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Good morning. Children may be dismissed at Children's Church. We're gonna open with prayer. Heavenly Father, I pray for my brothers and sisters hearts here today that they will be tuned into You, into Your words, into Your message. Help us to hear what You are saying. Help us to understand the truths in Your scripture and help us to apply them to our lives. In Jesus name, Amen. Well, I have kind of a different sermon today. Normally, normally I come up here and I have some kind of scriptural principle and I kind of expound on that and it's something that we can all apply to our lives. And that's typically how these things go. But as I was praying about the sermon this week, I kept asking, you know, what's the principle guy? What's the principle you want me speaking on? And I didn't get one. I didn't get one. And all I kept getting was this, what I felt like was just a message, like passing a message on to someone, I kept feeling like I was getting a message to pass on. So I'm going with it. And the message is, if you've seen the title in your bullet, the message is, it's time. It's time. It is a new season, is what I feel like He's saying, that God has been tilling our hearts and our lives and He's been making fertile soil in there. And He's been giving us visions and dreams about the future, about things to do, things to accomplish. He's been giving us these dreams, but we've been holding on to them because we felt like we're not ready. And I feel like God's saying, it's time. The season for preparation is closing and now it is time to begin to plant. It's time to take the next step. It's time to follow through. We've been frozen, literally and metaphorically. And now it's time to fall and to begin to move. I prayed about what kind of scripture I could possibly bring to go with that. And God brought to my heart the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 18. Now, what was going on in 1 Kings 18 was there was this really evil king named Ahab. And God sent Elijah, the prophet, He said, "Go to Ahab and tell him you've been so wicked and evil, it's not going to rain anymore for years until I say so." So that's what He told him. And then Elijah left town and I'm sure at first Ahab was like, "Whatever." But then it didn't rain and he started freaking out, to the point where he was now sending envoys to other countries to say, "Hand over Elijah the prophet if you find him because we want that guy." And Elijah's laying low for a while and Ahab is freaking out because it's dry. There's no rain at all. And eventually God comes to Elijah and says, some other things happened in there, but eventually God says, "Elijah, it's time. Go back to Ahab." So Elijah meets up with Ahab and he says, "Look, the reason that you've had to go through this is because you've allowed all of these prophets of Baal into your kingdom." He's like, "There's 450 prophets of Baal and there's one prophet of God." And he's like, "And that's a problem and that's why God has brought this calamity upon you." And so then that's when they have that famous showdown where these 450 prophets of Baal, Elijah challenges them. And he says, "Each of us is going to build an altar, a big pile of wood, going to put some meat on it, and you guys are going to pray to your God that he will light the altar on fire. And I'm going to pray to my God that he will light my altar on fire and we'll see whose God shows up." And so he says, "You guys can go first." And so these 450 prophets are out there and they're chanting and praying and doing all this stuff and nothing's happening. And Elijah starts making fun of them. He says, "Maybe he's in the bathroom or something." And it's in the Bible. And I can just imagine that even if there was some kind of demon or something who wanted to answer those prayers, God's just got his finger on that guy and saying, "You're not going anywhere." And so anyways, those prophets of Baal, they have their chance. And Elijah says, "All right, now watch this." And he digs this big, deep trench around his altar and then they just dump water and water and water all over the altar. The meat is soaking, the wood is soaking, the moat around the altar is now full of water and he prays and boom! Fire comes down from heaven, evaporates all the water, burns up the altar, burns up their altar. And so Elijah says, "All right, Ahab, do you understand now the stupid decision you've made?" And Ahab says, "I understand." And so then he orders all of the 450 prophets of Baal to be executed. And so because of that, because they got rid of the prophets of Baal, it was time to bring back the rain. And this is what it says starting in chapter 18, verse 42b. "Elijah went up to the top of Carmel," which is the name of the mountain. "Then he bowed down on the ground and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, 'Go up now, look toward the sea.' So the servant went up and looked and he said, 'There's nothing.' And seven times Elijah said, 'Go again.' And then it came to pass the seventh time. The servant said, 'There is a small cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea.'" So Elijah says, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'" And it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind and there was heavy rain. So I feel like what God is saying is that this is the season of our puffy cloud. We have been going through this season of prayer and it seems unnaturally long time, unnaturally long preparation. In fact, if I'm reading this correctly, he says he prayed and then sent him and then seven times he said, "Go again." So really that was like eight trips out. And that's just a long time just to keep praying and saying, "Now check." "No, I'll keep praying." "Now check again?" "No, I'll keep praying." But finally, he's like, there was just this one puffy little cloud rising out of the sea. And that was the turning point. That was the moment when it went from the season of prayer to, "All right, now it's time to get ready." "Now it's time to prepare for what's coming next." And I feel like that was what God is saying about this season. That God has been giving us ideas and visions about things that we should be doing. And for a lot of reasons we haven't pursued those. Some of us have just been in prayer and in preparation. And some of us have been just hesitating for certain reasons. But I feel like God is saying, "No, now is the time to start planting the seeds of that dream." Some of us hesitate because in the past we've pursued these same dreams and we've met resistance. I've tried this before. It didn't work. I was stopped. God, I'm not going to pursue the same thing again if it didn't work last time. If that's how you feel, I want to remind you of what was going on in Ezra 4 and 5. The Temple of Jerusalem had been destroyed. And God said, "You guys, go, children of Israel, go rebuild my temple." So they went back and they started rebuilding the temple. And then the kings and the stuff in the area, and they're like, "What are you doing?" And they're like, "We're just rebuilding this temple." And they said, "No, no, no, you can't do that." And they got out lawyers and they got out soldiers and just all kinds of stuff. And just thwarted the plans and the people were like, "Okay, fine." And they walked away and the temple sat there unbuilt for a long time. But then some prophets came back and they prophesied, "God wants you to do this. God wants his temple built." And so these two young men named Zerubbabel and Shealtio, they stepped up and they said, "All right, I know that we tried this before and we were stopped, but now we're going to try it again." And they stepped up and they started building and this time those exact same people came and said, "What do you think you're doing?" But this time God had prepared the way and they weren't stopped. In fact, they were blessed. They were given supplies and the things they were need to keep going. And so if you have a dream, a vision about the way things might be, something beautiful in the future that you've tried before and failed, but God won't let that dream leave your heart, then what I feel like he's telling you today is try again. You weren't meant to succeed the first time, but try again because watch what I can do this time. Some of us, I believe, are hesitating not because of past resistance, but just because of past failure. We, some of us mess up. I mess up because I'm terrible at putting names to the things that they belong to. Like, "Who sings that song?" Or, you know, just earlier we were setting up the sound board and there was three cables, yellow, red, black, and I said, "Red, yellow, black." And I just put names with the wrong things and it happens a lot of times with like pulp culture and TV and music and I'm terrible at songs. So that's just an example. But there's a lot of, like if someone, if I felt like I was telling me to go on a game show, I would laugh out loud because I'm terrible at that kind of stuff. And I think that God has put some dreams in our hearts and we see our past failures and we say, "There's just no way, God. I'm not the bright man or woman for the job. I can't do that. Look at me. I'm a mess up." And to those people, I want to say, "Look at Peter." Here's a guy who was there with Jesus the whole time. He saw all the miracles. He performed miracles. He's like, "Jesus, I will never leave you. I'll never forsake you." And Jesus is like, "Before tonight is over, you're going to deny me three times." And he did. He messed up big. Later on, here he is now. Jesus has come back and he's risen to heaven and now they're in charge of this new church. And there's all of these Jews converting into Christianity and that's wonderful, but now there's also all these Gentiles converting to Christianity and that's kind of weird because for all their lives, they have distanced themselves from the Gentiles and it's just kind of weird to now be buddy-buddy with people that you used to shun. And so Peter was at the dinner for all of the Christians but he was just kind of hanging out with the Jews and he was kind of ignoring the Gentiles. And so Paul comes up to him and right in front of everyone and rebukes him and says, "What you were doing is wrong. Jesus died to get rid of this class division nonsense and he probably humiliated him in front of a room full of people." But once again, Peter said, "You're right, dusted himself off, made the change and pressed on and continued to live a very powerful, effective life for the kingdom of God." And so if you have the vision and the dream in your heart for something that God is calling you to and you think I'm a mess up and I'm not going to try it because I'm just going to mess it up, then I want to say God uses mess ups. God covers over our weaknesses. He gets us past them. God, when we're imperfect, when we're imperfect, God shines through. The Bible says that we have this treasure in jars of clay, meaning that we are just these nasty earthen pots full of treasure. And when we allow our nasty earthenness to shine forth, then it gives God more glory because people are like, it can't possibly be that messy, forgetful, mistaken person doing this great work. There must be some power inside of him because I know that that person is not capable of doing what he's doing. And that's the thing, God shines through. And in addition to that, he gives us helpers, which is something we've talked about before. God sometimes calls you to things that you can't do by yourself because he wants you in community and in relationship and fellowship with the people around you. And so he brings in the people to help you and they're not going to be perfect. And there are going to be times that those people rub you the wrong way. And that's how stones get smooth, is when they get rubbed the wrong way. So if you say, God, I can't work with those people, they rub me the wrong way, you're denying God the opportunity to smooth you out into the beautiful stone he wants you to be. My parents told me a story this week. I finally talked to them and they're doing great and they're teaching English and making videos and just having a real successful productive time. Thank you so much for everyone who's praying for them. Please keep them in your prayers. I got to speak with them over Skype and they told me this story about this woman who is a quadriplegic. And they have set up this system where she can hold a pencil in her mouth and she responds to emails whenever people ask questions about Jesus. And she responds to emails about people's questions about Jesus. And it is the joy of her life. Because we live in a world where people look at someone like that and they say, that person should have been aborted as a baby. They should not have been allowed to live. And that is a wicked, terrible thing to say. Because yes, even though that person has grown up and they can't do construction or manual labor or something, they have still found a way to serve in the kingdom of God. And if God can use someone who can't move more than just a pencil in her mouth, then how much more is he able to help us get over whatever silly little hang-ups we have and accomplish the work that he is calling us to? God can use you. He wants to use you and he is calling you in this season to make that move. And maybe some of you, I know personally, that there are things that in this season, there are things that God is telling me finish up stuff from the last season. You got stuff left over and I want to move forward with you, Matthew, and you got to finish up the old stuff. Because that is holding you back. And maybe that is you too, I don't know. But I do know that it is a season for something new. And I don't know what that looks like in each of your lives. And you are going to have to pray about this. Because like I said, this is what I just feel God is telling me. And I don't know who it applies to and I don't know how it applies to you. So we are going to pray. But let me say a little bit more. If God is giving you the vision but you haven't moved on it, because it is too big or too scary or too much, I just want to remind you who the God is that we love and that we serve. 1 Peter 3, 12, "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their prayers." Like I said, God has been tilling our hearts and preparing us. I see when I look around this church people who are becoming more hungry and more eager and more passionate in their walk towards righteousness and holiness. And God promises that His eyes are on you. His ears are open to your prayers. If He is calling you to something, it is because you are ready. In 2 Chronicles 16, 9, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him." God has been turning our hearts to Him and making us loyal to Him. And He wants now to show Himself strong on our behalf. That's why you don't have to worry whether you have the strength to see this through. God is going to be strong on your behalf. You just start going and He will multiply your efforts. I was going to say something about Kurt Vonnegut. I saw it on the internet, so I don't know if it's true. Here's a story about how this school that Kurt Vonnegut graduated from wrote to some of their famous alumni and said, "Would you please write back and give words of encouragement?" and he wrote back and he said, "Give advice." And he said, "Here's the advice I can give you. Every one of you needs to, starting today and for every day of the rest of your life, either write a poem or a song or draw a picture or do something creative because that's good for your soul. And even if you write it and just tear it up and shred it into little pieces and burn it and no one but you ever sees it, you still will have grown in your soul. You still will be better for having just done the exercise." And when I thought about that, I thought, "How many times have I had a dream about starting something, about doing something and said, "No, but I'm not going to be good at it." And I sabotaged myself before I even start. People aren't going to like it. People are going to make fun of it, whatever. And I don't even begin. I don't even try and I don't start. And I sabotage whatever success, even if it had been just little success, I sabotage it because my imagination as to how it's going to be doesn't live up to what I think the world expects of me. And what I took away from that is I need to stop worrying about what the world expects. I need just to start doing. And I just need to love God, whatever I'm doing, do it, whether you eat or drink, do it all to the glory of God. And so even if it's not the next Picasso or whatever, you know, Picasso didn't get a lot of credit while he was alive. But after his life, he did. But even if it's not world-renowned or fantastic or whatever, even if it's just some small little bit that just makes a difference in one person's life, then it's worth it if I'm doing it to bring glory to God. And so let's lay aside our fears and our doubt. And I've been looking around the church and I've been seeing people have this same hunger. And that's kind of been the confirmation for me that I was supposed to go ahead with this because I see people who are starting out on new things, who are stepping out of their comfort zones, who are trying something that they wouldn't have done before. And I could just see that hunger. I see people who are just looking for something to do and they don't even know what it is they want to do. They just have that hunger to start doing. And I'm like, yeah, I can see this. I can see the hunger that God is calling people to the season to start planting, the season to start taking those steps. That's what I feel God is saying to us today. And you may disagree. Like I said, this is my own limited hearing of God. I hope it speaks to you. I know it speaks to me. I'm pretty sure it speaks to some of you. But we're going to have our time of open worship now. And as we sit here, I want you to think about the dreams that God has put on your heart. Things in your life, things for this church, for this community, ideas that you've been just dismissing, maybe, saying, I could never do that. I don't have the something to accomplish that. But what dream has found its way into your heart and you just haven't been able to let it go, you haven't been able to move on it yet, but it just won't let go. You have that dream. And during our open worship time, I hope that you pray about that dream and ask God, what are you really saying here, God? Is this of you? You want me to move on this, God? And if you feel him say yes, then cast aside your fear and your doubt and step out in faith. If my message has filled you with apprehension, I hope it also gives you excitement as you remember who is on our side. The God above all God's creator of heaven and earth is right there with you to help you alone. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have beautiful, wonderful things in store for each one of us. We thank you that you do not leave us as orphans, but that you come to us, you are fathers, you lead us along, you prepare the way ahead of us. Thank you, God, that you want to do amazing, world changing, wonderful things through us. Thank you that you want to use us in that way. Help us to be bold and confident as we step out in faith, as we remember all the times throughout your word that you have been there and supported your people, that you have never let them down, that you have never allowed them to fail, that when they trusted in you, you were there for them every single time. Help us to remember that as we step out in faith and pursue the godly dreams that you have given us. In Jesus name, Amen.