

## 201413 wherejessat mustardseed joeamaral 20140802am

Good morning, how many are looking forward to a good day here at camp? Amen? Did Pastor Tim already leave the building? I wanted to ask if there was an age limit on the slip and slide. Am I too... No? You were talking about the baptism. I would really encourage you, if you have not yet been baptized, it really is an amazing experience.

And I get to do them all the time. I no longer pastor a church, but I get to travel into churches. But for 10 days a year, I get to pastor the tour group as we travel throughout Israel.

One of the things we do is we baptize people in the Jordan River. Would that be pretty cool? What do you think? You know, standard is cool, but you know, the Jordan is pretty cool too. And our policy is, when I baptize you in the water, I hold you under water according to the amount of sin in your life.

I'm just saying. The weather in the north in Israel where we baptize people can be unpredictable at times. And one year we were there, it was in the fall, I think in October or November, and we've been battling the weather.

And if it starts to rain, it can kind of wreck things when you're trying to be outside. And so it was going to rain, and we decided, you know what? If people are going to get wet, let's do the baptism. Because you know, you get wet, you get wet.

And so we were driving to the baptismal site. And as we're going, I mean, we're seeing like these big... Am I cutting out again, guys? Yeah? Okay, I'm just going to...they want me to grab that mic. Great.

So we're heading to the baptismal site, right? And you see these huge storm clouds. And all these dear ladies, God bless you ladies, just so you know. You know, they knew we were going to be baptized, but they got up early, and they did their hair all nice.

And this one lady had this really big poofy hair, and she had her makeup all done. And we were driving to the baptismal site called Yardenit, and it started to rain, and she put up her hand. I said, yes, dear.

She said, could we do the baptisms another day? And I said, why? She goes, well, it's raining. I said, yes. Well, I don't want my hair to get wet.

So I had to explain what it means to be immersed in the waters of baptism. Now, before I go any further, I'm going to do something my wife is going to love me for. I'm going to ask her to join me here at the front for just a moment.

Oh, those eyes. Pray for me later. Come on.

There's a reason why I'm doing this. I won't say how many years ago, but a few years ago on

this day. Come here, you big chicken.

Come here. A few years ago on this day, the world received a great gift when Karen came into it. So today is her birthday.

Yeah. In your best voices possible. Ready? Happy birthday, Karen.

Dear Karen. It's family camp. I know, I know.

It's allowed? Well, thank you very much for that permission to kiss my wife. I appreciate that. Last night, I had a wonderful time just kind of, you know, setting the stage for the weekend where we would be talking about the culture of Jesus.

And I know that a lot of times it kind of shocks people. Not that Jesus was Jewish. I think people understand that.

I think we know that. But sometimes we don't know how to process what does that mean? How did it change him as a person? You know, he wasn't a Christian evangelist going from church to church or from camp to camp. But he was a Jewish rabbi going from town to town.

And so what does that mean for me as a Christian? As a devout follower of this man, Jesus, Yeshua, this rabbi, what does it mean for me that he was Jewish? How do I understand that culture? You know, I went to Bible college for three years. I spent 10 years as a pastor. And I really didn't understand that Jesus was Jewish.

And it took me a 12-hour flight to Israel to get there. And when I got to Israel, I remember saying, wow, this place is really Jewish. It sounds silly now, but I said, wow, there's a lot of Jewish things here.

And I was there one week, and the country affected my life. You see, whether I wanted to or not, no matter how much I wanted bacon for breakfast, I wasn't going to get it in Jerusalem. And no matter how badly I wanted to go shopping on Saturday, I can't because everything shuts down on Saturday, on the Sabbath in Israel, still to this day.

There's hardly any cars in the street. All the stores are closed. And so I realized, my goodness, he spent 33 years, his entire life, in this country, not in Canada, not in the West, not in the U.K., not in China.

He spent it in Israel. So the culture affected him. Now, for better or for worse, you are a product of your environment.

Would you agree with that? How many people come from a non-traditional Canadian family, but there's some kind of a mix in your blood, or you come from a different background? Anybody? Just yell them out to me. Scottish? Guatemala? Mexico? Wales? I've been to Wales. Who's from Wales? It rains a lot.

Anyways. Right? Okay. So we know that our culture, for better or for worse, it makes us who we are.

And so what I want to do this weekend is I want to go back to that time, back to that period, and understand how Jewish people were in that day. Jewish people, Middle Eastern people, Israelis are different than Canadians. Let me tell you, when you travel outside of North America, your bubble is going to pop because it's a different world out there.

Here in Canada, we have lines, whether it's lines for food, lines at a rental place, lines to board the plane. We have lines. Lines don't work outside of North America.

Everybody's in a greater rush than you, and they just cut in front of you. And if you say something, what are you, Canadian? Well, actually. And so I tell my tourists, leave your Canadian culture behind.

If you don't, you won't. That's the rule in Israel. And so as we understand people's culture, we understand, oh, that's why they're that way.

Or that's why they do what they do. It's normal to them. I'm the abnormal one.

I'm the alien. I'm the outsider. You know, I'm the North American.

I'm the Canadian coming to this book, which is written in a culture that's completely different than mine. So if we can, let's go back in time a little bit. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on the preliminaries.

You guys know we have a website that we have, you know, social media you can follow us on. The one thing I will say is Karen and I co-host a TV program called First Century Foundations, and it's a show that we love to do, which we film on location in Israel. And so what we do is we get a theme.

This year we were doing the miracles of Jesus. We were on the miracle trail. We were hunting for the locations where the miracles actually took place.

And so we got to travel across the country with our camera crew, meet some amazing people, see some amazing things. And if that kind of thing interests you, hey, pop on over to [firstcenturyfoundations.com](http://firstcenturyfoundations.com). You can check out the show. We have a tour that goes every year to Israel.

We'll talk about that maybe a little bit later on as the week goes on. This morning I wanted to start by talking about a story that we all know very well in the Gospels. Now if you were here last night, I said something about Luke.

Does anybody remember what I said about Luke? You guys are listeners. He was the Gentile. Luke is like you.

Luke is like me. So he sees things from a slightly different perspective. Remember Matthew, Mark, and John are Jewish men writing to a Jewish audience? So he writes in a certain way.

And last night we saw that John said on the last and great day of the feast. Remember Jesus went to the temple? He doesn't tell you what the last day is. He doesn't tell you what the great feast is because if you're Jewish you already know he's talking about tabernacles.

But when Luke is writing his Gospel, he's writing to somebody named Theophilus, somebody who's not Jewish. And so Luke writes about things nobody else writes about. In fact, he's the only one who records this incredible event in the life of Jesus.

And on the outside when you look at it, it's cool but it's not amazing. You may not think it's very transformative. But what I want to do is I want to stop.

We're going to get out. Remember our Hebraic roots lenses? Remember our 4K 3D glasses? And we're going to look below the surface a little bit. And we're going to see something about this passage and understand, oh, that's why Luke wrote that.

So as we read, I'm going to kind of interrupt myself and stop on certain words or elements that I want to draw your attention to. Because I'm willing to bet a lot of us don't understand the fullness of what's going on here in the background. So let me read this.

He's talking about Jesus, of course. And he says that he went to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue as was his custom. Is there anything unusual about what I just read? What do you think? Now, you guys are very quiet.

I need to remind you that in Jewish teaching called yeshiva, there's interaction between the audience, between the students and the one who is teaching. So when I ask you a question, don't feel that you have to be Canadian and be quiet. Let your inner Israeli, Middle Eastern, whatever, come out.

So is there anything unusual about what I read? That Jesus went to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue as was his custom. Nothing unusual? It's full of unusual things. We don't catch it.

First of all, if Luke simply said, oh, Jesus went to synagogue on the Sabbath as was his custom, that would have been no big deal. He's a Jew. He goes to synagogue every Saturday.

No big deal. But Luke draws our attention, he said. He didn't go to just any synagogue.

He went to Nazareth. Now, Jesus had left Nazareth, remember? Do you guys remember this? He goes down into the wilderness. He prays for 40 days, and then he sets up office in Capernaum on the northwestern shores of the Sea of Galilee.

So he leaves there. He says a prophet cannot be accepted in his own hometown. There was no faith.

He could only do a few miracles. He leaves, but then Luke says, no, no, it was his custom. He would go to the synagogue in Nazareth.

That's about a five-hour walk each way, just so you know. Why would he go out of his way to go to a community that had rejected him? You ever asked that question? Probably not, because we simply read it on the surface. So we'll talk about why Nazareth.

So it was his custom on this particular Sabbath to go to the particular community of Nazareth, and he stood up to read. Well, that's interesting. In the middle of a service of a synagogue he no longer attends, he just stands up and he starts reading.

Wouldn't that be weird if somebody did that in your church? What if somebody left the church because they were unhappy, and then some Sunday morning they just show up, they pick up their Bible, and they just start reading? Would you find that odd? I think so, but nobody reacts. He just stands up to read. In fact, they handed him the Bible to read.

Oh, hey, thanks for interrupting the service. By the way, here's the Bible. Feel free to read whatever you would like this morning.

So you need to understand the humanity of what's going on here. So he stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Why is Luke being specific? Why doesn't he say, somebody handed him a scroll, and Jesus looked for something to read? No, no, no.

The scroll of Isaiah was handed to him. So he found the place where it is written, The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

And then he rolled up the scroll, he gave it back to the attendant, and he sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. Let me continue to paint the picture.

While he was physically painting a picture, I'm going to paint a picture for you in your mind so you can understand what was going on. Jesus reads a very beautiful portion of Scripture, right? And then he rolls it up, he hands it back, and he sits down, and everybody is staring at him. I'm going to do what Jesus did, okay? So I've just read from the Bible, okay? And now I'm going to hand it back to the attendant.

Now I'm going to do something amazing. If you have cameras, get ready. This has never been done in your camp before, Louise.

I'm going to sit. Wow. Come on, didn't that impress you? Aren't you impressed? Well, thank you.

God bless Wales. Okay, so, hold your horses. Another figure of speech.

Was that very impressive? People say, well, Jesus said that today in your hearing this has been fulfilled. That's why everybody was staring at him, right? Well, did he say anything yet? In the

story that Luke gives us, does Jesus say anything just yet other than reading the Bible? All he does is he reads, he rolls, he sits, and everybody is staring at him. And I never understood the passage before I went to Israel, before I started to look and study these Hebraic roots.

And I've heard preachers, you know, when we don't understand, you know what we do, right? We make stuff up. We put stuff in. Well, surely this must mean this.

Yes, because Jesus was a Canadian, and this is what Luke meant. No. I heard a pastor say, because Jesus was so anointed that everywhere he went, the eyes of everybody in the synagogue were fastened on him.

He walked with anointing. Do you guys feel that anointing as I'm walking? What did he do? How did he sit? Where did he sit? Why did he say all these questions? Well, let me take you back to church, back to synagogue 2,000 years ago. And I'll show you a photo of the ruins of a synagogue in Capernaum, which is the village where Jesus headquartered his ministry before he ultimately left and went down to Jerusalem to be crucified.

He left Nazareth. He came southeast towards the lake. Today I can drive it in 40, 45 minutes, but it was a half-day's walk during those times.

And so here we are in synagogue, and this is the main door coming into the chapel, coming into the synagogue. And you can see there's a big door in the center, and there's actually two smaller doors at the side. I don't know if you can see them there.

You can just kind of see through. You guys see that there? So the men would come in through the main doors, and the women and children would come in through the side doors. And as the women came in through the side door, there were stairs going up to a second level.

And there was a balcony, and the women would have to sit up there and look down on the service and hear what was going on. Now, I'm going to destroy some theology right now, okay? But it's theology that needs to be destroyed. Well, what happened in the services, the rabbis would be leading the service, and the men would start, you know, are arguing.

They would start rebutting. They would start expressing their opinions about what was just read. Today in church, the speaker speaks.

Everybody else is quiet. That speaker is in control of the session when he has the microphone. Isn't that how it is normally? But not in Judaism.

In Judaism, as the rabbi is speaking, you could say, I don't think so. Wrong. I heard it means this.

And they're not going to say, no, you are completely off your rocker. It means this. And they would just go back and forth and argue, and when it was all over, they'd all go out and have hummus together and be fine.

Warriors in the synagogue, friends outside. And so sometimes the men were talking to each other, and the women in the balcony couldn't hear. And they would say, hey, Saul, what did you say? What did that guy across from you say? And Paul said, hey, in church, the women will be silent.

When you get home, you can ask your husbands what was said. People have used that verse to silence women in the podium. And all it was was a housekeeping rule.

Hope I didn't destroy too much theology. But people, because we don't understand the culture, we said God said women can't be used in ministry. Paul told them to be silent in church.

But when you understand the structure, the service, doesn't that make sense? They're saying, don't yell. Just ask them when you get home. So continuing to understand the synagogue, the service, the structure, really is going to give us an opportunity to understand what was happening here.

So we have the main door, and the pulpit, or the bima in Hebrew, is put at the front. So the main entrance is behind you. In church, we do it the other way around, right? We have the main doors, and we have the pulpit at the front.

I think I like this idea. And you might want to consider that for the camp, and even for your churches. Because just think about it.

If the front door was here, nobody could come in late. And nobody could sneak out early. Where are you going? I think it's brilliant, personally.

And so at the front, there's seats on the side that are carved into rock. It's a little hard to see. But they would sit there.

And then during the service, portions of Scripture are read. There are planned things that happen. I'm going to talk about what's called the Petishot.

How many have heard of that word before? One, two, three. Three people have heard of Petishot. And Petishot was the most important thing in synagogue, in church, during Jesus' time.

And we as Christians don't know what it is. Let me explain for you so you can understand why everybody was staring at Jesus. We're building.

I never just give you the wow and then walk away. I want you to understand the background for how we're getting to where we're going. The first temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians.

I think we know about this. David had the vision. Solomon built the temple.

The paint's barely dried. The Babylonians come. They destroy the temple.

They sack the city. They burn it to the ground. All those who survive, they take as slaves and they bring them back to Babylon.

Another chapter of occupation in Israel. My Jewish friend says, anybody who thinks they're anybody at some point in time had to conquer us. We have no oil.

We have no water. But everybody wants this land. And so they're captured by the Babylonians.

And on the way, what they would do is they had a horse and a chariot or a carriage where they would put the scroll, the Torah scrolls, in the back and that followed and went with the people. The scrolls were so large, guys, that they had to carry it with a horse and a carriage. And look at my Bible today.

I bet you on your smartphones you have at least three or four or five versions of the Bible. And you can pull it out any time you want, no problem. You have access all the time.

But in Jesus' time, nobody, nobody had their own scroll. It was at the synagogue. And you would go every Saturday and your ears would be burning.

You'd be longing to hear the Word of God. Could you imagine if you had no access to the Bible throughout the week? The only time you would hear the Bible read was when you came to church. It was an important part of the lives of the people.

And the Babylonians saw this and they wanted to continue to shame the Jews that they had taken as captives, so they collected the scrolls and began to burn them and destroy them. And the people became afraid. The rabbis became afraid.

We're going to lose the written Word. We're going to lose the Bible. The Babylonians are taking them.

How are we going to preserve it? And so the Jews of that time came up with what I think was a pretty brilliant plan to save the Bible. Let's pick on this row here. You guys look like you're good pickings.

They'd say, okay, you guys, row one, you're going to memorize Genesis after the slip and slide. You're going to memorize Genesis 1 through 5. Okay? That's a lot, just so you know. And then on the first Saturday of January, let's say Sunday because we're talking about modern times, who's the oldest here? Dad? On the first Sunday in January, you're going to read something from Genesis 1 through 5. Second row, you guys are going to memorize Genesis 6 through 10.

You're going to memorize 11 through 15. On and on it would go until the entire Torah was covered. So the first Saturday of the month, you're going to come and you're going to read.

The next Saturday, you're going to come. The next Saturday, you're going to come. And the whole Bible is preserved over the annual cycle.

Do you understand? And that was also passed on to the prophets or the prophetic portions, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah. So every week a portion then was read in the synagogue. So the first person would get up to read from the Torah, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

Remember last night we were talking about Leviticus? How many woke up this morning and read Leviticus? Were you inspired? So every week somebody would come up, they would read, and then they would sit. Then the second person would come up and they would do something called Haftorah. It means to read the prophets.

What did Jesus read from? Isaiah, which is from the prophets. And after the reading of that prophetic portion, you have something called Devar, to speak, to make comments. So after you read, then you're allowed to begin to speak and say something about the commentary.

And when you would make the comment, you would make it from the front of the synagogue. That would make sense, right? You hand back the scroll, and then you would begin to speak. But what Jesus does is after he speaks, he sits.

Now, I want you guys to think of this. Why did Jesus go back to the synagogue in Nazareth? Because it was his custom. Why do you think he went back to the synagogue in Nazareth, guys? Aha! It was his family's turn to read in church, in synagogue.

You see, as Gentiles, as Westerners, we're like, ah, he went and he read whatever. No, not whatever. Check this out.

The family of Joseph was given the responsibility to memorize and preserve Isaiah 61. So when he stands up and he reads, everybody says, what a good Jewish boy. As the firstborn to Mary and Joseph, he came back, even though we have issues, he came back to respect his family name.

And he stood up and he read his family's portion. Come on. Wow.

And then he reads, and then he sits. And where he sits, guys, is very important. He sits in a seat that's at the front of the synagogue.

And it's called the seat of Moses, also known as the Messiah chair. Why would you place this seat there? Because the people believed that one day God would send a second Moses. This Moses would be a Messiah.

In Deuteronomy it says, the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. And so they believed that one day the second Moses, this teacher, this Messiah would come.

He would sit in the seat of Moses where all the authority is. And when he sat there, he would declare himself to be the Messiah. Can you understand why Jesus sat in that seat? Can you

understand why the people became infuriated and tried to throw him off of a cliff? You see, it's not because of what he said.

It's because of what he did. See, in Judaism, you don't say as much as you do. Remember last night we talked about remez, we hint.

He wrote in the sand. And as he began to do that, he began to nudge them and lead them towards the discovery. People thought the seat of Moses was just some kind of something poetic to say.

Oh, the seat of Moses. Remember Jesus arguing with the Pharisees? He said, oh, how you love to sit in the seat of Moses. You remember that? He was referring, you think you're the boss.

You think you're in charge. He was talking about an actual place. Look at how much more that story takes on.

Did you learn something new about that story by understanding the culture, anybody? Yeah? Now, if you had the chance, would you sit in the seat of Moses? I did. This is an authentic fake. The real one is in the museum in Jerusalem, but this is an authentic fake.

Okay, how are your brains, guys? We're good for 15 more minutes? Yeah? Okay. As you can see, I gave up hand modeling to become a preacher. That's my hand, minus the rings I have today, but that's my hand.

And this is one of the lessons that I do that I find difficult to do. I enjoy it because I know that it helps people, but personally it's very difficult because of something that I went through in my life, and we're going to talk about that as we go on. Matthew 17:20 talks about this famous mustard seed.

And here it is, just a little seed in the center of my hand, and this is what the English says. He replied, because you have so little faith, say little. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, move from here to there and it will move and nothing will be impossible for you.

Isn't that a beautiful verse? How many have ever claimed that verse and said, Lord, I have faith to move this mountain? Whatever the mountain you felt at that time was in your life, you felt that if you had faith simply the size of a mustard seed, you can make mountains move. Now when I got saved, when I became a born-again Christian at 17 years old, I came from a background of loving the occult, of loving anything that was dark, anything that was just not from God. And so when I became saved, I became radically saved.

I knew what I was pulled out of, and I never went back to that old life. And so I didn't grow up in a Christian home, I never had that privilege. And so I didn't know how to pray when I became a Christian.

I didn't have the right prayer book. I didn't know the formula. What do I call him? I didn't know any of that.

And so I was always a very real person with God. And if you haven't noticed already, when I'm up here, I'm the same person here as I am. If you meet me at the dining room table, I don't change, I don't transform and become the preacher.

Have you met these people? I'll be in the office with a pastor before the church service, and we're talking, he's telling me about the new soccer game he saw or the latest movie he watched, and we're having a wonderful time, church starts, and he becomes the pastor. Who are you, man? So like it or not, you're just going to get Joe Amaral this weekend. I'm going to be honest, because I think that when we're honest with people, people can relate to us better.

The preacher often comes up here and says, yes, I do have all the answers you can ask me. Yes, I have no problems in my life, glory. I have faith.

I have no problems. I wish I could say those things, but I can't. So I'm just going to speak from my heart.

And I remember thinking, man, if you could move a mountain with a mustard seed, what could you do if you had faith the size of a watermelon seed, right? Like, wow, imagine what we could do. Well, Jesus said, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, that you could move mountains. And so I began to think about mustard seeds, and are they the smallest of all the seeds in Israel? And a quick Google search told me, no, absolutely not.

You have mustard seeds, you have sesame seeds, and then you have poppy seeds, all readily available in Israel. Look how much smaller, the last one on your right, look how much smaller the poppy seed is than the mustard seed. Isn't it smaller? So why did he say, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed? If he was talking about the size of faith, why did he pick that mustard seed and not something else? Is that a fair question? Okay.

We're in 2014. Was it 2008, Karen, diagnosed or passed? In 2008, my dad died after a horrible 19-month struggle with a brain tumor, stage four. From the second they told him, there was no hope.

He did the chemo, the radiation, he had part of the tumor removed, everything, everything. And in the end, my dad passed. And I remember at that point in my life, it being the most difficult thing that I'd ever gone through.

My dad and I were close. I was the firstborn son, the only one born in Portugal in the homeland. So he'd say, you're my real Portuguese.

And when he died, oh, it killed me, it broke me. And I remember that as he got sick near the end, he went into coma. But before he slipped into a coma, he was still conscious, but he couldn't really speak well.

And he'd be lying there in this bed, just wasting away, and you would hear sounds coming from him. He would begin to sing worship songs. He couldn't speak English.

He couldn't recognize his children, his grandchildren, but yet he had the ability to sing worship songs. And I remember thinking, wow, let your praise continually be on my lips. I mean, he literally was doing that.

And I remember thinking, God, I hope I have my dad's faith. If something like that ever happened to me, I hope that I wouldn't turn sour. It wouldn't turn me away from you.

But if anything, my dad was just drawn closer to God through the experience. But after he passed, it just, it was difficult because I was the pastor. I had to do the service.

I had to do the burial. I had to do all of that, and it was so, so difficult. And you go into administrative mode.

You do what you got to do. And then when the smoke settles and the dust clears, you're like, oh, wow, he's gone. And it hits you.

And I remember being very angry with God. Have you ever been angry with God? You pray for something, and he doesn't answer, or you think he doesn't answer, at least not in the way that you want. And I said, God, I don't understand.

I go to church every Sunday. I preach every Sunday. I bless Israel.

I tithe. I give offerings. I do everything I do.

I read my Bible. I pray. And yet my father still died.

And it really messed with me. And I told my wife, I said, I can't go on the road and preach because I don't feel like there's anything in me. I can't give what's not inside of me.

I can't do it just to get a paycheck. I can't do that. It's got to be real.

And so we canceled for several months all the preaching appointments that I had. And as I began to heal and go through that process and made the decision, okay, I'm ready to go back, you know, back on the road and continue this ministry of teaching people. I get a phone call from a church, never met the pastor before, had never heard of the church before.

They'd seen the TV show and said, hey, we like your stuff. Would you come to our church? I won't say what part of the world it was. So I get on this plane.

I fly all the way to this church. And they pick me up and they take me to the hotel. Wow, beautiful five-star hotel.

I'm in his amazing car. I don't remember what it was, but it was all leather seats and, you know, just really, really nice. And they take me to the beautiful part of town.

And then he says, oh, we're a word of faith. We believe in, you know, that whatever you say, you will have. And I said, okay, whatever.

You know, I'm just the invited guest. I'm not here to challenge anything. I'm just here to preach.

And then they pick me up the next morning and they took me to their church. Now, remember, I haven't been on the road for several months. I forget how long it was.

And I finally get back on the road. And they pick me up and they take me to the church after we passed by Starbucks, praise God. And we get to the church and, well, they pull into a funeral home.

And I said, what are we doing at a funeral home? Oh, this is our church. I said, oh, okay, no judgment. That's odd.

And I remember looking at God saying, are you kidding me right now? Are you kidding me right now, God? The first church I come to is a funeral home. I get to the doors and some of the elders are there to greet me, hi, good morning, welcome, just like you do when you go into a funeral home. And I can laugh now because it was years ago, but I wasn't laughing then.

Then they took me into the sanctuary, which is the viewing room. And then they walked me up to the platform to the podium. And here is the podium where the casket usually is.

And then we're doing a PowerPoint check. And the screen to the sides are usually to the sides of the caskets showing a video of the deceased. You know what I mean, right? You've seen those.

Now I'm thinking, oh, God, if this is a test, I'm going to fail. I don't know how I'm going to do this. But I prayed and I got through.

I had five services that day, one day. You want to do an entire seminar in one day. So from morning until evening, the day closed.

I was exhausted. And the pastor said, wow, Joe, that was such a great day of teaching. The people loved it.

We want to take you out for a nice steak dinner. I was like, who says no to that, right? So we went, had this nice meal. We chatted about the services.

And he said, Joe, I sense a sadness in you. Right? That pastor's heart. I sense a sadness in you.

I said, yeah, there's a sadness. What's wrong? Why are you sad? And so I told him. And I had tears streaming down my face.

And they were falling into my plate. It was the first time I had talked about it with anybody since he died. And it was very, very wrong.

And this pastor looks at me. And he quoted Matthew 1720. And he said, oh, Joe, if your dad had more faith, he'd probably still be alive.

And I died again. It's like my dad died all over again. And it took everything in me to not lash out at him verbally, physically.

I was so distraught and upset. I said, please take me back to the hotel. I came back.

And I said, God, that better not be what you're saying in that verse. You better not be saying that in that verse, that miracles and healings and changes in this world rely on my faith and my faith alone, the size of my faith. Because if that's the case, it's not going to turn out so good.

And so I began to study this mustard seed to try and learn more about it, to find out why he would pick such a thing and why he would say such a thing. And I grew up in Toronto, not a lot of farms, not a lot of ability to plant. Do you guys like to plant? Anybody here? Gardens and, yeah, God bless you.

You know, I'm horrible at that. Everything we buy dies. I wish I was kidding.

Even the fake plants in our house die. It's just, I don't know. It's terrible.

And so I began to talk to people who were in the farming industry. And I said, tell me about mustard seeds. He goes, oh, we hate those.

I said, sorry, didn't mean to step on your toe. Oh, we hate mustard seeds. He goes, they're the worst kind of weeds you can have.

I said, oh, they're weeds? Did you know they were weeds? I didn't know. I just put them on my hamburgers. He goes, mustard seeds can lie dormant for over 20 years in the soil.

And the second you turn over the soil, they're activated and they grow like weeds. No watering, no planting, no caring, no pruning. They just grow everywhere.

I said, really? So then you're traveling through Israel and you're driving from Jerusalem. You come out of Jerusalem. The best road directions are in Israel.

You say, okay, turn right at Jerusalem. When you get to Jericho, hang a left. And when you pass the Sea of Galilee, the store is on your right.

Those are the best directions in the world. So you hang a right at Jerusalem, you hang a left at Jericho, and you go through the Jordan Valley. And as you drive, there's miles and miles and miles of these yellow fields when you come through the desert part.

And they're mustard trees, mustard plants. They're everywhere. And you'll see them growing between houses, between buildings.

And every once in a while, you'll see that there's big boulders that have been taken out of the

field. As the donkey's plowing, they hit these boulders, they dig them out, and they throw them to the side. And they land on top of a mustard plant.

And these mustard plants are so tenacious. They are so strong that every once in a while, you'll see a big boulder tipped over on its side. Because a mustard seed is so strong that no matter what you put on top of it, as it grows, it'll literally move a mountain.

Come on. I went back to the text in Matthew. I needed to see it for myself.

Again, here it was in English. I went to the amplified version, which gives you the option to use the Aramaic word. And the Aramaic word says it like this.

For truly, I say to you, if you have faith, that is living like a grain of mustard seed. You see, it's not the size of your faith. It's not the quantity of your faith, guys.

It's the quality of your faith. Come on. It's whom you have the faith in.

Wow. You see, this is why it's difficult for me to talk about the mustard seed. You can understand.

Every week I do this, I remember losing my dad. And I kind of go through it all over again. But I've had people come up to me.

And I may even have some here today. Say, Joe, thank you for sharing that because my mom died or my son died or my husband or my wife died. And I had a pastor tell me it was because they weren't surrounded with people who had enough faith.

And that's why they died. And I've been carrying the guilt of their death for all of these years. And just like God released me, can I release you? We don't understand why or how these things happen.

We just know that they do. But know this, that it wasn't your fault. That condemnation, that guilt, that shame, that fear, whatever it is that you've been carrying, can you please leave it here today? God never meant for you to carry it.

He doesn't want you to carry it. You know what helps me get through is that one day I'm going to die and I'm going to have another coffee with my dad. The hope is this, that the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead is in me.

Because he lives, because he rose, I know that I'll live and I know that he lives and I know that those that you've lost live. And so this is what I want you to take away from this mustard seed teaching this morning, that it's not on you. What your job is is to have faith in the one who can do the miracle.

It's not your job to create the miracle. Do you hear that? Take your faith and place it in the one who can do the miracle. You see, that mustard seed, it goes down and it gets fed by living water

that you can't even see, but it's there running below the surface.

And this mountain that's placed on it, how do you move a mountain? You have Blue Mountain just over here, right, in Collingwood. They would be furious with this camp. If we all went there with faith and said, move, right, the skiing community would freak out.

I've been to BC and I say this every week, I will give a free trip to Israel for you and your entire city. If you can show me a video of standing in front of a mountain in British Columbia and saying, move. And I want to see feet grow on the mountain and I want to see it walk away.

I'll give free tickets to everybody in this camp. So hang on a second. It's not the size of your faith.

It's the quality of your faith. So what's the mountain? A mountain in Judaism represents something that has authority. You see, the context of the story is a little boy who was demon possessed and the disciples tried to cast it out and they couldn't.

And Jesus said, don't you understand? If he had faith that lived like that mustard seed, he could have spoken to that mountain and it would have left the boy. So some of us at this camp have mountains. You talked about some mountains you have going on right now with your car, with the internet, with all kinds of stuff.

We all have mountains. It doesn't matter if I think it's a big mountain or not. It's a mountain for you and that's what matters.

And today, guys, if you have faith that will live, that will allow the living water to feed your roots, let those mountains come. Because if you're rooted in him and the one who can do all things, we can move those mountains. If we have faith that will live like a mustard seed.

Amen. I'm going to ask the worship team to come and just close us in one song. Can we stand together, guys? I want to just pray for you and bless you as we go.

Did you guys learn something new this morning? Praise God. You know, sometimes it's it's in our pain. It's through our pain that God uses that to minister to others.

And I pray that I didn't share that story in vain. I pray that some of you who have been maybe struggling with that guilt, that you would leave it here today. You know, George mentioned that there's these prayer benches here.

And if you need to come afterwards and say, I just need to spend some time because I've been carrying something that I know that I shouldn't be carrying. You know, in the circles I come from, in the Pentecostal background, they always do these altar calls. And I've never been an altar call kind of a guy because I don't think we understand what an altar is.

You see, the altar in the temple served one purpose. To kill things on. Stuff came to the altar to die.

You brought a lamb. It died. Its blood set you free.

And so whether you come to this prayer bench, whether you kneel, whether you do it over lunch, whether you do it over this week, it doesn't matter. But take that guilt, take that thing, that mountain that you've been struggling with and bring it to the altar. And allow it to die.

Let the blood of Christ cover that thing. Amen. Father, I thank you for your word.

I thank you that your word is alive. I thank you that one day the Bible says that heaven and earth will pass away, but the word of the Lord shall endure forever. And so, God, this morning, it wasn't Joe's preaching.

It wasn't Joe's teaching. It was your word that went forth in power. And so, God, I pray that your word, like a mustard seed, would take root in people's spirits.

See, we can have faith in the name of Jesus. For we know you truly are the Messiah. The one who sat in that seat of Moses, who declared, I am the Messiah.

I am the one who have come to teach, to set you free. Lord, would you set your people free this morning in this place? And whether people do it physically or whether people just do it kind of in their minds or in their hearts, I pray that chains would be broken. Because you are the one who breaks the chains.

You are the one who binds up, Lord, the brokenhearted. You are the one who takes care of those who are wounded. And if anybody today, Lord, is in any one of those categories, Lord, would your power come into their lives and change them.

Set them free. In the matchless name of Yeshua, of Jesus, our Messiah. Amen.