of Bulloch. Who were they? And then the uncomfortable truth that they were engaging in astrology and stargazing and fortune telling to figure that the Lord would be born in Israel, and did they have an idea of a Messiah. It's just weird. And that they traveled thousands of dangerous miles. I mean you've got thieves and robbers and weather and all this stuff, to merely worship Him for a moment. To merely just lay some gifts before this child truly shows us that within the Christmas story, and within the kingdom of God itself is one adventure after another. And it's the adventure itself that refines us and shapes us and molds us.

So don't be afraid of the risk, the hardship, the difficulty, the fight that lie between you and your hopes and dreams. And furthermore, don't try and predict what's going to happen because let me tell you, you'll be wrong. That's exactly what makes an adventure an adventure is its unpredictable, it's odd, it's weird, and you can rejoice that it's all of that that lies between you and achieving your dreams.

Now for some of you, that's very good news. For some of us, we feel like it's bad news. But for all of us, it actually is good news. There's always, always, always going to be many unknown struggles, suffering, difficulties and that can include people lying about you, maligning you, suing you, harming you between you and your dream. But is that so bad? Is it? I'm not sure it is.

I believe that all of us in this room, and all of us watching on television, are descended from fighters. You look at our world and it's very comfortable, very well fed, especially in America. It's very safe; we're in Orange County, one of the wealthiest places in America. Very affluent. But our descendants, except for a few kings and queens, I mean our descendants didn't have that kind of life. Our ancestors were explorers. They were soldiers. They were hunters and gatherers. They rode on horseback. They walked through the desert. They endured plague. They endured famine. They endured days without eating as they would travel from one place to another. They built, they survived, they created all of this that we're in today. And I think that there are a lot of people who didn't make it. And they aren't your ancestors.

All that to simply say you are descended, what was the famous line? You are not descended from fearful men? You are not descended from people who die and fall apart and are weak. You are descended from survivors. Despite your race, despite your ethnicity, no matter who you are, you come from people who made it. And I think that there is something in our biology, our ancestral biology that does not jive well with modernism. Dostoyevsky said something like if we could build the perfect world, we would tear it down because of boredom.

There is something inside of us that, like cognitively we want food and shelter and safety and rest, but there is something deeper inside of us that has contempt for those same things. That has a desire to leave the abode and to embark on some adventure, despite the risk that lies between here and there. Do you think that's true? I wonder if much of the anxiety and depression that is chronic today, especially among young people, has to do with the fact of how safe they are and how comfortable they are. We blame it on things like technology. I'm not sure that's it as much as it is that there's not this facing of fears, this chasing down of dreams, this getting out of the house and doing things, that the diminishment of that might have a greater part, and this is just conjecture right? But that the lack of struggle might have more to do with it than playing video games, for example.

I believe Christians in particular, human beings in general are anti-fragile. Remember this word anti-fragile is coined by a guy named Taleb. Anti-fragile: shall we review it real quick? I talked about it in October. Anti-fragile is something like this. Imagine you had a cardboard box and you were going to ship a box full of champagne glasses to your brother in New York, and these are family, special family heirloom champagne glasses. What would you put on the box? You would write in big red ink across the side – FRAGILE. And fragile means that the thing inside is precious to you, its valuable, but if its harmed in even the slightest way; if it falls or if its bumped or stacked on the bottom of something, that it would break and maybe become worthless. What is the opposite of that, do you know? And this is where people almost always answer the question incorrectly. The opposite of fragile is not something like.. everybody always says something like a bowling ball or baseballs or bowling pins or something that is hard and then you put it in a box and it doesn't matter how much you hit it or beat it or ruin it, it just comes out the same the other side, right?

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But in the same way that neutral is not the opposite of negative or positive, robust resilient baseballs or bowling balls are not the opposite of fragile champagne glasses. The opposite of fragile, Taleb says, is anti-fragile. Anti-fragile means if you were to kick it and throw it and put it on the bottom of the pile, it would improve! It would be like you have more champagne glasses, and they're more valuable, somehow. Those would be some magic champagne glasses, wouldn't they? That if you took the package and threw it out the window that would be the best thing you could do for the thing inside the box. I'm pretty sure our postmen actually believe that sometimes during the Christmas holidays.

The mythical version of anti-fragile is the famous Hydra-Snake, the guardian of the sea who has three snake heads and if you cut off one of the heads, two heads grow back, and so the worst thing you can do is to attack it. The only way to defeat Hydra; Hercules defeated Hydra by healing it. So the only way to defeat something anti-fragile is to leave it alone. To let it die on its own. The way to kill something anti-fragile is to keep it well fed; to keep it comfortable, out of the rain, safe, predictable, ordered, at peace, at rest all the time.

When I talked about anti-fragile the last time, I talked about the Incredible Hulk, but I guess that was old fashioned because I had like 15 people tell me who's the Hulk? What about Black Panther? Apparently Black Panther, I don't know if you saw this movie, Black Panther has a suit and every time it gets hit, it builds up kinetic energy that can explode.

I believe that all of us who are anointed of the Lord, in particular, who are full of the Holy Spirit, who have been touched by God, who have been called by God, who have been baptized are anti-fragile. The way to destroy a Christian is to keep him safe, well fed, out of the rain, orderly, protected, in a safe place all the time. That's the way you kill a Christian.

That's just not your life. That's just not what you've been called to. We have moments of rest and vacation and good meals and Sunday keeps us coming back to that, but you are a brave person. You are a hero called to do something extraordinary. And you can't be both extraordinary and always comfortable. And I think that this is what the scriptures just talk about constantly, this power of how in our suffering, in our struggle, in our difficulty, like a crucible purifies gold, something about the fire purifies the soul. Not that we should pursue pain and suffering itself, but in the pursuit of the kingdom of God, not be afraid of pain, suffering, difficulty, even death.

To know that what God said when we left on this adventure remains true when we get into the darkest valley – that He will never leave us, that He will never forsake us, and that He will get us to the other side. And God will get you through, so trust Him during this time. And don't be afraid because all of this will be good for you. That's not a message we hear much anymore in the world, is it, that all of this kind of thing is good for you. We hear more safety, more comfort, more protectionism, and I'm concerned about that. If I have time, I'll talk a little bit about that.

But in the scripture that Hannah read today, in Isaiah chapter 11, there is this prophecy that out of the stump of Jesse.. so you get this picture of a stump, like a giant amazing tree, and you look at it sadly because it's like oh man, there used to be like this gorgeous tree here, and now there is this stump. Maybe you've seen something like that in the woods or something like that. And you think I wonder what this tree would have been like, or what sort of tree it is, and then it says that out of this stump will grow this green shoot.

And so it sounds like a little thing at first, but then Isaiah begins to say that this thing is going to grow into like a new.. and he doesn't say it specifically, but you can't help but picture a new gigantic tree because of the fruit it's going to bear.

And he just talks about all this fruit that its going to bear, and all the good that its going to do in the world, and what it's going to mean for God's creation and God's people, and then there's just going to be an enormous amount of fruit born from this thing that everybody thought was dead.

Jesse, by the way, is King David's family. That's David's father. And the prophecy is that through David's lineage there's something special about this family that when God anointed King David, it was permanent. Cannot be cut down to a stump. Cannot become unfruitful. Isn't that good news? It's a good word. So the good word is that if you've been cut down, I want you to know that God can do something great out of the stump in your life. Believe that. And of course the great shoot that came forth from the stump of Jesse was Jesus Christ who ushered in this new life that we're experiencing. I thank you Lord, for that.

So the first thing that we have to embrace when we think about the adventure that God has called us to, not for pain itself but of course to endure the goal that's set before us, is number one, to recognize that good dreams come under attack, especially if that dream is from the Lord.

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It will come under attack. There is evil in this world. And when good is being done, evil will attack it in any crude way it can.

Aside from that, people just hate dreamers anyway. A lot of people do. Remember when Joseph had a dream in his heart, and his brothers decided that they were going to sell him for money. The only reason they sold him – they wanted to kill him, actually. The only reason they sold him is they realized they could make some money; it would be just as easy. Just before they did that, they looked at him and what did they say? There goes that dreamer – with contempt in their heart.

You know it's good if you want to be a dreamer to spend more time with other dreamers. They won't say that about you. There is a certain type of person that we love and we care about, but we spend time with them and they're the type of person to say there goes that dreamer. You might want to think twice about being such good friends with such negative people. But no matter what, you're going to have people in your life if you have a dream in your heart that is going to see the worst in you, not the best.

You know what's good about that is you can use that. The good thing about having enemies is they're the most honest people in your life. You tell your friend about your dream and they're like oh, you're going to do it, that's great. In the back of their head they're like mmm, I don't think that's a very good idea. But if your enemy finds out about your dream, they're going to be brutally honest. We all think that's a bad thing, don't we. What if that's a good thing? What if one of the reasons we need enemies in our life is just so we have some people that'll shoot straight with us. What if our enemies can, in their desire to destroy us, actually help us? That's an anti-fragile way of viewing enemies, by the way. That maybe having a couple of enemies in my life is something I need in order to see my blind spots. Maybe that will help you love your enemies, as Jesus told us, in an easier way, huh? All right. Those who have ears to hear let them hear.

I think also the reason I talk about this adventure thing is if you truly are serious about doing something extraordinary, you have to have courage. Courage. Courage. The word courage comes from this French word *coeur*, which means to live from the heart. That even when you can't think anymore, even when your body is exhausted, there is this will within to press against everything that's trying to stop you. To continue to take one step towards the thing you're afraid of, in the direction of the barking dog, as it were. That to be courageous is key to fulfilling the hopes and dreams that God has put in your heart.

And one of the things that can help you be courageous is to recognize that we need the struggle. Just as a body needs exercise, so does the soul need a struggle. And not that we should go looking for a struggle, but we should look for a dream and then not have contempt when malevolence or difficulty or challenge tries to stand between us and where we're supposed to be; to even appreciate the struggle.

What if in trying to protect our children from struggle or harming them, I'm growing very concerned, especially when I compare my childhood of wandering around the wild side and exploring and all of this stuff, to the way some of our kids are being so carefully handled with white gloves. I think the younger a child is, the more they need that, but we ought to realize that as a child gets older, and in fact becomes an adolescent and a teenager, that some of those gloves need to come off. And that we need to, in adolescence, become mentors to children in their struggle and suffering, rather than try and protect them from the suffering altogether. Man I remember – bullies are a great example of this – bullying is horrible. And first of all, I want to say thank you to all of you who work hard to keep our schools free from bullying. But the flip side of that coin is, and I think all of you who are in that fight know this, that there will always be bullies in school and outside of school, right? On the playground or in neighborhoods, there's just no way to protecting kids a hundred percent from bullies. And I remember as a kid, the bullying that I faced a lot, I don't know why but I thought I was interesting. I mean I was pretty, I don't know. But I got bullied a lot and in a way, I'm thankful for those experiences. I know that sounds strange. I'm not thankful for the bullies. I still hate them, even today, like when I think about them, I'm like I hate those people. And you think about the horrible feelings you had as a kid, but what I loved was the opportunity of the men in my life and the women in my life who drew those experiences out and walked with me and taught me to defend myself and stand up for myself, and to be strong, and to have a barreled chest, and to keep my chin up, and to face the things I'm afraid of! And to recognize that in life, that there's always a struggle.

So although I hope bullying goes away completely, I hope that we also remember that there is a value in coming alongside children, teaching them to stand their ground, to face their fears, and not just with that, with all the things of childhood; the difficulties of a broken arm, or losing in a game.

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We ought to let children lose baseball games! These experiences are needed and the older a child becomes, the more we should coach and mentor and the less we should control. Hear me. If you want to make a child fragile, protect them as they get older. If you want to make them anti-fragile, mentor them. There's a big difference.

And you see this now the result of the generation going into college today, that there's just this fragility. I think so much of the political stuff that we're experiencing today is just from a total culture of fragility. Just an inability to hear any opposing view politically or religiously, it's within the church, as well. We should be paring people up with opposites. To sit down and have a cup of coffee and just talk and hang out.

All this to merely say that there is a danger to the soul and especially for Christians when we live in a bubble, when we live in an echo chamber, when we remove all pain from our life, all suffering, all goals where we are comfortable, out of the rain, well fed, safe, predictable, orderly. You are the anointed of the Lord. It's irresponsible to not use that to do some good in the world, even though it may give you a couple bumps and bruises.

If you're facing bullies today, even as an adult in the workplace, or if you're facing trial or sickness or illness or fear or lawsuit keep your chin up. Keep your chest out. Stay strong! Out of the stump of your life.. you may think you're cut down. I want to tell you that God is going to build something so great out of your life, so abundant and fruitful, if you merely stand your ground and face the thing you're afraid of.

So all that to say I'm proud of you, and so is the Lord. And if you hear anything, this is from Him. So proud of you. The Lord sees the struggle that you've gone through. He sees what you've been through. He's never left you. He's never forsaken you and He'll always be with you and so will this church. You are loved and God will get you where you need to go. Don't be afraid of the harm. Don't be afraid of what might happen. When you get to the other side, you'll look back and be glad that you went through it. Amen.

Lord, we thank you and we love you. And we pray, in Jesus' name, that you would teach us the anti-fragile power of our souls. That we would learn, Lord, that too much comfort and too much fear will ruin us. Lord, I pray for more adventure in the lives of everyone in this room, and with that the great reward that comes from embarking on something cool and something new. So Lord we love you so much, and we thank you for this moment, and it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you His peace in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen.