

Series: Becoming
Jesus Changes Everything

Ephesians 3:14-21

Sermon by Lead Pastor Paul Joslin

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, January 11, 2026

Please stand for the reading of God's word. A reading from Ephesians 3:14 through 21: "For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on Earth derives its name. I pray that out of His glorious riches, He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the Lord's holy people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know his love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever, amen," the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Paul: Man, I almost totally skipped the reading today, and Sophie was over there looking at me like, "What are you doing?" and she was totally on it, so thanks, Sophie, for helping us out. Thanks for reading. Before we dive into the message today, I want to make two quick announcements. One is that hopefully many of you received or have seen either an invitation or an e-mail about our vision night that is coming up on February First. Did anybody get or see anything about that coming up? Is anybody wondering like, "What is a vision night? What are we talking about?" Well, here is a funny story. Just last week, we received the invitation in the mail, and my wife opened the mail, and she saw it, and she said, "Paul, what is this? Why didn't you tell me that we have something on February First?" So, this is my announcement to her as much as to you. Communication is our new strategy in 2026, but I am so looking forward to this evening.

There are moments in time in scripture when God calls his people to look back on what He has done, to remember the way that He has worked in their lives and in their stories, so that they can understand his character, they can see his faithfulness as He is ready to call them into something new, and essentially that is what Vision Night is. We are going to be looking back over the years of Waterstone and what we have seen God do in some incredible ways in and through our church, and then we are going to be looking forward to what we feel like God is calling us into as a church, and so we can't wait for that night. We are so excited. We hope you will come and join us. If you are newer to Waterstone, and you are curious about who we are as a church, this is a great night to join us. We will feed you, but here is the thing, Waterstone, as long as I have been here, and I am guilty of this too, I just told you that I forgot to tell my wife we had an event on February First that I am leading. We are awful as a church at RSVPing, like so, so bad. We wait until the very, very last minute, and I do not know if it is because we are like, I don't know, "I want to see what is better or like what the Broncos schedule is." They will not be playing on that night. It is the week before the Super Bowl, so hopefully they will be playing the week after. Okay, yeah, so here is the thing.

If you are thinking about coming, if you think you will be here, could you RSVP for us today or like as soon as possible? Because we want to feed you and give you nice snacks to eat that night, and we can't do that if we do not know you are going to be here. We also need to know about childcare. We have a great kids' program that will be going on that whole night, so please RSVP as soon as you can. RSVP ASAP. How is that for a thing? We would love to see you there, and then secondly, as we dive into this series, "Becoming," that we started last week, the devotionals, they are in. We did not have them last week, but we have got a number here this week, and they are over at the information table, and so if you would like a devotional to walk with us through this series, it is a great way to start your year, focusing on who we are becoming as a church and how Jesus wants to transform and change your life. They are only \$5.00, and it is just a suggested donation. If you can't afford \$5.00, just take a book, and we are more than happy to give it to you, but we would love for you to pick up that devotional book.

Then finally, we are going to be talking about prayer today. Many of you have heard that next week we are going to be doing a 24/7 prayer event, the first one at Waterstone, so I am looking forward to this 24 hours when we are going to be gathering together as a church. There are half-hour blocks when you can sign up to pray. There will be stations to guide you through that process. It is a great chance to sign up with your friends, your roommates, your family, whatever it might be, but we really want to start this year as a church focused on prayer and bringing ourselves before the Lord, and so we would love to have you sign up there. All right, let me pray for us, and then we are going to dive into today's message.

Holy God, we quiet ourselves now in your presence, and we just set down any distractions or worries, the noise we carried in, and we do not just set it down to forget about it. We set it down at your feet, Jesus. We ask this morning, Spirit of the living God, would you awaken us? I want to pray that you would open our ears to hear what you are saying. I ask that you would soften our hearts to receive what you want to do. God, I ask this morning that your word would not merely inform us or give us something to learn, but that it would confront us, that it would heal us, that it would transform us. Where we are resistant, make us willing. Where we are weary, Lord, I pray that you would just breathe fresh life into us. Where we are comfortable, God, I pray that you would disturb us with your holy love, and we just pray this morning that simple, ancient prayer that your people have prayed throughout the ages: "Speak, Lord. Your servants are listening." We ask this in the powerful name of Jesus, amen.

Last night, Saturday night is interesting, because I would not say that my sermons are ever a rough draft, but sometimes Saturday night is the workshop. Do you know what I mean by that? It is like I'm still figuring out a few things, and there is a smaller crowd on Saturday nights, more intimate space. We meet over in the activity center, so it has got a little bit of energy to it where we all do not know what is going to happen. We are all just going along for the ride, including me, even though I have got a sermon written, and so one of the things I like to do on Saturday night is to ask the audience to help me out, like if I am struggling to think through something or just get a little participation. So last night I began the sermon with this simple question: "Where does change happen? How does change happen? How does it take place in our lives?" If you think about your own life and how you have seen change take place at different times, what would you say was the key ingredient to change or transformation in your life?

What we discussed as a group last night, Saturday night, was if you were looking to change something about your life, and you went to the culture around us, and you asked the culture, "How do I

produce change in my life?” what would the answer be? I feel like everybody in our culture is trying to produce change or transformation in some areas of their life. So, they threw out some options, and as I was compiling those answers today, I realized they fell into three categories. Some people threw out this idea that you have to read the right book, so if you have a problem you want to solve, you just need to find the right author, the right books that you can read. It is the Atomic Habits. It is the self-help books, where if you just get the right information, the right podcast, the right person you can listen to that is a little further along. You just need knowledge in order to produce the transformation that you want in your life, and many of us have probably tried that idea.

Then there is the other approach, which is, we do not just need to know things, but we need to learn how to just be the person that we want to, so if we want to experience change in our life, then we need to go inward, and we need to meditate, or we need to explore what we are longing for. We need to figure out what is going on internally. Then we just have to figure out how to become that kind of person, and so maybe we just fake it until we make it, or we manifest, or we do all of these things to try to make ourselves become the kind of people that we want to be. Maybe we do not know how to find those answers, and so we go to a therapist or a life coach or a guru or somebody who can point us in the right direction of how we need to be.

Then others of us, one of the options that was thrown out is that it is not about what you know, and it is not about who you are, it is that you just need to do it. It is like Nike; you are never going to become a marathon runner if you do not just run a lot of miles. You have to just do the thing, and so we have all of these different options, and none of them are bad at all. I have participated in many of those things. Habits are great. You want to try to figure out the right thing to do. You go ask people. You read books. You listen to podcasts, but here is the thing. All of those have this assumption that change in your life, the change you want to produce in your life, begins with you. It is all about your effort. It is all about how hard you try. It is all about finding the right information that you need, and all of it begins in this place where it is about you.

I think it is missing a key ingredient, because I think that that is where we often get stuck, because many of us know the right information. We know more information than we know how to live out. Many of us can try and try and try, and eventually, like just willpower and effort, you can't sustain that. I mean, we get tired. You have a rough night, and you can't get up as early as you want or whatever, and we can't just be the thing. What we figure out is that we try really hard to be something, and then suddenly we realize that no matter how hard we try to be this thing, we are still struggling in certain areas. I don't know about you, but there are times in my life when I have looked inward, and instead of finding clarity, I find more complexity. Going inward does not always help me be the kind of person I want to be, and that is the question before us: “Where does change come from? What kind of change are we talking about?”

That is what is before us in this series, “Becoming,” and that's a question that we're wrestling with as a church, or to be honest with you, that we wrestled with as a church over the last year. I said this last week, but the mission of Waterstone is very clear. It is become like Jesus and live for others. At Waterstone, our mission is simple. We want to become like Jesus and live for others. That is not just something we say. That is not just something we do. That is who we want to be. We believe that Jesus is not just like a part of the solution to what is going on in the world. He is the answer to every problem we have.

We do not believe that Jesus is just an accessory to an already busy life. We believe that He is the essence of the life that we were meant for and intended for, but this mission raises a deeper question, one that I have been wrestling with over the last year, because if you look at that mission, and if you are a part of Waterstone, then this is the mission, the banner that is supposed to be over your life. It is not just something we are doing as an organization. It is something every single one of us is called to as a part of this community. The question is, “Are you becoming more like Jesus? Are you learning to live for others?” If you look back at your life, the beginning of last year to this year, what has changed? What is different? If you went back five years, all the way back to 2021, 2022, crazy years, a lot of stuff happened, do you look more like Jesus today than you did then?

As a pastor who stepped into this role of leading Waterstone, I had to really wrestle with this mission, because it has been our mission for four or five years, but suddenly, as a person who inherited leading this church, I came to a place where I had to start asking myself that question. Is that just something I say on a Sunday morning and believe or want other people to participate in, or is it something that is actually happening in my life? Would my friends or my family say that I’m becoming more like Jesus and living for others? Is it just something I preach about on Sundays or talk to people about on Wednesdays?

I think that questioning then led our staff to this place where we began wrestling with that idea as a church. Over the last few months, as we concluded 2025, we began in this place where we were asking, “Who are we becoming as a church? Are our programs, are our Sunday mornings, are the things we do, the small groups we run, the classes that we have, are they actually allowing us to become like Jesus and live for others? Are there good things that we have been doing that are beneficial but maybe have not been helping us live out this mission?” So, we began to wrestle with that question: “What would it look like for the people and place of Waterstone to become a people that are actually doing this, that we are becoming like Jesus and learning to live for others?” So, we begin praying and listening to the Spirit. We began talking amongst ourselves. We began this process of discerning, and we were asking the question, “Who is God calling us to be as a church? How could we shape values and practices that would allow us as a community to live this idea out?” That is really the heart of where this “Becoming” series has come from. The next six weeks are going to be a six-week journey where we unveil the values of Waterstone one by one. That is what the devotional is. That is what our sermon series is going to be. Who is God calling us to be as a church where we would actually be able to become like Jesus and learn to live for others?

Now here is the temptation when you preach through a values or a vision series. It is I think you come up with a vision statement, and then you say, as a pastor, “Okay, what passage can I use to support or prove that that’s good and that’s right?” I do not want to do that. I do not want our vision or values to be the driver of this series. At Waterstone, we believe scripture is the authority over who we are, and so here is what I want to do today. I am actually not going to tell you the value up front. I am going to build a little suspense. We are going to preach through the scripture like we do every Saturday and Sunday, and we are going to look at these passages together, and we are going to see what God has for us, and then at the end, I want to tell you about the first and most important value of who we want to be as a church.

Here is why I want to do that, because this passage that we are going to look at is an ancient prayer of the Apostle Paul. He was looking at the church in Ephesus, and he was praying over what he wanted that church to become. If I am honest with you, this is a prayer that I have had for Waterstone the last year,

that I have been praying for us as a community, that this is what I would like to see take place in our church. This is what my hope and prayer is that would happen in your life, and so we are going to just walk through this passage, this ancient prayer of the apostle Paul, and look at his prayer for the church and what he hopes that change will look like in our lives.

So, in Ephesians 3, if you have your Bibles and want to follow along, whether it is on your phone or with a Bible in front of you or the Bible you brought with you, Ephesians chapter 3, starting in verse 16, it says this: “I pray that out of His glorious riches, He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Now, I love where Paul begins this prayer, because he says these words, “glorious riches.” What in the world do glorious riches mean when Paul says that he is praying that out of God’s glorious riches, He would strengthen us with power through his Spirit in our inner being? There are a lot of words there, a lot of theology happening, so let’s unpack it. I think when it comes to this idea of glorious riches, what he is saying is that he is praying out of an abundance of who God is and who His character is. Many of us operate with the understanding or the belief that change happens in our lives based on our energy, our maturity, our spiritual track record, how much we can use our will for it, or how much we can know, or who we can be, but Paul is starting in a very different place. He is saying that change flows from the inexhaustible, glorious riches of God Himself. In other words, he is saying that change is possible not because you are strong or you are good or you have enough ability. He is saying that change is possible because God is so rich.

I was thinking about that idea this week. It made me think of something that I probably should not say in church as a pastor. I hate potluck dinners, and I do not know if you are allowed to ever say that as a pastor of a church. I hate potlucks. I do not like them, and I know that it is like the way the church does community and eats food together, and that if we tried to feed 600 people, we could never do it, so we ask everybody to bring something. I get all of that, but even if it is just like a small group, and we are like, “Hey, we are going to do a potluck style dinner, and there are like twelve of us that are coming,” I hate it. I don’t like it, and here is why. It is because I get this low-grade anxiety about what I’m supposed to bring. I’m in the grocery store, and I’m going to exaggerate a little bit, but these are definitely conversations I’ve had with myself in the grocery store aisle, at King Soopers or Trader Joe’s or whatever it is: “I really like this dish, so I am going to bring it, because it is a favorite family recipe.” What if I take it, and nobody likes it? What does that mean about my family? Or what if I show up with a dish, and somebody else has the exact same dish, and then there are two of the same thing, and people do not have enough variety, and they’re looking at the two of us like, “You guys couldn’t coordinate that a little better? Why did we end up with two of the same thing?” There is just this low-grade anxiety, and then here is the real reason that I really don’t like potlucks, and it is this. What if people bring bad food that I do not like? If you are like, “I love this,” and I am like, “It is fine. Kale salad,” not the best thing to bring to a potluck? That is not what I want, and so there is so much that is dependent on what people bring to the table, and I do not have any control over it, and I like a little bit of control, and I am just at the whims of everybody’s desires, and I do not like it.

Here is the thing. I think we often have a similar relationship, if you can stay with me for just a second, I think this will land. It is that I think sometimes we have a similar relationship with transformation and our relationship with God, in that we think transformation or change takes place in our life based on

what we bring to the table, that the success or the goodness or how great the potluck is, is always dependent on what people bring to the table, and we have the same belief about our relationship with Jesus, that it is about what I can bring. It is about how good a recipe I have. It is about how I am bringing all of the things together to make this meal good and whole and something that people want to be a part of. I think what Paul is saying here with this idea of glorious riches is that the meal is not about what you bring to the table. Transformation is not about what you are bringing to the table. It is based on the idea and the belief that God has it covered, and that out of his glorious riches, that is the place that change begins, not how hard you try, not what effort you can muster, not the things you bring to the table. Change always begins with who God is, that He has this way of transforming our lives, not through what we bring, but because He is a good and gracious host. He is the one providing the meal, and it is a meal of abundance. That is what it means that God has these glorious riches available to us.

Then he goes on, and he says that not only is this out of the glorious riches, but his prayer is that we may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, so let's take it phrase by phrase. He moves from this idea of glorious riches into this place that he is praying we may be strengthened. This is his prayer, that you would be strengthened through the power of the Holy Spirit. Now that is important, because again, it brings home the idea that change in your life is not based on hype. It is not based on discipline. It is not based on religious effort. It is the active, personal work of the Holy Spirit in your life that is bringing about change. This means that the Spirit, by which change takes place in your life, is because of God's life becoming present in us, becoming real within us.

Paul knows something that we all too often forget. Change is not about behavior modification or trying to change things externally. He is saying that the Holy Spirit is what strengthens us, sustains us, and renews us from the inside out, and you notice where the power goes. Paul does not pray first for external change. He does not ask for their circumstances to change, or for the problems to shift or to disappear, or for opposition in their life to be removed. He does not pray for any of that. Instead, he prays that they would be strengthened in their inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. I think that many of us live in this space. Sorry, my notes are lost, where we want God to rest on our lives, but what Paul is saying here is that it is not just this way that Jesus is passing through our lives. He is not just simply showing up in our lives when things begin to fall apart.

I think we sometimes have this view of Jesus that He is just there for when things get hard. When things begin to break down, He will begin to comfort us, but Paul is pulling this towards a different vision. He is saying that Christ will dwell within us. He will make a home within us. He is saying that Jesus is not someone we simply should believe in, but He is actually someone who lives within us, shaping our desires, reordering our loves, and forming our inner life. So many of us, we start with this place where we want a stronger resolve, or we want better willpower, or we want to muster up the energy and the change that we think we need, and we end up in a Christianity that absolutely exhausts us, because it is all about you and what you can do, and what Paul is saying here is that there is a power through the Spirit in our inner being that is at work through the power of the Spirit, that you do not have to live an exhausted Christian life where it is just a slog you are trying to get through. He's saying that there is a power available to us, that God is at work, and that it is not about new habits or stronger resolves or a better effort or tighter

boundaries, but that through Christ, we do not have to experience this constant burnout from trying too hard or give up because we keep failing. The spiritual formation does not look like self-improvement or moral polishing or spiritual performance. It is God's life slowly, patiently, and faithfully taking root in us.

My family, when we travel, we like to, we will often do Air bed-and-breakfasts if we are in a place for longer than any number of nights. Like if it is one night, a hotel is great, but if you are going to be in a place for a while, you want a kitchen and separate bedrooms, all that kind of thing, and what I have noticed is when we go to Air bed-and-breakfasts or VRBOs or that kind of place, there is always one door in the house that is locked. Do you know what I am talking about? You are renting the space, and they are like, "Hey, the whole house is yours. You can go anywhere you want. Use the kitchen, use the bathrooms, the hot tubs, whatever. It is all yours," but there is one door where they are like, they don't say anything about it. They do not let you know. It is just locked, and you can't get in, and I always want to get in when there is a door locked, and I am always curious about what is going on behind that door. Like what is it specifically in that bedroom or that closet that you are like, "You can have the whole house, but not this one"? "This place is off limits," and I have never tried very hard to get into those doors or anything, but it piques my curiosity, and here is why I say that.

It is what Paul is talking about here in this passage of Christ dwelling within us. I think sometimes we can treat Jesus within us like a VRBO or an Airbnb guest. He has free reign of the house, but it is not his home, and so, yeah, I use the kitchen, the living room is yours, the bedroom, like it is all fine, but there are places within our lives that we keep locked behind closed doors. It is the places of sin that we're afraid He might condemn us for. It is the places of shame we do not want other people to know about, and so Jesus just stays in this place where He is just a guest. He is just someone that is passing through, and what Paul is saying here is that his prayer is that Jesus would take up residence in our inner being, that there would not be locked doors where we say He is not allowed to be, that we would open the entirety of who we are to Him, and that is the space where change takes place.

I think a lot of times we keep these locked doors, we keep these spaces where we do not want Jesus to take up residence, because we are afraid that He will condemn us, but the reality is that Jesus wants access to those spaces, not to shame you or to condemn you, but to bring healing and restoration. Scripture says that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The whole purpose of Jesus is to heal and to restore and to reconcile the things within us that are broken and the things within us that we do not want other people to see, and so Paul's invitation is essentially, his prayer is that we would just fling wide those doors and let the Holy Spirit work within us, that we would let Christ bring the healing and the restoration that is on offer to us, that we would allow God to work in our inner being in those areas. The question is, "Why do we keep those things hidden?"

That is why I think some of us do not experience the change we are looking for, because the place we need change most in our life is the place that we will not let Jesus touch. When we look at those things, like the sins we hide or the anger we have or the whatever it might be, the shame, the pride, and we think, "If I just lock it away tight enough, it will not affect my life," but those things always seep out through the cracks. There is only so long you can go with those sorts of things before they will legitimately wreck your life, and Paul's invitation is, "Do not let it get to that point. Open the doors. Fling wide, unlock the doors. Give Jesus full residential access to your life."

Then it is fascinating, because that feels like a really hard prayer to pray. Like, just open yourself up to Jesus. Allow Him to change you. It does not start with you. It starts with Him, and you just need to let Him take up residence in your life. That is really difficult, and so I think that is why Paul shifts to the next part of this prayer, and he says, “I pray.” In verses 17 through 19, he says, “I pray that you, being rooted and established in love.” The foundation of your relationship with God is love. “Rooted and established in love, may have power.” There is that word again, “together with all of the Lord’s people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, to know his love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of the fullness of God.”

Paul’s second prayer is that he prays that we would be able to grasp God’s love. His prayer is that we would have the power to grasp the love of Christ, which tells us something really important. If he is praying that we would have the power through the Spirit to grasp the love of Christ, then what he is implicitly saying on the other side is that the love of Christ is sometimes hard for us to grasp, that sometimes it is hard for us to believe. It is not automatic that when we are in a relationship with God, we have a full breadth and understanding of what God’s love is. Many of us believe in a general sense that God loves people out there. Of course, God loves people. That is what He is supposed to be about, but we do not believe that God could ever love me. We have too many doubts or repeated patterns of failure, and God loves those people because they are better than I am, and I deal with pride. I deal with sin, and I quietly wonder whether God’s unconditional love applies to me, and so we stay in this relationship where we keep God at arm’s length, and then that keeps us from experiencing the kind of change that we are hoping for, because we do not trust God’s love for us. Paul is saying that his prayer is that we would grasp how deep and how wide and how full the love of God is for us, that that is where change begins, understanding God’s love for us, and he prays this prayer, saying that he prays that we would grasp and have knowledge of what is beyond our comprehension. It is something that is really hard for us to know, and that is why he goes to the dimensions of Christ’s love, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

I think what he is saying there is not like poetic filler to just make us feel better about ourselves. He is trying to draw our attention to the actual dimensions of Christ’s love, that Christ’s love is wide enough to include you, no matter your background or your failures or your doubts. His love is long enough to outlast your sin, your wandering, or your seasons of dryness. His love is high enough to lift you out of shame and to give you a new identity. His love is deep enough to meet you in your grief and your trauma and your addiction and your despair. What Paul is saying is that God’s love for you, wherever you think it ends, it does not. Wherever you think you have outrun God’s grace, you have not. It is beyond your boundaries that you set for how much God could love you. It is deeper and wider than you could ever begin to imagine, and it is from that place of understanding God’s love for us that it does not stop, and then he says this paradoxical thing. He wants you to know, experience. It is not head knowledge. He wants you to experience in your inner being that which surpasses knowledge. In other words, you can’t just read a book about this love and get it. You have to experience it relationally, slowly, patiently over time as it forms you. Then Paul closes with this amazing statement before we get to the next verse. He says, the fullness of God, “that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

Paul is not saying that we should merely settle for a spirituality where we survive, or we just grit our teeth, or we endure the Christian life. I think so many of us have come to this place where we believe that spirituality and following Jesus is a slog, that it is just hard. It is just painful, and someday, when we die, it will be worth it, and this life is hard. Jesus makes no qualms about the fact that following Him will cost you everything, but He never says that it will be miserable. What He is saying is that there is a fullness present now, filled to the measure of all the fullness of God that is available to us today, not someday when we die, but that we can experience a life with God now that is not free of pain, that is not all prayers answered on demand, that is not circumstances that work out exactly the way we want, but that is filled with the presence and life of God, even in suffering and in waiting and in uncertainty, that the fullness of God does not merely comfort us. It is not just merely with us, that it fills us, and that is entirely different.

It is entirely different, and if you think all of this is too impossible or too unimaginable, if you think, “Okay, so the Spirit rests within me, and then it is trying to produce transformation in my life. It does not start with me. It starts with God. That is great news, and then that transformation is based on the love that God has for me. So that sounds great too, but I am still not fully convinced. I am not sure if I can actually grasp that. I am not sure if that actually makes a difference in my life.” Then listen to what Paul says next: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine.” He is able. He can do it, and He can do more than you can even begin to ask or to imagine, that this life rooted in love, that people can be filled with the fullness of God. This change that begins with Him and not with us, He is able to do it, and it is stronger than your imagination. It is stronger than your ability. It is stronger than what you can even begin to ask Him. Think about that.

I think so many of us, we settle for prayers with Jesus that are simply this: “God, help me to get from point A to B without it being too hard.” Like, “God, can you just like help my kids get through high school without getting pregnant or getting hooked on drugs?” and we settle. We pray for this space where we just hope that God will maybe show up enough in our lives to help us get by and get through, and Paul is saying that there is so much more available to you, that your prayers do not just have to be for survival. They can be for transformation. It is not just about enough strength to get you through the week, but there is enough for renewal, to actually change your life. He is asking for us to change a posture, to expand our imagination, to believe that God is not limited by our fear or our doubts or our past or our disappointments.

That is why I think that the value that Waterstone has, our first and most important value, is so critical. It is because I think many of us live with this quiet doubt that Jesus actually makes a difference in our life here and now. Sure, Jesus saves us for someday getting to heaven, but we are not sure if He actually makes a difference in our marriages, in our kids’ lives, in our careers. We are not sure if He makes a difference in our singleness. We are not sure if Jesus actually impacts the places that we are living our lives, and so one of the core convictions that Waterstone wants to have, a value that we want to hold to as we try to live out this calling to become like Jesus and live for others, is we do that because we believe that Jesus actually changes everything in our lives, that He actually wants to change and transform your life. He wants you to be able to become more like Him.

The good news of Jesus is not just a belief. It is not just theological assent. It is a way of life, and we follow Jesus with expectancy, because we believe that He has the power to change and transform people and places and purpose in our lives, that Jesus can actually change the places in your life that you

think are untouchable or too far gone, the places that you have grown weary of praying about, the places that you have just given up on and think, “Okay, someday I know He will make it all right,” and that is the extent of it. There is something more for us.

As I was writing the devotional on this idea of Jesus changing everything, I wrote a reflection of what I think this idea means, and I want to share it with you today. I don’t often read quotes, and I certainly hate the idea of quoting myself, but when I wrote this word, I wanted to put it in front of our church. I do not know if you are going to pick up the devotional or not, but I want you to hear this idea. Sometimes we read the stories in scripture of how Jesus healed or transformed a life or met someone in desperation. We think, “That is great for them, but Jesus does not do that stuff now.” However, we believe Jesus changes everything, and we have seen that transformation. These stories are not just in history. They are happening right now, in our church and around the world. I have seen Jesus pull people out of suffocating depression and breathe hope into them again. I have witnessed healing in bodies that doctors did not know how to fix. I have stood with couples whose marriages looked all but dead, only to watch Christ rebuild them through forgiveness that made no sense except through grace. I have seen prodigals come home after years of wandering. I have sat with people whose addictions felt unbreakable, only for Jesus to loosen the chains that could not be loosened on their own. Story after story, life after life, moment after moment, Jesus steps into our lives and shifts everything, but it is important to note and when we say we believe Jesus changes everything, it does not always mean our circumstances work out perfectly. It does not mean Jesus makes all of our dreams come true.

I have also witnessed that Jesus changes everything often means seeing transformation and new life emerge right in the middle of circumstances that remain unchanged. I have watched people walk through cancer, but without fear, because Christ met them in the valley of the shadow of death. I have sat with grieving parents who discovered a peace they could not explain but somehow could not deny. I have seen followers of Jesus cling to hope when the circumstances never changed, yet they changed in their circumstances. I have watched people forgive someone, an offender who never apologized to them. I have witnessed joy grow in hearts where sorrow did not leave. I have watched believers remain tender and faithful in seasons where every prayer seemed to echo back in silence. I have seen people carry chronic pain or unanswered questions with the strength that could have only come from God. Jesus changes everything means that He changes the situation sometimes, and sometimes it means He changes us in the middle of the situation. Either way, we hold fast onto this value, not because everything works out, but because He works in everything. He meets us in the broken places, the unresolved circumstances, the unanswered question, and He brings new a creation there too.

That is the kind of change we are talking about when we say we believe that Jesus changes everything. It is the kind of transformation that no program, no self-help plan, and no New Year’s resolution can accomplish. It is the kind of transformation only Jesus can do. I think it is the idea that Jesus changes everything that has to fuel everything about who we are as a church, because otherwise, what point is there? If we just gather to sing songs and to hear a Ted Talk from scripture, and we don’t believe that Jesus actually has the power to make an impact in the days that we live out, we are wasting our time. Jesus can and is able to change everything. So here’s my prayer for you, Waterstone. It is that we would believe that, and not that we would just believe that, but that we would live it out, that we would live with that

hope. One of the interesting things that Paul says in this passage is that we would have the power together as God's people to grasp what he is saying. It is not about you just figuring it out on your own. It is about us gathering together and lifting each other up when we do not have the strength to do that ourselves.

So, to close today, we are going to do something a little different, that we have not often done at Waterstone. If you are here today, and you need prayer, I am not going to ask you to come forward. I am not going to ask you to share your request. I am simply going to ask you to stand in the place where you are and to say, "I need Jesus." That is all you are saying. We have no idea what is going on beneath that request. You are just proclaiming and taking a posture that says, "This is what I need. I feel this internally, and I am showing this to the body around me, that this is where I am today. I need Jesus to show up in my life," and it could be the places where you have grown weary of praying for yourself. It could be those places that you have kept locked away and hidden, and you are ready for Jesus to have access to those spaces. So, I am going to ask you in just a moment to stand and to receive prayer for those places. So, if you are here today, and you believe that Jesus changes everything, and you need to experience that in your life, you need to know that in a way that surpasses understanding, I am going to ask you to stand right now, to stand, simply saying, "I need Jesus, and I need prayer."

Now, Waterstone, for those of you that see people standing in this room who need prayer, I am going to ask that you make sure not a single person standing does not have someone lay a hand on them and pray for them in this moment. This is how we lift each other up as the body, as we carry each other's burdens, and we say, you do not have to carry whatever this burden is alone. I do not even have to know what it is, but I am here to pray for you today. So, if you are sitting, I am going to ask that you stand and move around the room and lay a hand on someone who is asking for prayer at this moment. It is going to be messy. It is not going to make sense, and then it might be a little confusing, but lay a hand on someone, and if you feel led by the Spirit, pray for them, whatever you feel like the Spirit is prompting you to pray, and in a moment I am going to pray to close the section, and we will worship together, so pray over those around you as you feel led in this moment.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for those who have stood in boldness to say that I need Jesus. God, we do not know what those requests are about. We do not know the places in their life where they have felt weary or worn down, where they have been praying and asking for you to show up in some way, where they have felt like spirituality was a slog, where the places are in their life where they have kept things hidden and locked behind closed doors, the places where people are maybe thinking in this moment, "I do not even know what this Jesus thing is all about, but I need something to change my life, and I have tried everything else." God, I ask in this moment by the power of your Holy Spirit that you would bring the change and transformation that we are looking for, not through easier circumstances or prayers that are answered just the way we want, but with what Paul talks about, the fullness of who God is, that we could experience that life, that transformation, that change, because Jesus, we have looked everywhere else, and nowhere else offers what you do, so Jesus, we come humbly. We ask persistently. We pray that Waterstone would be a church that believes that Jesus changes everything. God, may we experience that this week, in his name, amen.

45:07 minutes