

# Seeing Wonders

by Gary Wilkerson

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*Gary Wilkerson's sermon encourages believers to embrace risks in faith to witness God's wonders in their lives and community.*

**Duration:** 56:08

**Scripture:** Psalm 107:23-30, Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 14:29-31, Acts 2:42-47, James 1:2-4

**Topics:** "Faith And Trust", "Spiritual Perseverance"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God and stepping out in faith, even in the midst of storms and challenges. It encourages believers to trust in God's plan for their lives, to seek their desired haven, and to engage in the battle with faith and perseverance. The message highlights the need for deep spiritual engagement, taking risks for God, and being willing to launch out into the unknown to see the wonders and works of the Lord manifest in their lives.

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## Transcript

Oh yeah, thank you worship team, we love you guys, appreciate you so much. Good morning Springs Church, how are you today? I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and you got everything you wanted and maybe not everything you wanted because that might not turn out too well for a lot of us, but glad that you're here today. We hope that you're going to have a wonderful time in God's presence.

Before I go into my message, I want to ask Scott Middlebrook if he'd come up here on the stage. Scott is one of the overseers and directors here at Every Home for Christ in the Jericho Center. We want to take a moment to thank Every Home for Christ and Scott for all that you've done.

We appreciate you guys. We have been here almost two years now and they have been such gracious hosters, haven't they? They have treated us like royalty and you guys have gone over and above and beyond what we can imagine. We ordered a very special page from a Bible about prayer when Solomon was dedicating the temple and the glory of the Lord came upon the house and it's from a 1620, one of the original King James Bibles and it's in a frame, has glass over it and it's not here.

Isn't this beautiful? Look at that. Do you see this by faith? I don't know if you can see this, but it was supposed to have been delivered earlier in the week and it didn't show up, so we apologize for that. We wanted to pass that gift off to you, but we will get that to you, but mostly we just wanted to say thank you and a blessing.

We could not have done what we've done. The Lord used this place, you guys serving us, as a means so we could start at first upstairs and then we overgrew that and you were kind enough to, I think we were one of the first ones to meet downstairs here and you guys have just blessed us and overwhelmed us. I'd like to pray for you and for Every Home for Christ if I could do that, okay? Thank you.

Father, we thank you for Scott and Tim and for Dick Eastman and the whole team at Every Home for Christ. We thank you that they're touching millions of lives around the world, God, probably unlike any other ministry in the world in its expanse and its scope and its reach. God, that takes a lot of administration, a lot of leadership, and it's a heavy burden upon their shoulders and we ask you, Lord, to send them teams and leaders and finances and resources to bless that.

Lord, they have been such an amazing blessing to us. I pray we as a church, in this prayer right now, could just in a small way, as a token of our appreciation and thanks, tell this ministry how grateful we are, Lord, that the Springs Church could not be the Springs Church if it weren't for their graciousness and their kindness. You use them, God, to bless us and we want to continue to pray.

We've been praying for this ministry and we want to continue to pray and bless and give thanks for all that God has done through Every Home for Christ. We thank you for Dick Eastman, his leadership even in this church, as he has called me on several occasions and given us a word from the Lord, a prophecy that was timely, precise, and edifying. We thank you.

We pray this relationship would not diminish, but it would even grow, even though we're not in the same building now. We give you thanks for this in Jesus' precious name. Do you mind standing on your feet and giving a great round of applause and thanking you, Lord, for Every Home for Christ? Thank you, God bless you.

Amen. Amen. Please pass on our gratitude towards Dick and Eastman as well, if you would, and the whole team here.

Let's not make this building a stranger. There are wonderful prayer meetings going on here every day, almost every day. You can look at the schedule.

It's on some of the cards they have being passed out. There is a prayer wall going on here, a wall of prayer, and there's prayer rooms as well. We want you to continue to be a part of that, even though we're in a new location.

This is still a great place. Some of our staff come here and receive refreshing and words from the Lord. We want you to join in with that as well.

This is our last Sunday here. We love being here. We have fond memories of being here, but Scott, no offense, we're ready to leave as well.

You're probably ready for us to go. Are you ready for a new adventure? Are you ready to start filling up 100,000 square feet with people that are hungry for Jesus? Children on the streets that are lost and hopeless and living lives of quiet desperation unless God gets a hold of their life? You ready to see that building filled with children coming to know the glory and the power of God? Are you ready to see God unleash His glory and His splendor in the midst of a people that want to see Him move mightily? Yeah, I am too. I am too.

Let's thank the Lord. So next Sunday we won't be here. 9 o'clock will be the 9 o'clock service.

11 o'clock, those of you that come to the 11 o'clock service, come and invite your friends. It's going to be a great day of celebration. We're calling the New Year's Eve service launch because we're not only launching that service in the new building, launching a new year, but also launching a new season in this ministry.

And we're believing God for double portions. We are believing God for the greatest things yet to come. We are believing that God has called us for such a time as this and His hand is upon us.

We want to make use of every opportunity to know and to believe and have faith that God is going to raise up a work in this city that blesses and glorifies His name, cares for the poor, loves the lost, and sees people growing to the deep maturities that are in Christ Jesus. Can you say amen one more time? Amen. Just thank the Lord for what He's done.

I'm so... I couldn't be more thrilled. I couldn't be more blessed. Are you excited about Jesus this morning? Yes.

Amen. Amen. I love Him and I know you love Him and I love serving you.

I love pastoring this church. And we have one more Sunday here, so we are not going out with a whimper. We're going to go out with a bang.

We're going to believe that this day God is going to do something great in your life. He's going to speak to you. I want some of you to leave this building today knowing that at the end of the year 2010, you heard a word from the Lord, a transitional word, a word that is going to keep you, sustain you, and launch you into the greatest things you've ever seen in your life coming in the year 2011.

There are great things in store for us. We are already praying and believing God that we'll see a thousand people come to know Jesus next year in this church. We are... I am believing for wholehearted enthusiasm.

When people clap their hands, that others join in and say yes to the goodness and the purposes of God. Let's clap one more time and thank the Lord. We are not going to be defeated by the after effects of turkey here in this house today.

Did you hear that? We're going to be alive and awake and energetic because that's what God has for us. We're believing God to call each of us into a fast, a holy and awesome fast on January 10th for a 21-day fast, some a partial fast, some a full fast. Believing that God is going to use that fast to pray for laborers to work in the fields and the harvest.

The harvest is plentiful and we want to see this church be sent out to reach thousands of people in this city. So the fast will be instrumental in seeing us reach the goal that God has called us to reach, that thousand people, and see them grow and mature and develop in Christ. We're looking forward to a 2011 where the building and the facility that he's given to us is used for his glory and the honor of his name.

We want to see that place just minister deeply, not only in the sanctuary of the youth and the children's ministry, but the 40,000 square foot plus of what we call the mercy ministries, the furniture bank, food, clothes, crisis counseling, medical help, support supply, back to school supplies for kids. If you were there

for the Feed the Children, you'll have a taste of what that space is going to be used like all year long. That is now a one-time event, Feed the Children, but very soon that's going to be a daily event, seeing people come in there by the scores, receiving the kind of help that Jesus intends them to have.

And church, you are going to be not only a participant in that, but you're going to be responsible for it. Every member getting involved. Every member involved in evangelism.

Every member involved in mercy ministries. Every member involved in serving the body of Christ. Every member involved in caring for one another in true Christian community.

That's where we're headed in 2011. And if you're on the wrong boat, now's a good time to know that, because we want to row together in the same direction. Have you ever seen those cartoons of some people rowing in a boat and they have different destinations in mind? It makes for chaos and confusion and division.

We want to be stalwart in our vision of seeing God raise up a prevailing church in this city that does love the poor and the lost and ministers so in-depth to people's lives that they're transformed and the glory of God comes. How many believe that the glory of God still descends on churches today? Do you believe that with all your heart? I believe that. Amen.

Let us pray. Ooh, my time is short. Real short.

I'm trying to think of what I should cut out of my sermon. Ah, nothing. Jesus, we need you today.

We are thirsty for you. We are hungry for you. And we're asking you to minister deeply through your word right now.

Transform our hearts, God. Make our lives quickened and awakened to the purposes and plans you have for us. God, we don't want to play games.

We don't want to be silly. We don't want to be foolish. We want to be on fire for God.

We want to see the glory of God, the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit permeating our church and this whole city, God. And I thank you. Lord, let this be our Jerusalem that we even send people to the four corners of this earth, believing that your name be high and lifted up in the glory of your train field, the temple of this earth.

We thank you for that in Jesus' name. And everybody said together, amen? Amen. I want to talk to you this morning about seeing wonders, seeing with your own eyes wonders.

I want you to be a church that lives in the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. I want you to see miracles take place in your life daily. I don't want the wonders of God to be an exception in your life.

I want it to be the norm and the rule. God has established his kingdom purposes and plans in your life in such a way that it's meant to manifest his presence where these miracles, the supernatural, the glory, and the wonders of God. So seeing wonders should be a daily part of your life.

If you have any kind of routine at all, it should be, I'm seeing wonders. I'm seeing the glory of God take place. We're going to read from Psalms, chapter 107, verse 23 through 30, in just a moment.

Before you turn there, I just want to tell you a story about a wonder that I went through. And it comes out of a risk, going into a place that I wasn't supposed to go to, at least according to man's measure. I was in Brazil a number of years ago, and we were speaking at a pastor's conference.

About 4,000 pastors had gathered from all over Brazil, and the bishop, the head of the main denomination that was sponsoring the conference, he and I, he was a young man, I got to be friends with him. He began to tell me about one of the pastors in his denomination that was ministering in a place called a favela. Now, if you've never heard of a favela, a favela is a location outside of the city of Rio de Janeiro, up on the side of a hill, where people just began to move.

Originally, they were slaves. When they would leave their employ during the day, they would go up and live in the squalor of these mountains on the side of the hill in Rio de Janeiro. And it, over the last hundred years, has continued to perpetuate extreme poverty.

And this area, he was telling me about, where they started this small church, was in one of the worst gang-infested, drug lord-led communities in all of Brazil. And he told me it was Torino Favela, and they have a pastor there, but they don't go in there as other pastors to help them because it's so violent. You can't even get in.

Police aren't there. Government resources aren't there. There's no trash collection.

The people that are there are trapped in a life of bondage, and that part of the city is run by the drug lords. You have to come to a gate, and they open up the gate, and there's drug lords at the gate, and they give you permission whether to come in or not. So this bishop was telling me all about this, and I said, I want to go.

And tears came to his eyes. He goes, I've been a bishop for 20-something years now, or 15 years now, and I have never in my life, of all the Americans and people from the West that have come to my country and preached at my church and other churches and at conferences, not one has ever asked to see the poverty and the drugs and the gangs in the favela. He said, I'm overwhelmed with joy that you'd be willing to come, but it's risky.

There's bullets flying through that neighborhood. There's gang violence. And so I was kind of a little bit tentative at that point.

The worse he painted the picture, the more I was like, did I really just say I want to go see this place? Well, he had to call and get permission from the drug lords, and he did. And we went into this favela, and we walked through these narrow buildings where they just build homes randomly wherever they are. You can't even call them homes.

They're just shacks that they put up. And we walked through this muddy village, sewers open on the sides, and we walked through there, and we saw this little building where this church was meeting, and the pastor there, he introduced us to the pastor, and the pastor said to me, would you come and meet with the woman who helped found this church? And I said, sure, I'd love to meet her. As we're walking up to the top of the hill where her house is, the pastor begins to explain her life story.

She was over 110 years old, and she was a slave when she was a child at 18 years old. At 18 years old, she'd been a slave. She was set free from slavery and moved to this favela, and had lived there ever since, nearly 100 years living in there.

And he said, and she was the founder of this church. I said, how did she become the founder of this church? He said, by prayer and fasting alone. She didn't do one thing.

She just prayed and fasted and loved the children and the neighbors, and she led some to Christ, and then one of the boys she led to Christ is now the pastor of the church, and that was him. And he was walking me up to her house. I walk into her house.

It's probably the size from this piano to the other side of this podium right here, and she was lying on a mat on the floor, a mud floor. She was lying on the mat. All she had was that, one dresser there, and had to duck down to get in the ceiling.

And when I walked into her room, she reaches out her hand, and she grabs hold of my hand and just begins to weep. She just begins to, just bawling her eyes out. And then she begins to pray for me, and she's praying what I assume is in Portuguese.

She's praying for me, and one of the pastors who's with me begins to interpret, or so I thought, began to interpret the prayer. And here's what she was praying. She said, thank you, Father, for sending this, the equivalent of, I guess, a gringo, thank you for sending this white man into our favela.

I've been praying for more than 20 or 30 years now that you would send someone from the outside who has some resources to help, and I thank you that you've sent the man of God to my house, and I thank you that he has been willing to press through the difficulty to get here, and he's here now, and God, I thank you that your hand is upon him, and he and his ministry are going to help us establish a place for our children in this city. And it was just, I was shaking. It was like the most glorious prayer I've ever had prayed over me, and as I walk out of her little shack, I turn to the man who was interpreting for me, and I said, that was the most amazing prayer I ever heard prayed, and your interpretation, I was just so glad you were there to interpret, and he goes, what interpretation? I said, when she was praying for me, you were interpreting what she was praying for me over, and I heard you in English.

That's how I knew what she was praying about, our ministry helping her. He goes, she wasn't praying for you in Portuguese. She was speaking in tongues, and he said, I have no idea what she was saying, and I didn't say one word to you in English to interpret that.

So I had no idea what was going on. Now I'm a little bit of a skeptic. I hate to admit that, but I'm sort of like, okay, well, who did then? And I walked our whole team, double checking, triple checking.

Did you interpret that? Did you interpret that? Not one of them did. It was the Spirit of God speaking to my heart, interpreting it directly through my ears. I heard the audible voice of God saying that our ministry was to be there, and I won't go into all the details, but we helped her in her house.

We helped that church build a building. We helped them build a school for the children. If you were to go to that favela right now, there'd be a school there with 200 children, and I was there for the opening, and they put a white, it looked like a doctor's cloak on me with my name and founder and director of the Favela Toronto School, and I looked like Dr. Seuss more than anything else, I think, and walked in there and saw these 200 kids hearing about Jesus and getting a meal and finding the love of God, and in that school there was a couple kids who had just wandered in off the street, and I picked up one of the little boys, and as I was teaching a little lesson to the kids there, I was holding this little boy, and I found out later as I was holding him, his mother had come and stuck her head in the window because the little boy had been

wandering away from home, and she was coming to beat him.

She was very abusive, and she hated her child. She hated him. She told me this.

She said, I hated him. She said, I used to beat him almost every day, and when I walked to the church and I looked through the window and I saw the pastor of the church, a man of God holding my son, I said to myself, maybe there's some value in my son, and then I heard your message about Jesus and his love and his forgiveness, and I gave my life to Christ, and I want to change, and now she's holding her son in her arms. Just glorious.

I mean, God's presence was rich over that place, but it took, and I don't say this to boast. This is gonna make sense in just a little bit. It was a little bit difficult for me to hear that they have guns, and they might kill you, and you're gonna walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and it would've been very easy to say, you know what, I think I'd rather not go.

Don't you know today that I'm glad I went, even though it might've been a little bit scary to go, and that's what David is writing in Psalms 107, verse 23. He's talking about seeing wonders, but you don't see wonders unless you take risks. You don't see wonders unless you're willing to put yourself out there on the limb at times, and that's what David is calling his people to here, I believe, in this chapter.

Verse 23 says, some went down to the sea in ships doing business on great waters, and these saw the works and the deeds of the Lord and his wonders in the deep. Isn't that a powerful verse? The ones that go down to the sea in ships and doing business in great waters, these are the ones who see the works of the Lord. Can you say amen to that? Amen.

For he commanded, speaking of the Lord, he commanded and raised up the stormy wind which lifted the waters to the sea. They mounted to the heavens and they went down to the depths. That's a big storm, isn't it, church? Their courage melted away in their evil plight.

They rebelled, excuse me, they reeled, and they staggered like drunken men and were at their wit's end. Anybody in this church ever been at their wit's end before? Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble and he delivered them from all of their distresses. He made the storm be still and the waves of the sea were hushed.

Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, I like this last part, and he brought them to their desired haven. He brought them to their goal. He brought them to the place where their spiritual ambitions were met.

God saw them through. They went on a journey that was a difficult journey, but God was present and God saw them through. You might be on a journey in your life that is the most difficult journey you've ever been on.

You might be in the trial and tribulation and testing of your life. You might see, like the Bible says here, storms ascending to the heavens and descending to the earth below into the pits. You might be on the ride of your life that is so tumultuous, it is literally making you seasick.

You may have experienced trials and tribulations beyond to the place where you're at, the scripture says you're at wit's end. It doesn't matter what you've been through. It doesn't matter what you're going through.

The Bible promises, the Bible tells us, the word of the Lord encourages us here in this place that he is going to bring you to your desired haven. He's going to see you through. There is no trial in your life too difficult for the Lord to handle.

There is no tribulation you are suffering that doesn't have ultimately the higher purposes of God in your life. He is working through the storm. He is working through the high winds and raging waters to bring you to a place where God has desired his haven, his rest, his power, his glory, his majesty will be experienced in your life.

Now many of us in this room here hear David say this. Some go down to the sea in ships and do business in great waters. And this is David, he's writing this.

As a man who has experienced what it is to go down into the depths, to go into the pit, to fight with the lion. It could have been very easy for David to say, hey, there's a lion. I got 200 sheep.

What's a lion going to eat? Three or four and he's going to get full. So I'll just change the number in the books, 197. He didn't do that, did he? He went down into the valley.

He went into the midst of the storm. He purposely put himself in what he calls here deep waters. Why? Because he trusted in God.

He knew by fighting that battle, he was going to see the glory of God. And he knew by not engaging and fighting in that battle, he was going to lose the opportunity to see the presence and the power and the majesty of God at work in his life. So many of us in the church today are missing out on the splendor and the glory and the majesty and the release of the power of the Holy Spirit in our life because we're backtracking.

We're opting out for safety and security and quiet and rest and a life of resisting difficulties. And it doesn't work. David understood what it was like to fight lions and then bears and then giants and then whole tribes and whole cities and then whole countries.

He knew what it was like to fight even people on his own side, his own commander who was warring against him. He knew how not to avoid the battle. He knew that some are going to go down to the sea and they're going to be doing their business in great waters.

They're going to see that the transactions they have with God are going to be not in the shallows, not in the koi ponds or the trout fishing places where you pay a dollar and you can catch a fish with a piece of cheese. He's going to go down to the deep waters because he's going to see the deep things of God in his life. He wants to see the majesty.

I like what David writes here. The first word could be a sermon all in itself, couldn't it? Some. Some go down.

As he's writing this, what he's meaning is some are going to go down, a few. Many are called, but few are chosen. Few actually engage in the battle.

Many like the idea of battle. Many buy battle brochures, read battle books, buy battle fatigues, get ready to go on a battle excursion and when it comes to actually launching, they back away. So David says some will go down to the sea and ships and do business in great waters.

And these ones that will go down will see the works of the Lord. But a lot of people refuse to go down. Some go down, but some sit idly by.

It's my opinion that for most of us, our experience in the Christian church in America is not going down to the sea and ships and doing great business in the deep waters. It's more like going to an aquarium where you look at the fish behind a nice three-inch stained, not stained glass, but a glass and you're just watching them. And you might even go into the shark tank and see, look at the sharks.

Look, honey, look how close we are to the sharks. We're living on the edge, aren't we? Some of you will even go further than an aquarium. You will risk SeaWorld.

And I've actually had people tell me this. I went to SeaWorld. It was amazing.

I got so close to the whale, Shamu, the killer whale. He jumped up into the air. It was splendorous.

It was glorious. And then he splashed down in the water and I got all wet. Wow, that's a real dangerous mission you're on there.

But how many of us as Christians have opted for the aquarium and the SeaWorld rather than going down to the sea and ships and doing business in great waters? How many of us are more inclined to be spectators and get the travel brochure about the journey to the sea and watch on television what this journey is like to the sea and buy the sea clothes and get the, what do you call it, the little windbreaker things with a helmet, not a helmet, a hoodie, a slicker, whatever you want to call it, and buy all the equipment and have pictures of yourself taken. I'm getting ready to go on a journey into the depths. But then when it comes time to launch, you don't go.

You sit there and you hear more about the journey and you learn more and you're a spectator more about the journey. How about we put the brochures down? How about we not worry about what kind of clothes we have? How about we just start taking the journey? How about we start going? How about we saying yes to God for the plans He has for our life? Now, some of you are asking, what is this journey you're talking about, Pastor Gary? For some, it's a journey like the Nichols who were here this morning, and they literally take their two children and leave America and go into Afghanistan at risk of life. And they go there and they're kicked out of the nation for preaching the gospel.

But because they did that in faith, they are now able to sit here today and say, right now, while I'm sitting in church, there are Afghans who are now believers in Jesus Christ because I was there. And they are an example of those that go down to the sea and do business in great waters. And they told me this morning, they're going back.

Even though they're asked to leave the country, even though they might be martyred for their faith, they're going back. Later this year, they're gonna spend three more months there and they're gonna preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's doing business in great waters.

Some of you are saying, but I'm not called to be a missionary. That's not the only way you can do great waters. It's not the only way you can go down to the sea and ships and do great business.

For some of us men, going down to the sea and ships and doing great business in deep waters is finally living up to the manhood call that God's given us in our marriages. For some of us, the deep water is engaging with our wives. For so many men, they are spectators to their marriage.

After a long day's work, they come home and their wife starts saying, how was your day? And you would think they were listening to Charlie Brown's teacher, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah. Because they're not really listening to the words. They're not engaging.

They're not moving towards their wife. They want the meal on the table and they want the TV on before the meal's done. And they have forgotten the call of God to go into those deep waters and to probe and to move into their wife's life and to care for them.

You can be here today and you can go into deep waters if you're a young person. And you can believe God has a great call on your life. And you can say, I don't want to settle just for a life of good Christian morals.

I don't want to settle just to be a good kid. I don't want to settle just to get good grades and hopefully get into a good college. I want to give my life away to Jesus Christ.

I want to fulfill His purposes and His destiny in my life. Whether it's being a doctor, a lawyer, a plumber, a school teacher, whatever it is that you would look in that vocation and say, God, I want to go into the depths and I want to do great business with you and I want to see the works of the Lord. If I'm a doctor, I want to see people healed.

If I'm a school teacher, even though I can't preach the gospel, I'm going to still see kids saved in my school. I'm going to believe God will do wonders. I'm going to believe that God does great works.

But these works are most often done in the depths of the sea. And he says here that these that go down to the sea in ships and do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord. But the next few verses begin to scare us.

They begin to want us to back away a little bit. It's like hearing there's a favela up there that needs you, but it's dangerous, don't go. You hear about these raging seas.

It says that they were so fierce that the people reeled and staggered like they were drunken men being tossed around. It says here that they were at their wits' end. But I thank the Lord that they stayed in the battle.

They stayed in the battle. This morning at our early service, a young couple was here, and we were able to pray for their little two-year-old boy that almost drowned to death this year in October. They were vacationing in Florida, and on the pool's end, a little baby boy fell off into the water, and by the time they got him out, his vital systems had shut down.

They rushed him to the hospital, and they thought they were going to have to pronounce him dead, barely clinging to life. Brain damage. They didn't think he'd be able to ever open his eyes again.

They didn't think he'd be able to see, to communicate, to hear, to think, to feel, to eat, to do anything. And as parents, when you hear something like that, this is it. You're reeling.

You're staggering. You are totally at wits' end. Here's a couple that said, we want to be missionaries.

We want to dedicate our life to Jesus Christ. We want to serve his purposes. We want to see the great things of God take place in our life, and then all of a sudden, the storm arises, and it's a storm that overwhelms.

It brings you, as the Scripture says, to wits' end. It means there's no possible going on, and yet at that point, they cry out to the Lord. That's what Scripture says here.

They began to cry out to the Lord, and this couple that was here this morning, they began to cry out to the Lord, and after a few days in the hospital with their baby boy, Ryan, being on the verge of life and death, the doctor comes in and gives them the prognosis. He's going to live. He's going to live.

Can you imagine the joy in their soul? But they're still fighting the battle. They're still fighting the battle, and to think that that little baby would never see them again with his eyes or understand that they're around there, and here he was this morning. We were praying for him, and he was not only looking at people around him as they were praying for him, but he was laughing at us.

Can you believe that? Isn't that beautiful? And in the midst, the parents told me this morning, in the midst of this storm that they're in, in the midst of these raging seas, they're able to stand firm in their faith. They're able to believe that God is going to show them wonders. They're able to not only believe for themselves, but for their little boy, Ryan, that God is going to use that boy as a testimony to God's healing power around the world.

There are other people here who say, that's a great story. I'm glad their son lived, but my son died. There are husbands there.

I know of two husbands in the building today that this year, both of them lost their wives. Mothers of little children have gone on to be with Jesus, and the husbands are here now. Their first Christmas alone.

It's got to be a horrific, horrific point of suffering. At wit's end, where do you go from here? But I want to say to you, if you've lost children, if you've lost a husband, if you've lost a wife, if you're suffering a sickness, if somebody in your family is sick, if you feel like the storms have so raged against your soul and your family and your life that there's no hope, I'm here today to say to you, the glory of the Lord wants to show you his wonders. He wants to show you his wonders right in the midst of the deep, right in the midst where the boat seems like it's about to sink, where it's about to tip over and capsize.

The Holy Spirit is there, and he's using my voice to tell you right now, stay strong, stand firm in the Lord. He is out for your good. He is not neglecting you.

He is not forsaking you. He is not leaving you. He is not punishing you.

He is going to take what looks like it's intended for evil, and he's going to turn it into something good. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

For those of you who have lost someone precious in your life, you say, well, my story isn't like little Ryan's story, where they're going to come back, and they're going to get healthier and healthier, and they're going to share their testimony. My story is that they have departed. But you know what, folks? You're going to see them again.

And when you get to that other side, they're going to say, I'm glad I got here before you. I got to see Jesus prepare a house for you, and I told him, he likes this color better. I don't know, that's stupid.

But anyway. No matter what, God, God, in the midst of the storm that you're facing right now, He is there, and He's present. But He's not only present, He is taking what was meant for evil in your life, and He's

turning it into something good.

It is going down into these depths. It is going into the streets. One of our overseers, Nicky, is here today, and years ago, my father went into the heart of New York City and saw trouble and chaos and harm to his own body.

But out of that, you know what he saw? The wonders in the deep. The glory of the Lord is found in the deep places. And I want to encourage you not to listen to this carefully, church.

This is very important because I don't want to lead anybody astray here. You don't ever have to ask God for a storm, okay? You understand that? Okay? They'll do you ask or not, all right? But what I want you to ask God is God, in the midst of the storm that comes to my life, allow me to be strong and stalwart and set my face like flint to your eternal purposes that you might one day bring me to this desired haven of my life. And you see, I want to pastor a church in this city that transforms this city, that brings thousands to Jesus Christ, that cares for the poorest of the poor, that loves little children, that restores marriages, that heals the sick, that casts out the demon, that makes an impact, that causes demons in hell to tremble because there's a church called Springs Church in this city.

And I do not expect to arrive to my desired destination without a fight. I don't expect to get there without a storm. And I tell you what, if I am just going to my... If my desired destination is for me, I want to be a popular pastor.

I want to have a lot of people on Facebook follow me. I want to be a real popular Twitter. If that's why I'm in this, that storm starts raging, and I say, turn this stinking boat around.

I don't want any... It's not worth it for that. But if my destination is for the glory of God, if it's for the cause of Jesus Christ in my generation, if it's to be like King David who said he served the purpose of God in his generation, and then he died. Why not die? Because if there's nothing else after you serve God's purposes, go on to be with him.

And he served God's purposes in his generation. That is worth riding out the storm for. That is worth.

And I tell you what, don't get caught as a spectator on the seashore. That's not where the deep fish are. That's not where the big fish are.

They're out there. And yes, when you go out there, you're taking more of a risk. But take that risk.

Men, take the risk for your marriage. Men and women who are married here, take that risk by engaging forcefully in your children. You say, oh, I don't really need to talk to them about sex.

They're pure. They're innocent. You need to talk to them about sex.

You may think they're pure and innocent, but there's a devil raging out there, and he is wanting to kill and steal and destroy their life. You talk to them about drugs. You get in their life.

That may sound like a raging sea. You may feel like you're at your wit's end. When it was my time to talk to my kids about the birds and the bees, I was like, Kelly, help.

I'm at my wit's end. But you enter into it. You see what I'm saying? You don't run from the battle.

You don't sit on the sideline. Sometimes pastors are the easiest to get deceived because a lot of us sit in churches that, and this one's not like this, but I've taught in churches before that have a spotlight on you, and all you can see is the front, you probably know this, like Nikki, all you can see is the front two rows, and usually in the front two rows are your most enthusiastic people. Usually it's like your family and your staff and things like that.

So your family and your staff and your coworkers and they're all up in front of you and you're preaching. They're going like, yeah, praise God, hallelujah. They're taking notes and they're loving it, but you don't even see like the two-thirds of the congregation is like, you know, they're like totally, they've checked out.

No, I'm glad this church is not like that. All my super saints are in the back row back there. All you guys, all the powerhouses, all those that go down to the sea and ships and do great business in water, you're back there.

You guys in the front row need to get saved. Man, the big catch is off the docks, guys. The big catch is out there in the ships that go down to the sea and the great waters.

It's taking risks. It's doing business not where you're safe and secure. So many of us, our prayer for our family, our prayer, I've noticed in this church, even when we pray for our missionaries, it seems like almost every time we pray for a missionary, we're praying, keep them safe.

It's a good prayer. I like that prayer, don't you? Keep them safe. I pray over my children every day.

Keep them safe. But you know what? I want more than safety. I don't want like to have a missions conference at the end of the year and have all our missionaries come back and say, it's your time to give us a report.

I was very safe this year. Thank you very much. How about you? Yes, I too was safe.

How much we give you each month to be safe. You can be safe here. We want more than safety, don't we? We want significance.

We want more than just tranquility for our own life. We want to see the works of God released in our life. And I want and I desire and I encourage my desired haven, my desired end is to see a church like this stand up and take its authority, take its place and its position in Christ Jesus and say, yes, I'm called to greater works than these.

Yes, I'm called to make a difference in this city and this world. Yes, I'm called to do more than be a spectator and sit in church week after week. I am called to serve.

And yes, that is a risk and there are problems. You know, I tried to be an usher for a few weeks, but those ushers can be cranky and I quit. You can't quit.

You cannot quit. I don't care how cranky your ushers are. They're the most loving guys in our church.

You can't quit. If you've signed up to help with the children's ministry, if you've signed up to help with street ministry, if you've signed up to push a broom through the expo center, you can't quit when it gets rough. You can't quit when somebody gossips about you.

You can't quit when the pastor preaches a sermon that offends you. You can't quit when we have a hymns Sunday and you don't like hymns. You can't quit because you get offended.

When the storms get tough, you gotta keep going, church. You gotta keep pressing in because that's where you see the wonders in the deep. That's where you see the works of the Lord.

If I have a choice between a dull, boring, couch potato existence and a life that's out there on the edge, a life that's out there in risk, in storms and troubles, and sometimes I might be reeling and shaking and staggering and feeling like I'm at wit's end, but I'm seeing His glory and I'm seeing His power, I'm gonna choose that every time. Well, most every time. Every once in a while I wanna back away, right? But most every time I'm gonna choose God.

I wanna see your glory. And so many of us in the church today are bored. And we just go like, what is this all about? Is this what I signed up for? I tell you what, you begin to launch.

Begin to pray. Some of you are so fearful of the storm, you don't even have a desired haven. Does that make sense to you? I say to you, go through the storm so you can get to your desired haven.

You go like, I don't have a desired haven. I'm comfortable right here. I wanna preach a sermon today that ruins this year for you, makes you miserably uncomfortable in your comfort and ease and selfishness.

I wanna preach a message here this morning that stirs our spirit, that awakens our soul and says, yes, God, my life was meant for something more than this couch. It was meant for more than television and watching. It was more than meant for waiting with my arms open while my wife cooks me a nice meal.

I love those things, but my life was meant for more than that. God's purposes are to reveal his glory in your life. And I'll tell you what, if you will get into the battle, man, you will see a transformation in your marriage.

Moms and dads, you will see your teenage kids transformed. The glory of God will begin to manifest itself in your household. Am I saying everything's gonna be perfect? No.

Am I saying there's gonna be no storms? No. It might even get worse before it gets better, but you're gonna see the glory of God in your families. You're gonna see the glory of God in this church.

We are going to see, not just the people saying, ooh, look at us, we have a new building. Big deal, we have a new building. But how about what happens when the glory of God gets inside that building? What happens when the glory of God touches, what happens when the glory of God touches those people inside the building and it's so rich and powerful that they say, I wanna see the deep works of God.

And so they go into the great deeps of this city and they go and they help prostitutes and they go and they help the homeless and they go and help business leaders who are so enamored by their own success and prosperity they don't have a moment for God. And you break through that icy cold heart and you begin to show them the love of Jesus. That's a journey.

And when you do that, you're gonna find resistance and you're gonna find the enemy coming up against you with everything that he has, taking you down to the very pits of hell, but you're gonna see Jesus lift you up. You're gonna see his glory of God shining on your life. You're gonna see the manifest power of God.

You're gonna hear things you've never heard before. When I heard that woman speaking in what I thought was tongues or Portuguese or whatever it was, and then I heard and I knew and I finally settled in as I was walking back down that road, that dusty road, that muddy road, and I was thinking, I just heard the voice of God. So glad I came.

So glad I came. I tell you what, do you want a lot of those so glad I came experiences in your life? Do you want it in your marriage? Do you want it in your finances? Do you want it in your household? Do you want it on your job? Do you want it in this city? Do you want it in your church? Do you want it in the nation? Do you want to see it as it expands the gospel throughout the world? Do you want to see it for four billion people right now that don't know Jesus? Do you want to see the glory of God do a great work? Yeah? If so, then I encourage you to say, God, two things I ask of you today. Two things, simple.

I ask you, number one, before I launch, I need to know the desired haven. I need to know where you're calling me. Speak to me.

I've been resistant. Some of you in this room have been resistant to hearing the Holy Spirit because you're afraid of where it's going to take you. But I want to ask you with an open heart, you have to trust Jesus.

He knows what's best for you. He knows how to take care of your family, your finances, your job, your house. Put all those things in his hands.

And as he said, seek ye first the kingdom of God. All these other things will be added unto you. And trust him with your heart.

Say, God, if I don't have that desired haven yet, please give it to me. Put that desire in my heart. Number two, you already have the desires in your heart? Then it's time to launch.

It's time to launch. Some of you have that desire, that dream is there, that goal, that vision for a certain kind of marriage that you want, a certain kind of lifestyle you want, a certain kind of calling on your life, but you're afraid. You know where you want to go, but you're afraid to launch out into the deep.

Some of you don't know how to swim. I mean that in a spiritual sense. You feel like you're young in the Lord and you don't know.

You've never been through those battles before. But trust. David had never been through a battle when he defeated his first lion, did he? He began, all he needed to know is that he could trust God and God would take care of him.

Church, if you will trust God, He will take care of you. He will see you through every storm and you'll get to your desired haven. And at the end of your life, you're not going to be lying on your deathbed, should the Lord tell you.

There's a whole bunch of I should have. I wish I had launched out. I should have.

There was an island I was destined for. There was a calling on my life that God had called me to. I met many men as I do these pastor's conferences who come up and they say, my pastor invited me here.

I'm one of the lay leaders in the church. But I was called by God as a young man to be a pastor and I ignored the call. And I've regretted it every day.

Church, don't have any regrets. When you lay on that deathbed and you know it's your time to be with the Lord, I want you to be able to say, yeah, I ran a good race. Be like Paul.

I didn't box the air, man. I was hitting something, you know? I was hitting the enemy in the teeth. How many of you would like to say on your deathbed, Satan lost a few teeth because of me? He lost some battles because I got engaged in the war and it was stormy and it was up and down and there were times where I felt like I was about to quit.

But I thank you God that I never quit. You saw me through to that desired end. Get the desire in mind from the Holy Spirit.

Be willing to launch out in there and if you're in, lastly, if you're in the middle of that battle, you're not quite at the desired end yet but you've launched out. That's the hardest place. Did you know that? The hardest place is you know the desire and you've already launched from the shore and you're just stuck.

You know what I mean? You're stuck. I can't go back. Peter said that to Jesus.

We can't go back. Where would we go? But they didn't know where they were going anymore. They lost the view of the horizon and in the middle of that they stayed with Jesus.

They stayed close to him. They clung to him and he saw them through. Some of you are in that place right now where you're saying I'm in that middle ground where I've launched out but I'm not sure where I'm going.

I'm not sure I'm going to get there safely and I'm not sure I'm going to have the spiritual tenacity and the spiritual ambition to keep pressing on and keep fighting this fight in the midst of the storms that I'm facing. But I want to encourage you. It says that that's not just the story of David's life.

It's a promise for us. It says they that do go down. You see that? That's a promise from the scripture.

They that do go down in the sea in great ships and do great business in great waters these see the works of the Lord. And it says he quieted the storm and he led them to their desired haven. God is going to lead you to that desire of your heart.

He's going to lead you to that strong marriage. He's going to lead you to that financial breakthrough. He's going to lead you to that miracle you need in your life.

He's going to lead you to that calling in your life. If you'll just simply say God I'm in the middle of the storm but I'm going to just lift up my hands to you and say here I am Lord. Here I am.

I'm hanging in there. I do nothing but I just stand and I wait for you God to deliver me to your promises for my life. Amen? Stand with me if you would please.

Worship team if you'd come back. Thanks for listening. I think you've heard the word of the Lord.

I think you've received it well. And I think it's going to bring us to a place in the year 2011 where we are going to see greater works of the Lord than ever before. Double portions coming church.

Next year is going to be brilliant. We're going to have a wonderful time. It's not going to be without storms.

It's going to be wonderful. And if you're here today would you just bow your head and close your eyes and I just want to ask one quick question. You walked into this auditorium today.

Maybe a family member invited you. Maybe you like to come to church Easter and Christmas and just kind of check it out every once in a while but you walked into this room today and you say man I you're talking about a desired destiny. I don't even have a relationship with Jesus let alone a destiny with Him.

And I would like to meet Him today. I would like to walk with Jesus and know Him and have my life not just be wasted but be meaningful and count for something. If that's you while every head is bowed and every eye is closed could you lift up your hands and say Pastor Gary would you pray for me that I might receive Christ in this room today and come to be a follower of His.

Maybe you didn't you walked in here today not knowing Him. Father if there's anyone here today oh yes okay yes thank you sweetheart. I see your hand thank you.

Anyone else? Lord we thank you for touching our lives and calling us God. Calling us into deep waters calling us into new heights calling us into new ground and we ask you to touch our lives God. And for anyone here Lord that is either backslidden or walked away from you call them back today Jesus and let them get engaged in the battle again let them not run from it but say God you have purposes for their life and I thank you for that now in Jesus name.

If you're in the middle of a storm right now and you would say you know what it would really be great to have a couple lifesavers around something just to cling to a little bit. Now Jesus is your only hope He's your source and He's the one who can bring you to your desired haven but while you're on that journey just like Moses had two men lift his hands up you might need some hand lifting to keep you above the water just until He sees you through. If that's you today you need that encouragement and prayer would you step out of your seat right now I want to pray for you I want to pray for you step out right now wherever you are we're going to sing this song and we're going to believe God in the midst of your storm is going to sustain you and see you through to that desired end.

The peace of Christ is going to pass understanding and you're going to see the miracle in His life. Let's sing this together come now would you receive that miracle from God. Father I thank you that there are people praying today we've just gathered around these saints who have come forward and just asked for prayer we respond by saying Lord use us to encourage them use us to bless them use us today to help support them in the midst of the battle they're going through.

I thank you Jesus that right now you're moving upon them it's a quiet work but it's a very deep work God it's a very deep work you're doing here at the altar God you're sustaining lives here today God you're rescuing people from the pit here today God you're rescuing people from despair and despondency from surrender and giving up to the purposes and plans you have for them God we pray that you see them through to the victory see them through to the desired haven God that's the place of anointing the place of seeing the works of God the place of the glory of God the place of the majesty of God coming down upon us as a church and as a people thank you God for these who boldly step forward and we just bless them now in the name of Jesus Lord we just speak a blessing church would you pray

with me right now and just ask God to bless them Lord we speak a blessing over them pour out your abundant blessing on them God thank you God that they won't be distracted or turned away from the battle but they'll engage Lord they'll engage and keep launching ahead into the things you have for them

we thank you we thank you in the name of Jesus we give thanks now God for what you're doing how beautiful how precious it is God that you don't leave us alone in the storm God that you're present just like Peter you called us out of the boat even to see miracles when walking on the water God we're even asking you to call us out of the boat God that's how willing we are to take risks when you call us we thank you now we thank you Jesus can you give the Lord a clap off let's just thank him for

what he's doing we bless you God she says I'm closing here I just feel really strongly compelled by the Holy Spirit to tell you when we engage in this fasting on January 10th through the 31st 21 days of fasting it's going to be important some of you that's going to be a time of the crossroads and the Holy Spirit wants to use that fast to show you his destiny for you not only to show you his destiny but to fulfill it in your life and this is not an advertisement for a fast this is a call to a holy assembly fasting together believing that God calls us into fast when he wants to move mightily in our life and for some of us that fasting is actually going down into the pits it's like our storm you know we've been going without food for a while but we're just believing in advance so I wanted to

put that in your ear early on and also remember January not only as the launch of our new building but also small groups will be starting very soon again for those of you that are small group leaders I want to remind you once again to be prayerful over that we are seeing a vision this year of not just small group leaders who are teaching a curriculum or building a few friendships we are seeing true godly leaders rise up and say God has called me to be a lay pastor in this church to help raise up the people of God to encourage to equip to train to pastor to mentor to visit when they're sick and so we're going to see these connect groups become more than they have been in the past this next semester I have a promise from God that these connect groups are going to serve truly as a biblically

functioning Acts chapter 2 church where they meet together from house to house and see the works of the Lord the glory of God is going to be happening not just on Sundays it's going to be happening in our homes as well if you have that burden I want to be that kind of pastor to people I want to be that evangelist to my community I want my house to be a house church so to speak if that's on your heart I want you to come and let us know either call the church email the church see Nima and Cheryl here today in the next few weeks we'll have some tables out at the back in our new building to sign up to lead groups and we want to mentor you and encourage you as you help mentor and encourage others so Father we thank you for all the great things you're doing we thank you in advance Lord you're

going to see us through the storms and take us to higher ground greater places and seeing the works of the Lord we thank you for these things in Jesus name and everybody shout out to the Lord Amen Amen God bless you have a wonderful afternoon you're dismissed

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