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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. Good morning.

HS: Welcome visitors and church family. It is such a joy to be with you. God wants to save to the uttermost all who draw near to Him through Jesus. Nothing exists that God cannot redeem or heal. You are loved.

BS: Amen. I realized earlier that the only thing anybody's ever looking at at this part of the worship service is my son. And whatever I say here kind of doesn't matter. But we're glad you're here. Cohen's glad they're here, right Cohen?

COHEN: Pirates of the Caribbean.

BS: Pirates of the Caribbean. All right! Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you that you're here. We love you. Lord, we're excited about what your Holy Spirit's going to do in our lives, in our hearts, and in this moment. You can do anything you want to do whenever you want to do it, and you love us, and that fills our heart with absolute confidence in this moment. We trust in you, we thank you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, all God's people said, amen.

HAVEN: Turn to the person next to you and say God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – Lukas 1,46-55 – Hannah Schuller

You may be seated. In preparation for the message, Luke 1:46. And Mary said my soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on, all generations will call me blessed for the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm. He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors. Amen.

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING (PEACE) – Chad & Hillary Blake & family

LEWIS: Merry Christmas.

HILLARY: Last Sunday we lit the first candle – the candle of hope. Today we light the second candle, the candle of peace. During Advent we celebrate the birth of Jesus, who was known as the Prince of Peace. Peace is not simply the absence of war; it is a state of the heart of every person who carries the life of Christ within them. And the kingdom is at work when God's people band together to be instruments of and for peace in this world.

CHAD: Let us pray these words together as a congregation: Faithful God, you are at work to restore all of creation to its intended harmony. Make your face shine upon us, so that we may be reconciled with you and with all our enemies. We pray that your peace would come over the many troubled areas of our world this Christmas season. God of hope, God of peace, into our darkness come. In the name of the Prince of Peace we pray. Amen.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

All right, no matter who you are, would you stand with us? We're going to say this creed together. Hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving from the Lord: 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 my neighbor. Thanks, you can be seated.

God's Promises Are Bigger Than Your Plans

MESSAGE – God's Promises Are Bigger Than Your Plans

Today's the second Sunday in Advent, and it has two words that people kind of pick which one they want. The two words are "peace" or "preparation." That's interesting, isn't it? Many of us feel peace when we're prepared. And we're going to talk about both of those things, how to truly be prepared for opportunity in your life, and how to truly have peace. But can I just begin by saying, so peace in life really comes when we have peace with God. This is something more and more I realize that the turmoil that we experience in life, in our families, in our countries, in our schools, it comes because there's not peace in here. There's an old hymn that says "let there be peace on earth, but let it begin with me." Let it begin with me. That's a great line. That's someone saying I take responsibility to be a peacemaker AND to be a peaceful person wherever I am. The best way to be a peaceful person is to be at peace with God. Many of us are at peace with our colleagues, or we think we're at peace in our families. Maybe you woke up today and everything in your life is going pretty good. Your job is good, your relationships are good, your school is good, whatever it is, but there's something inside of you that's not good, and you don't know what it is. I want to encourage you today to be at peace with God. The way we be at peace with God is through trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of that, our past, everything we've done, our sins, our mistakes, they're taken care of. And we breeze over this so many times in church, but this is the most important thing that's ever happened to you, that's ever happened to human history, that now we can do our best and forget the rest. We can truly trust that we are at peace with God because Christ was crucified. Make that decision today. And if you do make that decision, will you text me the word HOPE to the number on the screen. I want to pray for you and our staff wants to pray for you that you'll begin a journey, apprenticeship or discipleship to Jesus. Funny story. Pro golfer was invited to go golfing with a prince in Saudi Arabia. The prince was a big fan of this golfer's game, and so he went out and they spent three days golfing with each other. And this was like no other experience this pro golfer had ever had. The course was immaculate. The food, the experience, everything was wonderful. And when it was all over, the Saudi Prince and this pro golfer were going back to the jet, where he was going to be flown back to the United States, wherever he came from, and the Saudi Prince said 'I had such an amazing time with you, I want to give you a gift to commemorate this amazing experience.' And the guy was thinking about it. He was a little embarrassed because you're with this prince or king or whatever, and he was thinking I kind of need a new putter, and I kind of need a new driver, and he thought that would be the perfect request. And so he asked the Saudi prince, 'just send me some kind of a golf club.' And he said 'no problem.' This kind of thing. And so he goes home. Several weeks go by and he's wondering what kind of golf club he's going to get. He thinks like is it going to be gold plated or just solid gold, and it'll go on my shelf, or what will this be. Finally a few more weeks go by, still nothing, and in the mail he receives a courier. He opens the envelope and inside is a title deed to a golf country club. Golf club. Now I've heard this story.. it has to be apocryphal. I've heard this story four different ways and four different times. You might have heard it before, too. I googled it and I think it is based on a true story. But the meaning of the story, especially within a church service, is exactly right, isn't it. That very often what we're asking for from God is a little small. When you're with a Saudi prince and you ask for a golf club, he is not hearing a golf club, he's hearing golf club. And what I want to ask you to do today is to expand your mind to think about what God wants you to ask for. Can I just say God wants you to ask for more? God wants you to have more from life, more from Him, more from your day, and more from your year. God wants you to have more as long as you are on the right track. Ask for more from life. Ask for more from this week, and ask for more from your day, and you'll be glad you did. I've never read in the scripture where someone asked God for something and He says, ask for just a little bit less. I've never read in the scripture where someone asked for something and God says, oh I don't have a thousand cattle on a thousand hills, I just have a hundred. The best I can do is ten. Right? I've never heard God say to someone who asks big things of Him: no, some things are possible, but not that. The scripture says all things are possible to those who believe. All things. It doesn't say some things are possible for you. It doesn't say the obvious things are possible for you. It doesn't say the things that everybody else does are available to you. It says all things are possible. And when God, God, the creator of the universe says all things, the one who made a hundred year old man the father of many nations, the one who made a thief into the greatest preacher of the gospel, a man who turned Peter, a fisherman, into the leader of the church, a man who raised Christ from the dead. When He says all things are possible for you, they are. We call that possibility thinking. Possibility thinking.

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It's a way of thinking that says, maybe not necessarily this thing IS going to happen, but it's a way of saying is it possible? Is it possible? Is it possible you can still meet somebody? Is it possible you can still become the person you want to be? Is it possible your marriage can be good again? Is it possible your kids can come around? Is it possible you can overcome your disease? All things are possible. And that kind of thinking builds our faith and helps turn us into the people we need to be today. We've waited too long. We've waited too long to become those kind of people. Today's the day. Not tomorrow, today. We're going to make a decision today to live in a possibility kind of universe, the one that God oversees. Can I just tell you if your heart is right, and if you are working on you, that God's intervention and messing with your plan is a good thing. It's a good thing! God's plan is always an upgrade. God's plan is always an upgrade. It doesn't feel that way, sometimes. God's plan is always an upgrade. Look, when the guy asked for a golf club, and he got a golf club, we call that an upgrade. Can I say we call that an upgrade. When you ask for a golf club and you get a golf country club, we call that an upgrade. The man can walk into the golf shop at his country club and pick whatever club he wants, whenever he wants, because he owns all the clubs. You see what I'm saying? This is the kind of God we serve, and for sure, Jesus says to us still even now, oh you of little faith. Believe that it's possible. Expand your mind, expand your heart. Here's what I want you to get today. I want you to get today this idea of absolute trust. Here's what I want you to get today. I want you to wake up in the morning tomorrow, and understand that all things are possible for the God who lives inside of your body. Here's what I want you to get today. I want you to leave this building, or leave the screen that you're watching, and when you address anything that it is you put your mind to, to simply say it's possible, and maybe even say to yourself, I have not because I ask not. I have not because I've not knocked. I have not because I'm not done. And today, I will do, I will become, I will work, I will take the first step on a thousand-mile journey. And that brings us to the incredible story of Mary. Mary is such a wonderful story because culturally we don't understand what she lost when she gained Jesus Christ. Think about this for a moment: Mary, when she was told by the angel everything in her plan was going great. She had a great plan, Mary. Very beautiful young girl, probably 16-years-old or so, and she's engaged to a young hunk, Joseph. Don't believe those paintings. Joseph was not a 60-year-old bearded man. Most scholars believe he was probably in his late teens or early twenties. They probably loved each other. He was certainly an honorable guy. Mary was a woman of God already, Jewish woman in a Jewish village in a Jewish society, and in those days, things were like you're in or you're out. Maybe you come from a country that understands honor culture, but back then, it wasn't just Mary, it was her family. And it wasn't just Mary's family, it was Joseph's family, too. You might remember an experience, if you come from a culture like that where when a brother messed up, or a sister messed up, the whole family was frustrated because it made the whole family look bad. For sure this is something on Mary's mind. And when this angel arrives and says Mary, you are going to bear the Son of God, we go oh that's great. But most girls back then would have thought I'm supposed to get married and I'm going to be pregnant walking down the aisle? What are the neighbors going to say about that! What's Joseph's mother going to say about that? And the many other thoughts that come to her. Many reasons why Mary should have felt like this news was bad news and not good news. But what's her response? She's thrilled. What's Mary's response? She's excited. What's Mary's response to her whole plan and her whole life being messed up? In Southern California, we would say she was stoked, right? She was stoked out of her mind. Why? Because she knew what you know, and that is when God interrupts your plan, it's always an upgrade. And for her, it was. She would give birth to the Savior of the world, someone that would not only save her country from her sin.. it would save Mary. It would save her parents, her family, her nation, and people to come. Wow. Powerful story. So what we learn from Mary and what we learn from the scriptures is God loves to mess with our plans. But don't fret. When God messes with our plans, it's because He's going to upgrade whatever you're planning. God's promises are bigger than your plan. If your plan is getting messed up today, if you're working on you and you've been doing the best to follow Christ, and you're right with God, and still it feels like your plan is messed up, here's what I want you to leave here with today. God's promises are bigger than your plans. God's interruption is an upgrade. Trust me, this is the truth. So what do you say then? Well, then maybe I just shouldn't have a plan. Maybe I should just wait around and then let God come in and do His thing, and I'll play my video games, and drink my coffee, and enjoy my cinnamon rolls. I'm preaching to a mirror, right now. No, have a plan! Have a plan. You need to have a plan. Grandpa famously said, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." Well if God's going to mess with my plan, why have a plan?

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Here's why: you need to have a plan so God has something to tinker with. I've been a pastor now for two decades. Let me tell you, this is a hundred percent true. You need to have a plan so God has something to mess up! Hey, you've been a Christian long enough, you've seen God mess up your plans, you know it's true. So you have to build a plan so that you build yourself up. You have to have a place to go so that you step out of the house. You have to have a goal to build so you know how to build yourself. If you build your plan, your plan will build you. If you build your future, your future will build you. And that is what you get out of life. It's not what you acquire, it's who you become. And it is these goals, these targets, these things in life that develop us into the peaceful, powerful, joy-filled, loving people that we want to be. It's the plans that make us that way. You got to build your plan. You say Bobby, I need someone to motivate me. You say Bobby, I just don't have the energy. You say Bobby, I need to get motivated. Motivated. Listen to that word "motivated" for just a minute. What does the word in the middle of motivated? The word is "motive." You need to have a motive to be motivated. You need to have a goal, you need to have a why, you need to have a thing you're working for. Getting motivated for motivated sake is honestly stupid, right? We call that stupid. We get motivated for a thing, for a place we want to go, a person we want to become. That's how you get motivated is you get a motive. You get a goal. You get a vision. You build your plan, and your plan will build you. I have a friend of mine Pastor David Diga Hernandez said it best. It was a little harsh, but I needed to hear it, and it's great. Goes like this: he says here is the one type of person God will not anoint and God will not call. He said when David was called, and everybody was wondering where he was before his anointing, where was David? He was out in the fields taking care of his sheep. When called Moses in the burning bush, he was tending to his flock. When God called Isaiah, he was in the temple. When God called Elisha, he was out plowing the field. And when God called the disciples, what were they doing? They were fishing. God will not anoint a lazy person. God will not call someone who is sitting around doing nothing. God calls people who are doing something. Maybe others would call menial – fishing, shepherding, whatever. But to God, it's not menial, because God said it best – those who are faithful in the little will be entrusted with much. You want to be entrusted with much? Start with a little. You say to me Bobby, you don't understand, I can't get out of the house. I just can barely get to work. I have no energy. Does that mean I'm lazy? Look, we've all been there before. We've all felt lazy. Sometimes it's good to be lazy, if you're in Hawaii and you're on vacation, that's a good time to be lazy, or if you're out golfing, that's a good time to be lazy. But that kind of lazy is only good when you've been working a lot. Right? The hot tub feels the best when you've been out in the snow. Food tastes the best when you're hungry. And the list goes on and on, and relaxing feels the best when you've been working hard on meaningful stuff, whether it's your art or your studies or your business or your ministry, we ought to be applying.. God can take care of your past, He can take care of your sins, He can take care of your insecurities, but He cannot cure you of laziness. Here's what needs to happen. Have you ever sat in front of a screen and you're trying to write a paper in school, and you just can't get yourself to do it. Or maybe you need to make a sales call and just can't bring yourself to dial the number. Or maybe you're single, you want to ask a girl or a guy for a phone number, or introduce yourself, just can't bring yourself to do it. All the many things in life, the dreams and goals that we have, you just can't bring yourself to do it. Say I'll do it tomorrow or some other time. Here's what you need to say to yourself: I cannot fail at this. Is that true? No, it's not true, no. You can. You can fail. But this is a little hack that's worked well for me. That very often I think the reason we stare at our computer screen and cannot write, the reason we cannot walk across the room and shake a hand, the reason we cannot make that phone call or write that letter or do the work that needs to be done, is that there's this lingering fear, fear, fear, fear of how it's going to feel to be in the gym. Fear of how it's going to feel to hear a no. Fear of what it's going to be like to be grinding away at that thing. And when you say to yourself "I cannot fail at this," it's kind of like magic. Try it sometime, it works. But you have to start, you've got to do something. Sometimes you just need some small wins. You say I got to lose some weight, so I got to run ten miles. NO! Don't start with ten miles. Take a walk around the neighborhood, bring your dog along. She's been wanting to get out anyway, right? You can talk to your dog. Meet a neighbor. I once heard a guy say "you got to floss every day," and he said "start with three teeth, don't do all your teeth, just start with three." And very often, that's all we need. We need to just get started. An object at motion stays in motion unless acted on by an outside force. Something like that. So get going. Get going. So you got to have a plan so God can mess it up. But you know what else you need? You need to plan by preparing yourself. The one thing that's better than a plan is being prepared for anything. That is the core. That's the thing I always talk about.

God's Promises Are Bigger Than Your Plans

In the Bible, the word we use for this is discipleship. Discipleship. That's a very Biblical and old word, so we can say apprenticeship, personal development in the kingdom, whatever you want to call it, you have to build yourself up, prepare yourself, build into your life the kind of person that's ready for the opportunities that are coming in life. Now in the age of discovery, it was an amazing time because you think about the kind of courage people had. We always think of Christopher Columbus. A lot of discussion now about Columbus, a lot of revision. If you ask your sociology professor, he will say Christopher Columbus was Hitler. If you ask your history professor, he'll say well not so fast. Some of those claims were made by his opponents in Portugal, etc. This painting, by the way, that is the only portrait we have of Columbus, was made twenty years posthumously after he died. And so that's a model. That's some model the painter uses. We don't even know what Columbus looked like, and so much of the history we don't know because it's in the late medieval period. But here's what we do know. The guy sailed across one of the most dangerous waters anyone could ever imagine, and he tried to pitch it to many countries, and finally Ferdinand and Isabella bought the story. They paid for his voyage, and he had this amazing plan. Here's the plan. Now because he was a bit of a pirate, his goal was what? Was it to spread Catholicism? Was it to make discoveries of knowledge? No. It was loot. Loot! Money! That's what he wanted, Columbus. And he knew that the spices in Asia were worth more than their weight in gold, and that's true. And so he said I think we can sail right across the Atlantic and we'll land somewhere in China, India, Indonesia or Japan. Just trust me. And so somebody said all right, we'll trust you. Made the voyage, discovered, for Europeans or millions of people living there already, but discovered what we call the new world, came back, still believed that he had found Asia. While he was there, he was looking for the Mongolian empire and the great Kahn that hadn't existed for two hundred years. Terrible plan, right? But he got there, came back, and didn't lose a single sailor, which back then was unheard of. Here's what we say about Christopher Columbus – he had a bad plan, but he was a great sailor. Born in Italy in Genoa, sailed his whole life. He just knew how to read the skies, read the waters. The plan was so bad that when Amerigo Vespucci, cartographer and discoverer went there, he named it, what. Not Columbia, he named it America, after himself! Because he said no, this is not Asia, this is a new place and I'm naming it after me. Magellan in the same way had a terrible plan to circumnavigate the globe, but he did it, sort of, he died in the Philippines, but he did the hard part, and he did it, not because he had a great plan, but because he was a great sailor. Here's what we can learn from these characters of history. It's better to be a great sailor with a bad plan, than to be a bad sailor with a great plan. Let me just say that again. If you have to choose. Better to be a great sailor with a bad plan, than a bad sailor with an amazing plan. Because sailors can be ready for anything. Famous girl, Laura Decker, here's someone we can really emulate and highlight someone that's impressive. Laura Decker, the youngest person to ever circumnavigate the globe, and she did it alone. Wow. Sixteen years old she circumnavigated the globe alone. Isn't that an amazing? Dutch girl. Now her story is interesting. From Holland at six years old, her parents divorced and her dad was a shipbuilder. That's probably why. Liked the ocean. How does the line go? Oh I'm not going to do it. And she had to choose. She was given the unfortunate choice that so many children are given, choose which parent you want to live with, and her sister chose her mom and she chose her dad, and so she just lived on a boat and sailed all the time. When she was about 11 years old, she had a little schooner and her parents would allow her to like sail around the islands by herself. When she turned 13 years old, she was out sailing one of these islands in the Netherlands, and she decided to just sail to England. Without permission. Didn't tell anybody. Thirteen-year-old, on a boat, by herself, sailed to England. And then the police found her and brought her back to the Netherlands. When she was 14, she was sailing around the French coast and decided to go all the way down to the Canary Islands, which are those islands to the west of Africa, stopped there for a bit and then sailed to the Caribbean. A 14-year-old girl. Later, when she was 14, she sailed 6,000 nautical miles from Australia to South Africa. She's someone who grew up on a boat. She knew she could do it. She was fine. And eventually, she sailed and circumnavigated the globe when she was 16. Now what do we learn from her story. Not a great plan, but she's what? She's a great sailor. Yes, she's 16 years old, but she's doing it for 10 years, all the time. Better to be a great sailor with a bad plan, than to be a bad sailor with a great plan. The best thing is what? Great sailor with a great plan. Okay, you get it. So in life, the best way to prepare for life, the best plan to have is a personal plan. The best way to prepare in life is to improve. To continue every day to become the person you want to be. To take as much responsibility from life as you can, to be allergic to blaming others for anything, and to commit every single day to taking a few small steps in the direction of being who you want to be.

God's Promises Are Bigger Than Your Plans

Our jobs are one of the best places to learn an array of people skills, developmental skills, discipleship skills. Our jobs are so often wasted because we just do the minimum. But here's one of the best questions you should ask from any job you have is what can I become in this job. What can I learn in this job? Who can I meet in this job? Can I tell you I had a job at Barnes and Noble when I was in college. I was 19 years old. And when I left that job to come back to California for the summer and I quit the job, my manager told me, 'Bobby, I'm kind of glad you're quitting because you almost got fired four times.' I said what? Now if you're my friend, you will believe this story. She said the general manager told me on at least three or four different times to fire you, and I defended you. And I said why did I get fired for? I was faithful, I was here every day. She said because there were so many days you were singing and whistling incessantly for hours in the café and it was driving the general manager, John, crazy. Now if you know me, you know that story is true. You know I whistle; you know I sing. And why was I whistling Dixie? Why was I singing Frank Sinatra constantly too loud while mopping? Because, well it was in Oklahoma, and in Oklahoma the weather is bad is the word you're looking for. We call that bad in Oklahoma. Whenever it snowed or rained or was a tornado, I still had to go to work, but people didn't like going to Barnes and Noble in bad weather. There's nothing to do. Just cleaning, so you sing, you whistle, you're bored, you're by yourself. What a waste of time that was for me. I think I wish I had had something like me with me back then. Someone like me today with me back then. Why? Because.. think about it: I had a business degree, I could have gone back to the general manager and said hey are you doing some accounting? Nobody likes doing accounting. Let me help you with the accounting, and I could have learned more about payroll and accounting. What a skill that would have been for a 19 year old to have. Or what if I had seen Joe doing inventory and I said Joe let me help you with the inventory. I can figure this out. I can help you, and I would have learned about work flows and inventory statements. There are so many skills. And for goodness sake, I'm in a bookstore! I could have gone to.. think about a world of knowledge that while I'm waiting for somebody to come order a cup of coffee, I could have grabbed any book from any shelf on any topic and I had it there, and been reading. But instead I was within a breath of getting fired because I was just bored and I just tolerated it. No, no, we use these opportunities in our jobs to get better. We use every experience. Marriage is one of the best ways to grow as a disciple. To practice, what, forgiveness, right? To practice, what, love of enemies, right? Some of you are like what?! You know it. For some of you, you're like if I could love my husband, I can love my sister. If I could love my husband, I could love that guy next door. No, but really, marriage is a great place to grow, to grow. Your job is a great place to grow. It's all these experiences where you can grow. Remember that any plant that bears fruit grows down before it grows up. It grows down in the visible places before it grows in the visible places. Yung said that if you want your branches to reach to heaven, your roots have to reach to hell. What does that mean? It means you have to do the hard stuff, the hell, the suffering that no one sees in order to reach the glory of the kind of life that you want. So focus on you and focus on your plan, and your life will bear fruit. So trust in God today. I want you to leave here just going with like I got to plan, but if God interrupts this plan, I just trust Him. I trust I'm going to lose my golf club but I'll still get a golf club. Yes, right? So we're going to have that kind of faith. We're going to remember that God never tells us to ask for less. He wants us to ask for more. Doesn't tell us to believe in less, He tells us to believe in more. And it is those kinds of faith goals that help grow us as people. Don't ask for life to get easier, ask that God would make you stronger. Don't ask for less challenges, ask for more books, more podcasts, more mentors. Don't ask for life to be simpler, ask God to upgrade you to make you the kind of person that's ready for the kind of thing that you want. Become that kind of person today. Your life will never be the same again. Amen. So Father, we thank you for faith. There are things happening we can't see that you can see and we trust our future to you. Today we decide to build ourselves and build our plan. Help us, Lord, to see the way you see. We love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, all God's people said, amen. Would you stand with me?