

PASTOR SCOTT: Hey, Freshwater. Good morning to you all. My name is Scott Brooks. I'm on staff with Freshwater. If you're a guest and just kind of jumping in, we're glad you're here. We've got a great morning for you. We've got just a time of worship, hearing a cool story of what God has been doing just in the life of our church and, obviously, taking a few moments to look at his Word.

Also, got some great news. At this point, the Indians are undefeated for the start of the baseball season. Just to let you know that.

Anyway, we're going to have a great time connecting with Jesus. Grab your coffee. Grab your muffin. It's so different, right? This is church online. You can do that. We really trust over the next few moments we all can connect with Christ, worship with Him, and praise His name. Join us as we come into His presence.

PASTOR JAKE: Hey. Good morning, Freshwater. Well, another week and another change for us in our lives. With the governor's order this past week, we are now broadcasting and recording from our home. It'll be the same. A lot of our band members have done the same thing. They've recorded from their homes, and we've put this together so you can worship with us. They just wanted to serve you in that way.

As we get started this morning, I wanted to share from Psalm 34. This has been a time of heightened fear. It's been a time of heightened worry and anxiety for a lot of us. Psalm 34 is goodness.

a reconnection to the Lord and his

It says this, "I will bless the times. His praise shall

be in my mouth. My soul makes its

Lord at all

continually

boast in the Lord. Let the humble hear and be glad. Magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.

"I sought the Lord, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to Him are radiant and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. Hear this. The Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and He delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him."

PASTOR SCOTT: Hey, Freshwater. We are with Joe and Janet Grasso, and we just wanted to tell a story of something that God has been doing here over the last several months. You've been a part of it, some of you. We want to let the whole church family know about this. This is Joe and Janet. Everybody say hi to them. Great. And why don't you guys tell us your story? You've partnered up with Samaritan's Purse. Let the people know what Samaritan's Purse is first, kind of give them a picture of that, then we'll just kind of talk about what God is doing

JANET: Well, I think most of us at Freshwater are familiar with Operation Christmas Child, filling those Christmas boxes for a few years. That is one of the projects of Samaritan's Purse. It started back in 1970 with Franklin Graham. Really, it is just to be the hands and feet of Jesus, bringing the

gospel message of hope to a hurting world. SCOTT: You guys have been involved with that for a long time, the shoe boxes, right?

JANET: SCOTT: JANET: SCOTT:

22 years.

22 years?

Yeah.

You've been brushing

shoulders and really into Samaritan's Purse for a while. One of their ministries is this whole thing that you guys are now in, which is, what is that?

JANET: The Children's Heart Project. This has been going on for a little over 20 years. They bring -- what Samaritan's Purse does is they will bring children from areas of the world that do not have the

technology,

fine.

the medical technology, to --

SCOTT: JANET: SCOTT:

America, U.S.?

Sorry.

Cities around -- that's

JANET:

world. They're working with five different

Yeah, cities around the

countries right now. Mongolia is one of them.

That's the -- where our children are from. But these children have been diagnosed with congenital heart defects. Obviously, Mongolia, they do not have the medical technology to be able to do the surgeries.

Once the children are identified, Samaritan's Purse will bring them to the states and have them stay with a Christian family. We

are really blessed. We have some fantastic hospitals in our area.

SCOTT: Yeah. Number two hospital in the world.

JANET: Number two hospital, yes.

You know, we were talking about this a couple weeks ago. I said, "Hey, we got the Browns fans. We've got the Tribe fans. Really, our source of pride for Cleveland has got to be the hospital."

SCOTT: So you guys -- and she says sorry. You have to bear with us. Doing video stuff is not easy to do. Give them grace here. We're going to work through this.

So you guys sensed God's call to start considering this, and you start doing the process. You get -- you end up saying yes to

this. Talk to us about the two little ones that are now in your home.

JANET: They are the most precious little babies. They are so sweet. We have Engi. She's our little girl. She turned 1 in January. And we have Byaraa, our little boy. He just turned 1 a couple weeks ago. He got to

celebrate his first after he got here. SCOTT: JANET: SCOTT: JANET: SCOTT:

heart defects. JANET:

birthday with us two days

Tiny.

They're tiny.

Little ones.

They are.

Right? They both have

They do. They were both diagnosed with heart defects within a couple weeks of birth. SCOTT:

committed to caring how long?

JANET:

SCOTT: meals at home.

When they came, you were

JANET:

Yup.

for them, housing

About five weeks. Five weeks. That

them for

means

SCOTT:

JANET:

SCOTT:

JANET:

SCOTT:

JANET:

SCOTT:

take care of the financial part of  
Lodging. Transportation. Transportation. Yes.

All of this?

Mm-hmm.

That's what you sign up  
for. We'll

this, housing them, feeding them, all that stuff, right?

JANET: SCOTT: JANET:

Right.

That's a lot.

So, well, that's our first

God story that really came into this. We kind of took this leap of faith, and we thought, "Okay, you know, we can do this. We have -- we'll get a baby and mom and a translator come live with us."

Just before Christmas, we got a call from Samaritan's Purse that they said,  
"Well, we have two babies coming, and that means two moms and the translator."

The first thought running through our mind was --

JOE: We don't have any room in the  
car.

SCOTT: Don't have a big enough vehicle for that, right.

JANET: Go ahead.

JOE: Janet went online and found a Christian organization, Northeast Ohio Vans.

She sent them an e-mail, and through a couple conversations, they agreed to get us a van.

They went to their church, and they at their church to pay for the van. JANET: For five weeks.

JOE: Five weeks.

SCOTT: Five weeks. At you're like, God is in this. We're  
got someone

that point,

doing it. JANET: I remember Andrew, the

owner, calling and asking, "Hey, is a 12-passenger van going to be okay?"  
cost?"

"Yeah, how much is that going to

He's like, "I'll call you back."

Few days, and he said, "No, it's covered," so we have this 12-passenger van for  
five weeks.

SCOTT: Yeah.

JANET: That's really when it

started. Because as people learned about this, diapers started showing up at our door, gift  
cards to grocery stores. People from Mongolia, their primary diet is meat and dairy, so a lot of  
beef. We've been going through a lot of ground beef.

Yeah, when people heard about this, we just realized, we're not in this alone. God  
is doing this. So many people have asked, you know, how we're doing this. I'm like, I'm just  
along for the ride. God's got this.

wise, where

weeks ago.

SCOTT: So you've had -- surgery are you guys with both of the kids? JANET: Engi had her  
surgery two No, about ten days ago.

SCOTT: She's doing?

JANET: She's doing great. We just

had her follow-up this morning, and all is going really well.

That was another amazing story because they went in for their pre-surgical

checkups, and her platelet count was too low for surgery. It was, I think, 73. I have a Facebook group of our prayer warriors and our support team and sent out a prayer request. 48 hours later, she had repeat blood work done, platelets were over 200, and surgery was a go.

SCOTT: Shot back up, yeah. She's gone through the critical -- like those first days, and she's looking good?

JANET: She's looking really good. SCOTT: Going the right way. JANET: And none of this has been

lost on Mom. Mom comes from no religious background, and she has seen what God has been doing. The other night at dinner, our translator said, "We want to share happy news. Engi's mom has" -- I knew I was going to lose it.

SCOTT: It's all right.

JANET: -- "She has seen everything that God has done to bring her daughter here, the care, and so she has given her life to Christ."

SCOTT: Wow.

JANET: So -- and she's so excited. She can't wait to get home. Said she just really wants to be able to study the Bible with her husband when she gets home. is Monday the 24th, Losing the days. I the 23rd?

JANET:

SCOTT: throw in, surprise, I think. I can't remember. don't know what day it is, 23rd.

So that's great. Then you hey, the world is shutting

SCOTT: Wow.

JANET: So -- oh, I thought I was going to make it through without crying.

SCOTT: No, because this is it, right? I mean, that's part of it. They see Christ in the middle of all of it, right? It's amazing.

JANET: Now we're waiting on Byaraa. Had a bit of a cold when he had his pre-surgical checkup, so his surgery had been postponed. But he also was seen this morning at Cleveland clinic; he'll be going in for surgery at 6:00 a.m. on Thursday morning.

SCOTT: On Thursday. So we're talking Tuesday right now, so that -- Monday right now, so that's Thursday this week. This down with coronavirus. So you get a call from Samaritan's Purse saying, "Hey, they may not be going home like we thought."

JANET: Yeah.

SCOTT: Where are you right now? Just the news they've shared and what you're looking at.

JANET: We're still talking to them because there are some groups that -- right now, there are nine groups in the states having surgery. Not all in this area but throughout the United States. So we're all kind of in the same boat.

to get home

would be on

to be in the states surgery.

SCOTT:

JANET: April anyway.

SCOTT:

what you guys thought, even that?

JOE: Yes.

JANET: We knew we'd get the extra two weeks once Byaraa's surgery was postponed. Again, you know, word gets out, and people respond. God is moving. So many people respond.

But it looks like they may be able the end of April, which really target. Because they want the kids

for four weeks post

Okay.

We're looking at the end of

This is extended beyond

SCOTT: Yeah. We sent out an e-mail last week. Talk about the response you got even this last weekend.

JANET: Well, we talked to the van company, and asked, "Can we extend by two weeks?"

So he sent us the invoice where he had given us a 50 percent discount. The next day, we opened up the mail, and there was a check from somebody from Freshwater. Van is covered. So God is good.

JOE: We got a couple gas cards, so gas is covered for the van.

JANET: Yeah. Put out a request, we needed more diapers. Diapers are just showing up at the door. And the volunteers, people have volunteered. We had one night Byaraa had to get into the emergency room. Part of Samaritan's Purse's rule is men would not be alone with the women, obviously.

SCOTT: Yeah.

JANET: Within five minutes, I put out a couple -- I sent out a text. I have a group text. Within five minutes, Pam Miller

was at our door. She's like, "I'll go with Joe. You stay here with the rest of the group."

People have come to the hospital with us and just been there when we need support. I've had to run out for different things, and we've had so many people that just come to our door and say, "Yup, we'll stay here with the group so you guys can do what you need to do, if you need to get to the grocery store."

Again, coronavirus has kind of brought a lot to a screeching halt. And we've had people lined up to come in and enjoy meals with us, and we can't do that right now. But, still, people are showing up, saying, "We'll bring you dinner. We'll drop it at your door."

So, you know, we're just so thankful. Because we had no idea when we started this that we were going to get such a response. We thought, we can host. How hard can that be? We had no idea that we couldn't do it; we can't do it alone. We can't. It's all been God moving.

SCOTT: Yeah.

JANET: We are so thankful. And the love we have felt from our Freshwater family has been overwhelming to us. And the moms who don't know any of you are overwhelmed. Because they're seeing diapers show up, and they're wondering, where are these diapers coming from? Who is bringing these? Where is all this coming from?

can play. donated to car seats, need them.

SCOTT: Right?

JOE: Diapers, bags of toys so they We've got Pack 'n Plays someone us. We've got chairs. We've got all donated to us for the weeks we

SCOTT: Yeah. It's probably a huge piece of even what the journey of her, you know, starting to say, "Hey, wait a minute, who is this Jesus, and who are these people that do this kind of thing?"

Well, thanks for coming in and sharing the story. So we're still -- I mean, Freshwater, we're still praying, one, just for health for both of the kids, but also just you guys, as you're still hosting, and for really the borders to open, at least for them to go home here by the end of April. I think that's what we're looking at, right?

JANET: We are. And they want to get home.

SCOTT: Well, yeah.

JANET: This is a long thing. Once they get home, they have to spend two weeks in

isolation. Once they even get home -- SCOTT: The journey isn't over. JANET: -- it'll be another two weeks before they see their families. It's been hard on them, missing their families. SCOTT: Thanks for coming in. Appreciate it.

JANET: Thank you.

JOE: Yeah, thank you.

SCOTT: All right. Freshwater, keep it up. Way to go. Let's keep showing God's care, not only for the Grassos and these families, but just for each other, too. God bless. I love hearing that story. It's something over these last weeks, it's just captured my heart. Been able to be over at their house and see those babies and what God is doing. It's just an amazing story.

As we move into just the time to look at God's Word and what He might say to us this morning, I invite you to turn to

2 Corinthians 8. While you're doing that, I just want to tell you a little story here.

This past week, my brother and I were talking and reminiscing. I don't know how we got on this story, but we started talking about how, remember back when? And in junior high and high school, I would get up at 6:00 in the morning to practice the piano. I'd do scales and chords and pieces.

Of course, everybody is asleep at that point. I would creep down there and start. I'd feel so bad. Except for the times when I was really mad at my brothers, and I'd play it really loud and wake them up. I don't think I ever, like, told them that. Sorry, Brother.

But, you know, it's one of these things. We practice. Going off to college, I'd practice two hours a day. If you play an instrument, if you're in sports, shoot, if you do video games, you understand this idea that the more you practice, the more it becomes what they say is second nature. Right?

It's so much a part of you because

you or I would do the repeated, simple things over and over and over again, so that no matter the pressure, no matter the place, we would just go through it like it was easy, like it was instinctual, like we were born to do this, like this was second nature.

And as we come into this third week of kind of being shutdown, now definitely shelter at home, I'm wondering how you're

doing. In particular, I wonder what it looks like for us to even ask God and to ask him in this moment, "God, as you look at me, how do you think I am doing in response to all that's going on?"

So often, we'll look at some musician or athlete or someone, whatever expertise they have, and just are amazed at what they're able to do under stress. Because it's second nature.

I wonder over these next few minutes what God might say to each one of us.

I just invite you, right now, just in your spirit, just say to the Holy Spirit, "How do you think I'm doing with all that's going on?" And I realize this pandemic is one thing, and for some of us, it's actually on top of what we were already dealing with coming into it. So it's even more stressful or difficult, adding that in.

The reason I want to go to

2 Corinthians is, last week, I talked about how

we should go to God's Word. In good times, in bad times, His Word is really His voice, His words to us. It's one of the stories in Scripture where people were in unprecedented times.

In the book -- or the letter of 2 Corinthians, there's a story of a church, actually churches, in Macedonia. Paul is writing to the Corinthian Christians, the church in Corinth, and saying, "Hey, you guys have got to know about what these Christians and churches in Macedonia were doing, and what they were going through, and what ended up happening in the middle of what they were going through."

So 2 Corinthians 8 goes like this, "We want you to know, brothers, about the grace

of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia. For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy, and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

"For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints, and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us."

Paul tells this story of the churches in Macedonia going through a severe test. He called it extreme poverty. Like that's bad. There's poverty, and he'll use the word poverty, but extreme poverty, he doesn't use that very often. This is bad. You want to talk about something that would be horrible to wake up to all the time, extreme poverty.

What ends up happening is the churches in Macedonia hear about a famine that's going on in Israel, and the Christians that are there in Israel, their brothers and sisters, are starving to death. The Macedonian

Christians, who are in extreme poverty, say, "Oh, wait a minute, you're not leaving us out of this." And these people who were extremely poor said, "No, we're giving."

Not just giving, they gave sacrificially. Paul is writing this to the Corinthian church saying, "You guys have to

know this. Think about how you're moving through this whole thing."

While the Macedonian church was not going to be able to give the amount that the Corinthian church did, it seems pretty clear

that the sacrifice was going to be hard to beat. That it was going to be a challenge for the Corinthian believers to even come close to matching the sacrifice.

Begging to be a part of it.

Begging to want to help out. And in verse 5 of

this passage, Paul makes it real clear, he says, "They gave themselves first to the Lord, and then, by the will of God, to us."

They gave them first to Jesus. And what's interesting is Paul calls this whole thing an act of grace. Actually, unprecedented grace is what you could call it. Extreme poverty, severe test, and this incredible, unprecedented grace. In fact, it makes the letter because it is so amazing. He gives the backdrop to this. He said, "They presented themselves to Jesus."

So understand what motivated them after that to give like they did, he describes that later on in chapter 8. He starts talking

about Jesus and the act of grace that Jesus gave. He says in verse 9 of chapter 8, "For you know the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake, He became poor. So that you, by His poverty, might become rich."

So the one being in the world who had everything, the one who was on the throne, the creator of all, the Lord of all, High King, Eternal One, perfect, becomes poor for you and I, for the Macedonians, for anyone and everyone. Goes through what I would say, and I think we would all probably agree, is the most severest test of all. Dying on a cross, taking on the sins of the world. That's unprecedented grace.

For your sake and for my sake,

became poor, so that we could become wealthy, united with Him. He did it for us. That's

unprecedented grace. So what happens when we give ourselves to Christ? It's not an obligation. I mean, Paul mentions that in verse 8. He says, "Look, I'm not commanding you to do this. This is not out of obligation. This is out of being connected to Christ."

When someone gives themselves to Christ, like in verse 5, and you understand what Christ did in verse 8, what happens is

Christ, in that moment, when we give ourselves to Him, it is not second nature, it's nature.

Christ puts His nature in us, this unprecedented grace-giving nature and becomes who we are, immediately, without practice. It happens. We become like Jesus, in that moment. His nature in us.

And there's this idea about this unprecedented grace, being us, there is an "It

is finished" piece to this. When we give our life to Christ, confess Him as Lord and Savior, we have His nature in it. Yet, there is a progressive, ongoing continuing to give myself, myself to Him, moment by moment.

So now we're in what I would say is a moment in our nation and in our lives where it is extreme. There is an extreme test going on. I wish you could talk to the Grassos personally. She was telling some of her stories, her and Joe. But when she got home, she texted me a picture. She had, I don't know, five or six stuffed sacks of groceries blocking their front door. It just goes on and on and on, of people that have kept on giving.

Unprecedented grace. I asked one of our elders this past week, "Hey, what are you seeing? At Freshwater, what are you seeing? What are you observing? What is your pulse on things that are going on?"

His response brought me up short. As we're going through the conversation, at one point, he just said, "Well, it's what I expected," about the response he was seeing at Freshwater.

I said, "Explain that to me. What about it was what I expected?"

He was like, "We've been coming to Freshwater for a number of years." He says, "The presence of God is here. It's not just the presence of God is here, but the culture of this church is where people are continually going after Him and giving themselves to Him, wanting Him to fill their lives with His presence. Of course, we're seeing unprecedented grace."

He says, "I'm hearing people call other people. People are calling people they don't even know within the church. 'How are you doing?' I'm hearing stories of people giving gifts, leaving gifts anonymously, calling up people, 'What do you need?'"

He said, "Yeah, it's what I expected because it's who we are. We have the grace of Christ, His nature, in us. Of course

this is what we would see. It's what I expected."

It makes sense. And I'm not saying that we're a perfect people. That's not the thing I'm trying to communicate. We're just a people who have given ourselves to Jesus, and He says, "Okay. I am going to pour you out on people. And I'm going to pour out your resources that I have given you. Those resources are mine. I'm going to pour those out on people."

Some of you right now are getting hit financially. You know, there's a number of people that are -- have been laid off or lost their jobs. And, you know, there's another side to this story in 2 Corinthians 8. Because there is a whole group of believers in Israel who are in a season where they were desperate and needed help. It wasn't going to be forever. They had to receive, and God was going to meet their needs. He was going to meet their needs.

Some of you, if you're feeling guilty, like, "I can't give because I just took all these hits," it's okay. You're going to have to receive. Just receive.

I just heard a story yesterday. There was -- actually, it was at the River we were talking. Some woman in our church was over at Giant Eagle, I think, shopping, and someone from our church, from Freshwater, saw her and said, "Oh, now I know what to do with this," and gives her \$20.

Because they sensed that they had this \$20 and sensed God was saying, "I want you to give this away. Give this away."

They were like, "Who am I giving to?"

Immediately, they saw and knew this person had a need. That's what God is going to do. It is unprecedented grace. The cool thing about it is it's just God. Grace is so fun. It's just awesome.

Some of us, as we move through this, this is not a time to pull back. We have a church here that said, "No." In extreme poverty, said, "Absolutely not. We will not pull back. in whatever

We will give ourselves to the Lord He says."



The world would say withdraw. The say hoard. The world would say you world would can't afford grace right now. I would just say, Christ to Christ. give money." talks about in faith, in speech, in knowledge, right? There's so much more than just money in this. is our model. Let's give ourselves Some of you are thinking, "I can't If you look at this passage, Paul in faith, excel. Excel in giving, What does it look like to call someone? What does it look like to call four, five people a week? Why couldn't we do that? Our brothers and sisters, people that maybe are trying to just start coming. Maybe you call them, check in on people. It doesn't hurt to get four or five calls. I was calling somebody this past week, thought I was going to -- I was there to minister to them. About halfway through, I said, I was just sensing, yeah, somehow, the tables are flipped. I was going to pray and everything, and I just -- I was sensing, no. They need to pray for me. It was a powerful moment. I encourage you, call someone. Take the risk, "Can I pray for you?" It doesn't have to be a five-minute prayer. Just a simple prayer, "Oh, Lord, give your grace to them. Oh, Lord, bless them today." It doesn't have to be any kind of professional prayer, whatever that's supposed to mean. I still haven't found the right professional prayer yet. If some of you are sitting there thinking, "Well, nobody has called me," what if Christ is calling you right now to be the one that calls others? Rather than focus on yourself, to look at others and say, "Who can I call?" There is a blessing in it. This kind of grace, its nature, it's who we are. It is not of this world. It can be such a difference in times like this. Such a difference. I would encourage you, everything should be on the table. When we give ourselves to Christ, everything is on the table. We say, "Lord, what are you wanting us to do?" I mean, my wife and I, we're now re-evaluating. After reading this, I feel so convicted. We're re-evaluating how much we should be giving right now in this season. Really praying through, we probably should actually increase our giving, which is crazy. But I look at this and go, these people are in extreme poverty. The grace is amazing. So as we go into this week, I think it's time to start not just being reactionary to everything, but start to be actually proactive and starting to move towards these things, and starting to move towards the pandemic and all that's coming at us and say, "All right. We know what's coming at us. We see what's ahead. Let's start moving into this. Let's be people of grace. Let's give ourselves to Jesus and see where He starts to pour us out. See where He starts to say give out grace. I want grace here." I can't wait to hear the stories of unprecedented grace. Let's pray. Jesus, would you first, with each person that's watching in each home or room or wherever they're listening, Jesus, I just, in Your name, release Your grace. Bless each person with Your grace right now. May it well up. May it just fill them up. All that you've done, refresh our minds, Your gift of grace to us. Spirit, as we go forward, would you begin to show us how you want us to start pouring out grace on people, in love, in money, in care, in wisdom? Lord, you know. Send us. Send us with your grace, Jesus, that unprecedented grace. Amen. God bless you all.