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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: Hello and welcome, church family! Welcome, visitors. We are so happy that you've joined us today.

Bobby and I were talking this week and something that's hard about this pandemic is all of the unknown. When are things going to open back up? What will the economy look like? You get information that comes out here and then other information that completely contradicts it. In the midst of all the unknown, one thing that we do know is that God is on our side. He is for you, and He is very good. You are loved.

BS: Yes, we just really are thinking about you and really missing church. I mean I know a lot of you are joining us from other parts of the country or parts of the world, but I think all of us, we miss our times of community where we're getting together with others, and spending time with others, and we really just want you to know that we miss you, and we can't wait to spend more time with you, and we just want you to know we love you, we're on your side, we're praying for you. And this too will pass. These hard things in life, they pass but we're grateful that God has a great plan in store for you and for us, and we're really looking forward to seeing you again. For now, we'll be patient and trust the Lord and pray together. And let's gather virtually again this morning, or this evening, wherever you are, and pray together: Father, we thank you that you love us; that we are the apple of your eye, and we pray in Jesus' name that you would give us everything we need to get through what we're going through. Lord, for a lot of us, we're going through much more than just this virus shelter-in-place. A lot of us are going through other deeper issues, and I just pray for everybody that's hurting today, and we thank you, God, just an outpouring of joy, of health, of life, of fulfillment, of deeper, better relationships. We think all these things can happen during this time, and we ask for them in Jesus' name, amen.

HS: Amen. Turn to the person in your living room and say God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – Zechariah 2:7-13 – Hannah Schuller

Thank you choir and orchestra. In preparation for the message, Zechariah 2:7-13: Come, Zion! Escape you who live in Daughter Babylon. For this is what the Lord Almighty says: After the Glorious One has sent me against the nations that have plundered you – for whoever touches you touches the apple of His eye. I will surely raise my hand against them so that their slaves will plunder them. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me. Shout and be glad, Daughter Zion! For I am coming, and I will live among you, declares the Lord. Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day, and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the Lord God has sent me to you. The Lord will inherit Judah as His portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem. Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because He has roused Himself from His holy dwelling. Church family, God calls you the apple of His eye. You are His cherished child, the object of His great affection. Amen.

INTERVIEW – Angela Braniff (AB) – Bobby Schuller (BS)

{VOICE OVER: Angela Braniff is a YouTube star who founded the popular channel, This Gathered Nest. Angela and her husband CR now have 8 children, biological and adopted, and their story is told in her new book, Love without Borders. It chronicles their challenges of becoming parents, and how God called on Angela's heart to step out boldly in faith and expand their family through multiple adoptions. Please welcome, Angela Braniff!}

You Are the Apple of His Eye

BS: Angela, welcome! We're so glad you're with us this morning live. How you doing?

AB: Good morning, I'm so good. How are you?

BS: Good! Tell us a little bit about your journey. You had two biological children of your own, but you also decided to adopt. How did you get to that place?

AB: I had really difficult pregnancies, and so we kind of thought after we had our two biological daughters that maybe that was all that God had for us. But when I was a teenager, He planted this little seed in my heart about adoption, and after we had our second daughter, that seed really kind of found roots and began to grow, and through various things, God showed me that this was the time for us to start that journey. And so we did and I never would have foreseen where we would have ended up and with as many children as we have, but we've just really followed God's leading one child at a time, where we felt like He's called us and asked us to go.

BS: And a special part of story, too, is that you didn't go through the normal process of adoption, but you have kind of a.. I don't know how else to say it – a mix of kids. I mean all sorts of different backgrounds. Tell us how that came about and how you got to that place?

AB: I think sometimes when people look at our family, it almost seems random because we have our son from Africa, we have our son that we adopted domestically from the United States, we have our daughter Rosie from China and she has Down Syndrome, and so it kind of does look like a bit of a mix of different backgrounds and stuff, but really God's hand was on every single one of their stories, and in every single detail of their stories, and was so clearly leading us to each of them.

So really it seems random, but it was a lot of prayer and a lot of just saying like okay God, what do you have for us next? Where is the next open door? Where do you want us to go? Where are you leading us? He has truly led us to each one of our children, and like I said, the details when you really get into the story and the details of them, it's undeniable that His hand in each of their lives.

BS: It's like each kid has their own probably miracle story of how they came to be a part of this family. We're going to get to your book in a second, but one of the things you talk about a lot is this idea of bold faith. Tell us a little bit about how bold faith works in your life and in adoption and other aspects of what you're doing.

AB: I think for me, what bold faith really means is being okay with not fitting in. Being okay with understanding that what God might be asking of you and what He might be calling you to might look counter cultural. It might look like it flies in the face of your perceived safety and happiness and what the world tells us we need to have that kind of happiness and security.

But for me, God has really shown me that that bold faith is just saying Lord, I trust you, and whatever you have for us and whatever you're asking of us, even if it feels scary, even if I don't know what's going to happen, I don't know what the next steps are, I'm just taking them one single step at a time.

BS: I love that, I think it's so great. One of the cool things that you were able to kind of show your bold faith was, you sort of documented this process of adopting these kids on YouTube. You have a great YouTube page. It's called This Gathered Nest. Tell us a little bit about the messages that you're communicating through that YouTube page. Do you get people like saying I'm going to adopt now, and I'm going to have bold faith! I mean you must get a lot of that.

AB: What I have really found so fascinating about how God has used our YouTube channel with it, it wasn't something that we intentionally did; it was just sort of sharing our lives and having fun with it. But what we were seeing is how God uses that and even these things that we don't see, like it's YouTube, right? It doesn't seem like it would have anything to do with ministry of any kind. But God doesn't care, He uses what He wants. And it's been really incredible to see not only the people that have said hey, adoption is something I've thought about and I see that you guys have done it and I see that it's not scary, right? It doesn't have to be like a Lifetime movie scary thing.

And also people being really open to special needs. Like I said, we adopted our daughter Rosie with Down syndrome, and she has really changed people's ideas of what it looks like to live as a person with Down syndrome and helps people to see that she's more alike than different.

So God's really been able to do some incredible things through our YouTube channel and sharing with the community just what that kind of looks like to live out your faith; to live out what you believe.

BS: I love that you intentionally adopted a child with special needs. We have a special needs son, and a lot of times, those kids must feel like they don't fit in, or that they're not loved. My understanding is, you can confirm this is true or not, but special needs children are usually not adopted or they're overlooked, or they're left. Was that a hard decision for you and your husband to make?

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AB: Yes, special needs children are definitely in terms of the need in adoption that is where the need is. Sort of healthy, very young children, there's not a huge need there. Don't get me wrong, there is, but it's not a huge need like there is for children with special needs.

And so for us, it was kind of a situation where God led us to her, and she just happened to have Down syndrome. We didn't seek it out, but God said very, very clearly, this is your daughter, here she is. And so it was like okay, here she is. And the package that she comes in is that she has Down syndrome. There were a lot of unknowns because we didn't have any experience with that, but we just really trusted that she was made perfectly in His image and that we were the right family to raise her. She has absolutely blown us away and changed our lives, and I say to people all the time, like I wish that you could be lucky enough to have a child with Down Syndrome because it's the most incredible thing and we love being her parents, and we are so honored to be her parents.

BS: That's awesome. I love it. Well your new book is called Love without Borders. It's just an awesome book and it's this idea that you go out of your way to love people no matter where they are or what they're doing, and that's really what Christ told us to do – love our near dweller. What do you hope that people get when they read this awesome book?

AB: My biggest hope, honestly is particularly for women when they read the book and they read my story, is that I spent most of my life feeling like I needed to please people; that I needed to check off the boxes for the happy life checklist; that this is what it looked like, the things that we're told.

And once I was willing to kind of throw that checklist away and see that whatever God has for you is where your happy life resides. It's on the other side of listening to Him and following Him, even if it seems crazy. So whoever's reading it, adoption may not be for you. That may not be what God has for you at all. But really it's about listening to Him and letting Him guide your steps and your life, and seeing how He works all of these things together and writes this really beautiful story for you, even through the highs and the lows.

BS: That's awesome. The book is called Love without Borders and it is available anywhere books are sold. You can also check out Angela at This Gathered Nest on YouTube.

Angela Braniff, thank you so, so much for joining us. We really appreciate you and are so thankful for your example of how to love your near-dweller, how to love children and how to create a great family. We're so thankful for you and for all you've done.

AB: Well thank you so much for having me. It was such a pleasure. Thank you so much.

BS: Take care, God bless.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving from the Lord, let's say this 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.

Man, is that creed needed now more than ever! I think it is. I found myself saying it in a meditative way last night just before going to bed. It was a creed originally that I used to use in this way to just pray. Nobody knew about it, but man a time when we need to know I'm not what I do, I can't get out there and do this stuff. I feel powerless, in a way, to be able to do these things. I'm not what I have. I'm not what people say about me. It's an important time to remember that.

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "You Are the Apple of His Eye"

It's interesting because yesterday Hannah and I were talking and I was like man there is something else about this quarantine shelter-in-place thing that is getting to me. And it is the fact that people are getting sick, it is the fact that I can't do anything, but there's something else that's anxious, and I think a lot of us feel that. Like this deep, deep desire for things to just go back to normal. To like kind of just wake up and be like oh, it was all a bad dream, and I can go back to the way things were. I can get my church back. I can go to the beach again. I can go shopping. Go to the mall. Go to Disneyland! These types of things that we do wherever we are locally and they're just not there. I can't go to your favorite restaurants. Restaurants are even closing. Stan's Donuts in West Hollywood closed. I don't know if you heard that, Russ.

So there are these classic restaurants that are just completely going out of business forever, and businesses, and everybody's getting sick, and it's just this tough time. But there was something else, and when I pinned it, I realized this was a big thing for me, and maybe it is for you, too. It's the fact that we don't have specific things to look forward to.

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It's interesting because last Christmas; in our family we draw names because we have such a big family, so we draw names for who to buy a present for so you don't just buy presents for everybody because it gets too expensive. And my mom is one of the most generous, loving, giving, supportive people I know, and she loves giving gifts, and she loves watching our kids. And growing up as kids, even when she couldn't afford it, she went the extra mile to make Christmas really special for me. And this was the first year I drew my mom's name. So I got her and so I spent a lot of time thinking about what to get my mom.

And I remember back in the day she said when I was in my 20's, I was in this cave in Italy in a café, and there was a blind Italian singer who sang one of the most beautiful pieces I had ever heard, and I never forgot his name, and he became famous years later. Well it was Andrea Bocelli. And I just loved that story, this young version of my mom heard a young, no name tenor in Rome, Andrea Bocelli in a café somewhere in a cave. And so I bought her Andrea Bocelli tickets. I thought that'd be great. She and I will go on a mom and son date, and it'll be in June.

And this whole time as the coronavirus has been building up, we keep texting each other – are we going to be able to go to the concert? Are we going to be able to go to the concert? Well last week I got an email from Ticketmaster that the concert is cancelled. And it was just kind of a sad reminder that all these things that we were looking forward to; there's something about having things: a vacation, a trip with your family, a holiday. Our anniversary is in a couple weeks. We're not going to be able to do anything real special for our anniversary. And so I think there's something sad about that, too.

And even yesterday as I was praying and thinking about it, I really feel like the Lord put on my heart like there are really great things that if you only knew what they were, you would look forward to them. In other words, you have stuff to look forward to you just don't know what it is. There's a fog between us and those good things, and hopefully this encourages you. I know some of you are kids and you're seniors in high school and you don't get to have prom, you don't get to graduate or maybe you're a senior in college and you don't get to have that great experience. You don't get to do those camping trips. A lot of people that are starting in life don't get to apply for jobs or aren't able to find them.

But I still promise this thing will pass. Let's all keep a positive mindset and continue to develop the inner life. This is an opportunity. Everybody's going to come out of this coronavirus thing different than they were when they started, and different than their neighbor. Some people are going to come out worse; some people are going to come out better. And I just believe and proclaim over you, you are going to come out of this thing better. And even though we're going to miss out on some things, we're going to not have as many of the fun things this is a great time to develop your inner life; to continue to grow and to learn and to ask the Lord to use these difficult circumstances to develop you as a person, and I think you will.

We're in a series called God's Names for You. And I think this is one thing that you can do during this time is to remember what God calls you. The names that God has for you. The book of Revelation says that one of these days, God will have a white stone, and on that stone He's going to write a special name just for you that only you and He will know. Isn't that a lovely story? That there's something about your life that you're going to look and that name is going to mean a lot to you. And God has lots of names for us, and they're all endearing and powerful and they move us.

We have names in our family that we call each other. My family calls me Bubba. My kids call me Daddy. I won't tell you what Hannah calls me. It's good. We have ah.. just kidding. I call Haven wavey havey, our whole family calls her that. And my son is coco bean. And there are these names that we pick for each other that are special that not a lot of people know and they're intimate and they're personal and they're casual.

And then we also have names that we use for people who we respect; dignified. Some people call me pastor Schuller, reverend Schuller. When you were in school, you had Mr. Swanson or Mrs. Smith. You don't call people in respected positions by their first name. I think about how God gives us His first name. Jesus, in fact, teaches us to call God Abba. So sometimes He says Father, but other times He says Abba. Abba is like saying papa or daddy. Isn't that amazing that God wants us to approach His throne, not like He would Mr. Smith or El Presidente, or this kind of thing, but He wants you to say Abba. He wants you to say dad. He wants you to say Father. And that intimacy that we have with God through Christ Jesus, He has that with us, too. He has a way in which He calls us not by some formal name, but He calls you by your first name. He knows you. He loves you.

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He likes you! I just know that when I get to heaven someday, God's not going to say welcome to heaven, Reverend Schuller. You feel like it's going to be something deeper.

So one of the names that I think is so powerful that we're going to talk about today is this phrase from the Bible that you are the apple of God's eye. You are the apple of God's eye. The phrase, which is common now in the English language, is original to the Bible. The apple of a person's eye, literally it's that white part of the eye. It's like if you're really close to someone and you look in their eyes, you can see yourself in their eyes, and that's the apple part. It means that God is looking at you so intently, so wide-eyed, with so much love and so compassionate that He's gazing on you with love, and it's like you're literally dancing in His eyes. The point is that He's looking at you and it's a term of endearment. He loves you, He likes you, and He's watching over you. It's like you're right in the middle of everything He's looking at. Isn't that a lovely image? Do you believe that? Do you believe God is watching you and He loves you? I do. I believe that even though God has seen all of the stuff maybe that you're embarrassed about or things about your past or things that you're tempted by or ways that you mess up that in spite of all of that, He is watching you, He favors you, He loves you, and He's going to protect you and He's going to watch over you. So believe it today that you are the apple of God's eye. Believe it! He loves you.

So many of us, we think we're not worthy of love. This is why we oftentimes don't take care of ourselves, or we don't do the self-care that we need is because there is something deep down I think that says well, I don't matter that much. In God's eyes, in my eyes, in this church's eyes, I want you to know that you are so important to Him. You are a part of His spiritual family. You are one of His kids. In the same way that a loving mother or loving father just looks over and loves their children, God is looking over and loving you.

This phrase appears all over the Bible but the best place, in my opinion, that it appears is in the book of Zechariah. Zechariah begins at the end of the exile. You remember the exile, don't you? In the story of the Jewish people, the people sin and worshiped idols, and neglected the poor, and sacrificed children, and so they were conquered by the Babylonian empire, and during that time they spent 70 years in exile, just working away from home, thousands of miles from where they were from in the city of Babylon, toiling away for the Babylonian emperors until one day a man that the Bible actually calls a Messiah, King Darius the great from the Persian Median Empire, comes into Babylonia and frees them. Frees them. And he says you all can return home. And there's this moment. Seventy years is a long time. That's from what now to the second World War. I mean that is a long period of time, and Darius says you're free to return home, but many of the people who can return home were born in Babylon. They're still Jewish, they still have their Bibles, but they probably speak the local language, and maybe their Hebrew isn't so good, and so they have to go back to this place that was effectively abandoned. There were still some people there, but when they returned back to Jerusalem, it's in shambles. And for many of them, even though this is home, there's something foreign about the place.

And imagine returning to a once bustling city and there were some patches of people that stayed back to kind of keep things up, but not really, and you come back and all the roads are overgrown and the plumbing doesn't work anymore, and buildings are collapsed and vacant, and there's weeds growing out of windows and roofs and you return in mass with all of these people, and now you've got food problems and water problems and infrastructure problems, and governance problems, and you look around and you go well where do you even start? What do you do?

Well Haggai and Zechariah had an answer to that question – where do you start? And they said you start by building the temple. Now that's an interesting thing to say because a temple you would think from a practical standpoint is like the last thing you need. You need water, you need roads, you need walls, you need these types of things. But Zechariah and Haggai are trying to encourage the people, look, God has brought us home. In fact this is what Zechariah says at the beginning of the book. God has brought us home and the reason we were in exile is because of our sin, because of how we were in the past. Of how we neglected the poor and turned our hearts to idols, and did all this stuff: child sacrifice. We will not be like that. And God says to you, return to me and I will return to you, and the people respond. The people just bow down in repentance and cry out. And then Zechariah is like all right, let's build a temple. And then it's kind of like I don't know. Should we build the temple first? Maybe we should build some roads. Maybe we should get the water system working. And eventually Zechariah starts having these dreams from the Lord, and he begins to speak to people. And I think people, when they think about building the temple they're worried that they're going to get attacked because they have no walls.

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And they're worried that they're not going to have a place to sleep. And God cares about these things. He does. He cares. He cares about your protection.

And so in this dream, in Zechariah chapter 2, following this idea that you should not be like your ancestors, or you should build the temple first, God gives this dream to Zechariah and it looks like this, in Zechariah chapter 2.

Zechariah said: "Then I looked up and there before me was a man with a measuring line in his hand," so an angel who's going to measure the city. "I asked where are you going? And he answered me – to measure Jerusalem to find out how wide and how long it is. While the angel was speaking to me, while the angel was speaking to me was leaving, another angel came to meet him and said to him run! Go and tell the young man." The prophet Zechariah is actually young. We always think of prophets as old men with beards. He's a young guy.

"Run and tell the young man Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of people and animals in it." Just pause real quick. In the ancient world, a city without walls was a crazy thing. The only way your city didn't have walls is if your city and your people were so powerful that nobody would dare attack you. You had so many armies and such a great thing that like nobody's going to mess with Persia. Nobody's going to mess with Babylon. And so there's no need for walls. So the idea is it's like you're going to be so full of power and so full of glory, and just like spilling over with wealth and prosperity and life and goodness (this is the prophecy) you're not going to need walls. And you can't have walls because there's not going to be enough room to contain the blessing that God has you. Wow, for the Old Testament, this is a good prophecy. Usually they're bad, right? It fire, things are coming. Now this is good news.

And then it goes on. The natural question is well will I be safe? If there are no walls, how will we be safe? And God says, "And I myself" okay listen to these. "I myself will be a wall of fire around Jerusalem, declares the Lord, and I will be its glory within." Let me pause again. I think that two of some of the greatest human needs that are often in conflict with each other are the need for safety on one hand; a lot of us didn't realize how great a need that was until this coronavirus thing happened. And then on the other hand, the need for glory. We always think of glory as a bad thing. It's not. Remember what Paul says? Jesus Christ, the hope of glory. So self-glorification and ego is a bad thing, but there is this need, glory, meaning that you live a life that shines; that you have done things that matter. That when you leave this world, you left it better than it was. That you've done things in your life that made a difference, that had an impact, that were worth doing. And both of those things are very often at odds. Sometimes your greatest dreams and visions are also opposed to your personal safety. Maybe financial safety or things like that. And you also want to create a safe place for your family, your kids, your country, but that takes away from your ability to do great things and achieve great things.

And isn't it amazing that in one single promise God promises both to His people. He says I will be a wall of fire around you, and He will be, and I will be glory within you. That's a promise of God for you to trust that He's going to not only protect you and keep you safe, but also He will be the glory within that when you follow after Him, that there will be a light within you that will be great. Okay.

And then finally He says, now He's talking to all the people who still have not come back: "Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north, declares the Lord, for I have scattered you to the four winds of heaven, declares the Lord. Come, Zion! Escape you who live in daughter Babylon. For this is what the Lord Almighty says. After the glorious one has sent me against the nations that have plundered you, for whoever touches you, touches the apple of his eye." It's like saying anytime somebody harms you it's like somebody goes BAP and just pokes God in the eye. Like He's looking at you and gazing you and loving you, and then somebody goes BOOM like it just hits Him in the eye. Isn't that a great image? That God is so for you, so on your side, that anyone who would harm you or touch you or hurt you, it's like they've stabbed God in the eye. That you are the apple of His eye. That even now, He's looking after you, He loves you, He's on your side, and He's going to be a wall of protection around you, and He's going to be the glory within you. We don't have to worry all day. We can trust that things in this life are in the hands of God.

I want you to know that you have God's favor upon your life. And I just want you to think about that for a minute. That so much of life feels like the result of luck, doesn't it? Doesn't it feel like there are so many.. I've talked to so many successful businessmen who I know they've worked hard and they've planned and they've done great things, but you ask them and very often they're like, but there was this one time I was just so lucky.

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Out of nowhere I met this person who taught me this thing, or out of nowhere I got this offer to do this thing. I wasn't even looking for it, and I just said yes. I think so much of thriving in life has to do with this idea of favor.

Now whenever you see the word favor in the Bible as a translator, if you translate, you can choose one of two words when you see it. You can either translate it as favor, or you can translate it as grace. Very often we as whatever native language you speak. I speak English obviously, but when I translate the Bible from this word, I get to choose grace or favor, and we forget that that is the same word, it's the same word. You could say we as Christians are saved by grace through favor. That means you're God's favorite! That means it's almost like the same way when I'm watching my daughter play soccer or something, or some game with her friends, I don't really care about the other kids; I care about my daughter. God is looking at you and He's rooting for you and He's on your side. Having God's favor, being the apple of God's eye is the wisest place to be; it's the smartest thing you can do, and it's THE thing we should seek after. And this is why Zechariah says build the temple first! These things are important but I want to know that I am in the center of God's kingdom. I want to know that God's favor over my life and that He's going to open these things up and present these opportunities to me.

In Hebrew the word "favor," by the way, is "Channah," which is like Hannah, or the root word "chen." So I know most of you speak Hebrew, but we're just going to look real quick. Hebrew is like what do they call it? An image language so in the same way, like Chinese characters, you can see images within the writing itself. Hebrew is the same way. So Hebrew goes from right to left because I'm pretty sure the person that invented Hebrew was a lefty because poor lefties now we go left to right and they get ink.. my daughter is a lefty; when she writes she gets ink all over the bottom of her hand, so if you're a lefty and you're inventing a language. So you go right to left, okay.

This is the letter "chet" and it makes the "H" sound. It's the first letter in the word "Hannah" or "Channah." And this letter also is a pictograph of a house or a fence. Can you kind of see it? It's like a house, a hut or a wall. And this is the letter "nun," and it changes over time. Originally it was on its side thousands of years ago, but it's supposed to be a fish. It's hard to see. It's a fish. So when you see this letter, you picture a house, or safety, or a fence, or walls, and when you see this letter, you picture a fish, which is the main food, right? For Israel? So its sustenance, its life, its life-giving, it's good, it's value.

So this word "chen," which means favor or grace, is the idea that God is going to protect you, and that God is going to sustain you. That God's going to be around you and look after you. He's going to feed you. He's going to make sure you have everything you need. So even when you read the word "favor" or "grace," you also can see within pictographically within the word itself, the idea of both protection and sustenance. Isn't that lovely? This is what God has for you.

All this to simply say if you have anything to seek, seek God's favor. Seek the temple. Build your temple first. Develop the inner life.

I have the opportunity as a pastor to watch people, and I recognize that the thing over time that makes the biggest difference in people is character. Is whether or not they have built that inner life to get through tough times, and to get through difficult things. So I want to encourage you, as Jesus said, seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you. Okay, I'll just finish with this. I think now more than ever it is so important that we are not rash. That now more than ever we are not making huge decisions that will dictate the rest of our life. That right now, now more than ever in your life is the time to practice patience. Remember when Paul talks about love, the first word that he uses is the word patient. Love is patient. So we have to be patient with our neighbor and patient with our business and our parents and I know that sounds horrible, but even patient with the authorities and the government, to people like that; that to practice the fruit of patience is going to be a good thing right now.

One of the best pieces of advice my grandpa ever gave to me, and he said it publicly before is never cut a tree down in the winter. Never cut a tree down in the winter. Now if you live in Southern California like I do, that may not make sense to you, but I also used to live in Oklahoma and I remember we lived in Broken Arrow. We had this big field behind our house and it was just land as far as the eye could see, and there were a bunch of trees, and in the summer, it was green and lush and this forested area. But in the winter, it'd be actually quite beautiful with snow or sleet. And all of the trees have no leaves on them, nothing. They're just sticks coming out of the ground and they'd even get like covered in ice.

You Are the Apple of His Eye

And there is no way you could know which tree was alive, and which tree was dead. You had some beautiful tree in your backyard and you went out there and cut it down, you might be cutting down a living tree that will come back in the spring.

When spring comes and the leaf begins to spring again and the green comes back and the trees begin to grow again, you can see that there are some trees that are alive and are doing great, and then there are other trees that are dead, and that's the time to cut things down. In other words, in life, if you're in a bad mood, if you're not in a good mental place, don't make big decisions. This is a huge piece of wisdom that if you're just like oh, I just don't like this. You're mad at your neighbor or somebody, don't make big decisions. Just wait until spring comes. Wait until you feel good and you can rightly discern whether the thing is alive or dead.

So if you're in that moment and you're like I need a divorce, or I'm giving up on this project, or I'm walking out on this thing, or some of you maybe even I'm going to take my life. We want to make these big decisions. I'm going to go out there and whatever. Whenever you're not feeling good, that is the worst time to make any big decision. Just ride it out like a wave and then when you feel better then you can decide whether or not that thing is worth cutting down; whether or not that thing is worth moving on. Wait until you feel better to make that decision. It'll really mean a lot.

I remember I used to love chess; I still love chess, and when I was an amateur player, I was always trying to like get a pace advantage of like try and do these great moves, and then I would just have one horrible blunder that I'd never recover from. And I remember I was just thinking just stop making blunders. Just try and play a defensive game where you don't mess up, and sure enough, my opponent would always do a blunder eventually and I wouldn't, and that's how I started winning!

And I think that's so important that in life, just be able to recognize I don't feel good right now. I'm in a bad mood. This is not a good decision. This is not a good time to make any major decision in my life. For now, trust that you are the apple of God's eye. That God has a great plan for your future. That life is an experience of just more, better, good, that more good is coming. Whatever the thing was that maybe you lost because of the coronavirus, I want to promise you that even better things can come and replace it. Just focus on the temple. Focus on building your temple. Focus on your inner life. Focus on growing in the Lord so that when things open up, you won't come out ragged and bored and tired and foggy brain, but you'll come out full of energy, full of ideas, full of life, full of positivity, and you'll see God do great things in your life, and just bring all that favor and all of that hope into your life. I believe that will happen, in Jesus' name, amen.