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GOOD MORNING/INVOCATION – Bobby & Hannah

BS: This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Good morning.

HS: We're so happy that you're here today. I want to remind you that worship is actually a form of powerful prayer. So whether you are facing something hard today or rejoicing, let's all worship our living God this morning. Thank you for being here. You are very, very loved.

BS: We're so grateful to have our children's choir, Voices of Hope with us leading us in worship, so thanks, guys, for being here. Thanks especially to the parents. I know that's hard work for you, too. Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, thank you so much for calling us into your house. Thank you, God that you love us right where we are, and we thank you that you continue to see the best in us, even when we see the worst, and we pray you'd forgive us of our sins, you'd renew us, renew our families, renew our country, renew our societies, renew our church, and we ask it all in the strong name of Jesus. Everyone said amen.

HAVEN: Turn to the person next to you and so God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – Matthäus 21:4-11 – Hannah Schuller

Would you open your Bibles with me to Matthew 21:4-11.

This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

INTERVIEW - Dr. Ryan Pineda (RP) with Bobby Schuller (BS)

Ryan Pineda is an entrepreneur and investor who has founded a number of successful businesses over the years. He has also been involved in real estate for over a decade by investing in homes and flipping them. He took what he's learned about his successes and founded Wealthy Way, where he speaks to others in hopes of inspiring them to reach their financial goals.

BS: Ryan Pineda, welcome, man. It's so great to be here with you. How you doin'?

RP: I'm good, man, thank you for having us. Beautiful church.

BS: Yes, thanks. A lot of people don't know your story. We have a lot of entrepreneurs, a lot of writers, a lot of movers and shakers that kind of follow us, and I really think you're one of those movers and shakers. And one of the things I love is you're obviously a successful person, especially in the world of finance and real estate, but you have a big heart for God. I've been following you on YouTube for awhile, and I've seen a lot of the stuff you've done, and I was so surprised.. it seemed like at first I didn't hear a lot about it, but then I started hearing about you being very bold about like your faith and like encouraging a lot of these younger guys that are following you. How old are you, like..

RP: I'm 34.

BS: Thirty four, okay.

RP: Yes.

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BS: And you've got a lot of these guys that are following you, and you've been very bold about your faith, and I'm sure a lot of people have not liked certain Christian stances you've taken. First of all, tell me a little bit about your story. Like how did you get into business?

RP: We don't have a lot of time, so the two minute version is I actually got drafted to play baseball by the Oakland A's in 2010, but I didn't make any money doing that. You have to go through the minor leagues in order to get to the big leagues and make the money. So I was making \$1,200 a month playing minor league baseball. So I was kind of forced into becoming an entrepreneur.

BS: Were you married when you were playing for the big?

RP: Yes, yes, so..

BS: Whoa.

RP: ..Mindy was in college, so she wasn't making any money, just getting debt, and we had to figure it out.

BS: Did the minors have like whatever it is – 162 games, also? Playing every day?

RP: Yes, hundred and forty games.

BS: So you're getting like 30 cents an hour?

RP: It was literally like two dollars an hour. We did the math.

BS: Incredible, wow.

RP: Yes.

BS: And so you're like I got to make some more money, so you started flipping couches.

RP: Well first thing I did was I became a realtor. I sucked at that. Then I got into flipping couches, and that was my first successful business, that then led to flipping houses, which became really successful.

BS: Great.

RP: Yes.

BS: So you went from flipping couches and you probably just got to a place where it was like I can't scale this, I can't recruit, I can't train a guy to do this because he'll just do it on his own, right? Like why would he do it for you?

RP: Yes, so it just got to the point, too, where it wasn't really fulfilling either, and I'd kind of capped out. It was like I was making eight grand a month, which was great money, but when you see that this is it, you're like what else is there in life? Like I want to improve, I want to get better.

BS: So then you started flipping houses. Now I know that's pretty risky. I mean there's a lot of people who have lost their shirts flipping houses. You've done very well. What was the key for you to like.. like did you make money on your first flip?

RP: Yes, our first flip I ended up maxing out my credit cards to do it and thankfully we made \$25,000, but yes, I've definitely lost on flips, too. It's by no means just all wins.

BS: Now you are still flipping real estate. I saw that you've flipped like over 500 properties, something like that. Do you ever hold.. is it all flips?

RP: Yes, so we got over 600 rentals now, too, that we manage. Some of my own, some as a syndication, everything else.

BS: So that's the business, Ryan, and this is a very.. I know you're a successful guy, I'm not going to ask you how much you're worth, but I know you've got a high net worth, you've made a lot of money in business, but there's this other part of you that you really want to.. like you're in ministry now. Like I was talking to you about this yesterday, I remember Hannah had met with Mindy, and Hannah was like I think they wanted to be pastors or wanted to go into ministry, and I was like did you guys want to go into ministry? And you're like we're in ministry. We're doing it now. How do those two intersect, because a lot of Christians are not down with probably the money thing; they're not down with businesses. We're not that way, but..

RP: So our ministry is called Wealthy Kingdom. Wealthy is my brand just overall, and so what it is it got started from me having my own Bible studies for the last eight years, and so I was just inviting my friends who were entrepreneurs and business people, and we'd have a Bible study every week. And sometimes it would be at my house or my office, and everything else, and all of a sudden it just kept growing and growing and growing, and we saw the life change happening. And I saw that it was an easier way to get a lot of these business guys in the door to faith than saying hey, just come to church on a Sunday. They were just more receptive to it, because it was more personal.

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And sure enough, they did, and then that then got them into the local church, that got them serving and going on mission trips and everything, and so eventually when social media started going big for me, people started asking me, they're like dude, how do I find one in my city? And I was like I don't know, they don't really exist for entrepreneurs. And so I said you know what, I'm just going to do it. And so last year, we launched 50 Bible studies nationwide, and now we have people doing them worldwide, and so that ministry is not even a year old, but like it's growing really fast.

BS: I'm so glad you're doing this, because there used to be something called.. I think it was called like the gospel Christian businessmen association. I think they're still around, but I feel like in the 90's I heard about them a lot more, and now I haven't heard much. I'm sure they're there, and I'll probably get an email, but I love that you're doing it for our generation, and I think doing it in a fresh way is super important because there are a lot of men, and women, who want to build a business. They want to make a lot of money. They want to build or create something awesome. They want to fulfill a huge dream, but they're like constantly told be humble, be humble, be humble, I think taking a lot of scripture out of context, like the eye of the needle and this type of thing. I know you're heart. You just love the Lord, you live for Jesus. What do you say to a young person or any person that's kind of struggling with that? They want to create an awesome business, but theologically they're wondering like is it okay to just wake up in the morning and be like I'm going to get out there and kill a gazelle and get like my bag.

RP: Look, I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I think that there are two misconceptions right now with Christianity and money. The first is that people think like they can't intercept, right? Like that it's wrong to pursue building a big business or anything else because it's going to be at the cost of your faith. That's not true. You can build a big business, and have great faith, spend time with God, lead your family, all of those things. So that's a lie that I think Satan tells people. The second thing is, like for me in ministry, this particular ministry, I can with authority say hey you know what, I've achieved the riches, the status, the fame, and I can tell you it will not fulfill you because I know. It's very different than maybe somebody who hasn't achieved it that's like hey you can't pursue God and money. It's like well dude, you've never had money. You can't speak from authority to know whether or not it actually is going to fulfill you. You don't have it. And it's like.. people don't really know until they experience things themselves, and I can say with certainty I have lots of friends who are not believers who have money, and they're miserable. I have people who they're Christians, and they don't have money and they're struggling every single day trying to figure out what they're going to do. And it's like I think there's this middle ground where it's like you have faith, and you shouldn't have to struggle every day.

BS: There are actually rich people, like a lot of people don't recognize that John Mark, for example, was actually very well to do.

RP: Oh, I didn't know that.

BS: We know that because for example in the book of Acts, when they go to his mother's house, she's in like basically a palace, and this is where the church is meeting. We know that there are multiple people who financially supported the disciples. A lot of times they remained nameless because in the kingdom of God, they're not more important, but they are important and like God for sure called them to financially support the spreading of the gospel. We also know that like writing the books of the Bible back then could be equivalent of like twenty/thirty thousand dollars in paper and like to have a person do it because it wasn't real paper, it was like papyrus and the ink had to be specially done, and put out in the.. So we know that it was financially difficult to do a lot of these things, and that there were people effectively helping, donating, bank-rolling the spread of the gospel. And so I think that it's a mistake.. what do you think about.. so you're gung ho, you're like don't live for money, but if you have a business, if you have an idea, just go for it, right? Just like get out there and do it.

RP: Well God calls us to be excellent at whatever we're doing.

BS: That's right.

RP: So if you're an employee at a company, you should strive to be excellent in the very best at your job. If you own a business, it's not.. God never calls you to be mediocre and give it half-hearted effort, like you should be striving to make the business as best as it can possibly be.

BS: So Jesus gives us the answer, right? He says seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you. All these things is financial stuff.

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So I think as believers, we would both agree that go for it, achieve your dreams, build a great business, build a great organization, make some money, why not, provide for people, do all you can, be all you can, but put God first. Keep God in that first position.

RP: Yes, seek Him first and the other thing I'll add, too, is like at the end of the day, He talks about in parables how those who can be trusted with little, He trusts with more. And it's like God's always testing you to see what you can handle and what you're willing to do and how obedient you're willing to be, and it's like don't fail the test.

BS: Yes, that's right.

RP: Embrace it.

BS: Ryan Pineda, thank you so much. You can check him out on, I guess, RyanPineda.com.

RP: Yes.

BS: Google it. You can see him on Instagram and YouTube. Thank you so much, man, for taking your time to be with us. God bless you.

RP: Yes, appreciate you. Thank you.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Well no matter who you are, would you stand with us? We're going to say this creed together as we do every week. Hold your hands like this as a way of receiving from the Lord. Let's say this together: I'm not what I do. I'm not what I have. I'm not what people say about me. I am the beloved of God. It's who I am. No one can take it from me. I don't have to worry, I don't have to hurry, I can trust my friend Jesus and share His love with my neighbor. Thanks you can be seated.

MESSAGE/PRAYER – Bobby Schuller: "The Will to Life"

You may have heard this, those of who are friends with my grandma Pursley, Jo, she's been sick for a few days, and actually last Friday she had an aneurism at her house, and she's been in the hospital for a few days, and I'm sorry to say but this morning she passed away. And she actually passed away while the livestream was happening in the first service. And so it was kind of interesting because it was like of course she had to wait until church. So she was ninety years old and had some health problems. It's still hard, though when somebody, no matter how old they are, when they pass, so I'm a little emotional this morning so I ask you to forgive me for that. We were very close. I think she would prefer if I shared the word that was on my heart this morning. And of course we know where she is. She had a tremendous faith and was here every Sunday. But here's what I'd ask of you. I'm giving you a precious 30-minutes of my life; this is an important time in my life. Here's what I'm asking for you is to give me that 30-minutes back in the sense that listen to what I'm about to say. Every author wants to be read, every speaker wants to be heard, and all I ask is that I believe what I'm about to tell you could change your life and could transform your life. And I believe it with all my heart. And I think if you hear what I'm about to say, that's why I'm here. Of course if you don't hear what I say, it's not your fault, it's mine. No such thing as a bad student, only bad teachers. That's what Mr. Miyagi said, and so just do your best, if you can this morning, to hear what I'm going to tell you, and I think it'll touch your heart. Amen? Can we do that together? Let's begin. I want you to imagine in your mind's eye a 15-year-old orphan girl in the Bronx in a rough part of town in the 1990's. She's knocking on doors, schools in fact, asking them to readmit her. She's been out of the loop for a while, has not been able to attend, and because of that, schools are not allowing her to go back without certain things, but the problem is her parents are dead. Years before this, she says, Liz Murray who tells the story that she would come home after school, back when she was in school, and her parents would be openly using drugs in the house. They were both addicts. And she said despite that, she felt very much that they created a decent home for her. She felt very much that they loved her, and that in their own they were good parents. And yet, they were addicted to drugs. Both of them contracted HIV and by the time she was 15, they both passed away. Now she says that in this moment when her mother dies, she experienced a weird thing in her mind where she began to ask the question: what if. She's in a bad way. She's 15, she doesn't have any money, she's living on the street, she's not in school, but she's asked herself a question: now that it's up to me, what if? What if I went back to school? What if I decided to get straight A's? What if I applied to Harvard, would I get in? And how would I pay for it? Well what if I write to the New York Times and ask them for the money in a scholarship? And brother, I tell you, all those things happened to her. What an amazing story, Liz Murray. Very often when we experience trauma in life, these events of death and loss and challenge, they cause post-traumatic stress.

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We've all heard of that and that's a real thing. But many of us don't know that it's more common to have post traumatic growth. That after you go through a rough moment in life, like the loss of a parent, very often something changes in your heart that can be quite positive. That even though she was close to her mom, she said she began to ask the 'what if' question. There was a quote from Martin Luther King that touched her heart, it went something like this: "the day we see the truth and cease to speak is the day we begin to die." What do you think that Dr. King means there when he says 'the day we see the truth and we don't speak is the day we begin to die'? This was a quote for her. The truth to her was its possible. She fell in love with possibility. Those are her words, not mine, although they sound like a Schuller. She said I fell in love with possibility; that it was possible for me. A what if. What if I could do this? What if I could do that? What if I could do this? And what she was grabbing onto was the old idea, an old philosophical idea, one that there's been lots of books written about contrasting the difference between a will to life, and a will to death. An old idea she'd embraced - a will to life. Now a will to life means that you make hard choices to get great outcomes. For her, it was hard and embarrassing to knock on school doors. For her, it was hard to get straight A's. For her, it was hard to apply to Harvard and it was hard to apply for a scholarship to the New York Times, but she did it because of a drive inside of her, a drive inside of her for the will for life, and you that inside of you. Here's the principle I want you to get this morning. If you hear anything, hear this this morning - my life is ever expanding or shrinking based on my choices. I'm asking you this morning to make choices that expand your life, even though they're hard. I'm asking you this morning to reject a will to death, which is a will to comfort and procrastination and giving in, and embrace instead a will to life, which is, I will, I will, I will. My life expands when I reach out. Your life expands when you do one more, when you go one more day without a drink; when you pray one more prayer; when you do one more rep or walk one more mile. Your life expands when you pray. Your life expands when you train. Your life expands when you grow and you do what's hard, but you decide to become a greater version of yourself. My encouragement to you today is to make those kinds of choices. Amen? Today we talk about the triumphal entry. That's a traditional phrase referring to the historic moment where Jesus enters into Jerusalem on a donkey. Now when He does this, there's a lot of reasons. It seems like a really positive moment. It looks like a parade. He's on a donkey and there's all these people on either side of the road? They're laying down palm branches, which is a symbol of Jewish nationalism. It's very positive. It's like waving American flags. They're excited that He's here, and He's fulfilling an ancient prophecy. And they're shouting this word "Hoshana" - Hosanna, which means save us. Save us. Save us. And what they're saying is no, not save us from our sins, like we would think today. No, not save us from our hardships and trusts. Save us from Rome. Save us from Rome. And what they see when they see Jesus coming in as not Gandhi, they're seeing Braveheart. They're seeing a general. They're seeing a guy that they want to get rid of Rome. No doubt what Jesus is doing is a brave act and a will to life. He knows what He's walking into. He's walking into certain death. He's walking into certain pain, certain torture, and even spiritual death, and He does it anyway. And indeed He does it to save them, but not save them from Rome, but rather to save them from themselves. From their sin. He doesn't go to the headquarters of Rome, He goes to the temple, the center of Jewish faith. He clears the money changing tables, and He begins to just heal people. Now this is a metaphor for our lives. It's a metaphor that looks like this - it says that God cares more about our heart than He does our circumstances. He cares about our circumstances, but He wants to change our heart first. He wants us to have a new mind. He wants us to have the skills. He wants us to have the fortitude, the constitution to be stronger than the things that we're facing, rather than to just take them away. God wants to change and transform you! That's His goal. But that's not what we want. And so when we cry Hosanna in life, when we cry save us, this is what it looks like - save me, Lord! No, not that way. Not that way. No, no, save me my way! We say oh Lord, save me from my money problem. Save me. And God says to us, I have a cattle on a thousand hills, provision is yours, abundance is yours, I will answer your money problem. Let's start by looking at your spending. And we say no, not that way! God says yes, I'll solve your money problems. Start tithing. Start giving to your neighbor. Develop a skill that will increase your value to the marketplace. We go no, no, no, no, no, no, no. I want the right numbers to the lottery, see. I'm hoping that this email exchange I'm having with a prince in Kenya is going to pan out. You see? No, no. We serve a God of process. He wants to solve your money problem a different way. We pray Lord, save me from my relationship problems. Save me, Lord, from my relationship problem. And God says no problem, I want you in relationship. I want you to have a healthy friendships. I want you to have a healthy marriage. I want your life to thrive in your relationships.

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So you say thank you, Lord. And He goes, okay let's start by learning about the opposite sex. And we go no, no, it's not me! God says let's start talking about your intimacy issues. Let's start talking about how to work together with another person. Let's talk about how much you need to control people and we're going to learn to let that go and trust others. Let's talk about empowering your spouse. Let's talk about encouraging them. No! No! I'm a king! I'm a queen! I'm perfect! You got to change them! God says no sir. No ma'am. Here's how God fixes our relationship problems. He makes us good at relationships. Some of you say Lord, heal me of my sickness and my disease. And God says okay, I will heal you. But you have to forgive someone. Now I want to be very careful here. I don't think you're sick necessarily because of un-forgiveness, but I think one of the biggest hindrances to physical health is our un-forgiveness, bitterness, and negativity towards our neighbor. It's not always true, obviously, but it's something to look closely at. Here's what Mark chapter 11 has. If you have your Bibles, you can turn with me. Mark chapter 11. Famous Bible verse. After Jesus talks about moving mountains with your faith, in verse 24, He says, "therefore I tell you whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours. And when you stand.." and here's where everybody stops, right? And then He says, "and when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them. Forgive them." My Grandpa Pursley had something horrible done to him when he was in 50's. And it was so bad it's not worth mentioning in church. But this person who harmed him, he bore a lot of un-forgiveness to her, and about ten years went by, and he contracted colon cancer. Almost killed him. Went through surgery, survived. Not long after, heard a sermon and forgave this person who did this horrible thing. And this is what he told us. He said I believe my bitterness and un-forgiveness towards this person, which by the way was totally deserved, gave me cancer. And I decided to let it go. And you know he's never been sick since. And in fact he's 97-years-old. Still going strong. Got an extra 35 years; that's pretty good. See? The cost of un-forgiveness is high. So we forgive. So God wants to work on us, you see. He wants to heal us, He wants to provide for us, He wants us to have great relationship, but we have to grow. It's weird to think that so many of our prayer requests, our circumstance requests; the things we want changed, have to do with other people. So here's a revelation for you – your inner life might be someone else's circumstance problem. Isn't that interesting? What if my anger, what if my laziness, what if my perfectionism, what if my blaming others, what if my unreliability or my stinginess is someone else's circumstance problem? The only way they're going to get their answered prayer is if I change! Let me tell you something: it's very hard to change other people, if not impossible. But here's the person you can always change, and that is yourself. You can always change yourself. Life gets better when we get better. Life gets bigger when we get better. Life can change for you if you yield your life to Christ. And that brings us to the will to life. Personal change is also hard. It's hard to change other people, but it's also hard to change ourselves, and it requires a will; a will inside of us. The thing that says I will live, even though it's hard. I will to live. I will become more. I will change. I will do what it takes. I will be the person my kids need. I will be the person my team needs. I will be the man my wife needs, or the woman my husband needs. I will show up because I have a will to life! A will to life is something that says yes to life, even though sometimes life is hard, and arduous. I will say yes. You know Oklahoma summers, I grew up in Oklahoma in high school. Oklahoma summers are not comfortable. If its not tornado-y outside, which is a real expression we use in Oklahoma: it's awfully tornado-y outside. That's tornado with a "y" at the end. Hundred and fifty tornadoes a year in Tulsa. And if it's not bugs and humid and this and that, it's windy. So the weather is usually bad, especially in the summer. And the best place to be in Oklahoma in the summer is inside a nice air conditioned house. Now I had a friend with a pickup truck that used to love to go fishing. His name was Josh. Old pickup truck. And he'd pull up with poles in the back and he'd knock on the door or call me, and I never felt like going. In fact I remember there had been a couple times I hadn't gone, and now it had been three days or so, and I had been sitting on the couch watching Judge Judy, reruns of the A-Team, and so on. There were chip crumbs on my chest and in-between the couch cushions, and I could tell that I was getting worse as a whatever – 17-year-old. One day Josh calls me, he says let's go fishing. And everything inside of me says no, it's hot out there, there's bugs and it's humid and it's windy, and I said yes, let's go. And I remember going down these old dirt roads, and you could knock on houses in Oklahoma, anybody who has a pond or a lake, you knock on the door, you say can we go fishing, they always say the same thing – if you catch and release. We'll be out there fishing and the mom will come out and bring us lemonade or biscuits, or the dad will come out and he'll look and he'd say what are you fishing for? What'd you catch? You got to go over there. That's the best spot.

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And so we have this experience where as we're going along, we're catching these fish and having this awesome thing, and every single time I came home, I said man, I'm glad I went fishing. And I made a rule for myself – Bobby, no matter how you feel, no matter how badly you don't want to go, always say yes to fishing. I have that rule for my kids, too. My kids say dad, you want to go for a walk? Dad, you want to go to the park? Dad, you want to play some video games? Dad, can you talk? I always say yes. I've never regretted it. Always say yes to life. Always say yes to God's calling in your life. Say yes. Live a yes kind of life. Live the adventure. Caleb and Joshua said yes when God told them to possess the land, even though it was full of giants, and they possessed the land. Moses barely said yes to God when he was called. Just barely. He was 80-years-old when he saw the burning bush, but it still counted and God gave him 40 more years. He lived to be 120. It's probably all those steps he got in wandering around the wilderness. Abraham said yes to God, and it was accredited to him his righteousness. David said yes, and he slayed Goliath and became the king of Israel. Mary said yes and she gave birth to the Savior of the world. And in all of these cases, they were urged by a will to live, even though there were bad consequences. Even though it was dangerous. Even though it was scary. Even though it might be that their reputations would be ruined. They said yes because they were full of a will to live; to be alive. This is the will to life – to want more from life, even though it's hard. Here's what a will to death looks like, and it's also in all of us, and we've all experienced it. Here's what a will to death looks like. The will to death says I'll just let it happen. Will to death says I'll let my life go by today. It's just a Sunday. Will to death says I'll let this one die on the vine. It's too much work. Will to death says I'll wait until tomorrow. You know the word "procrastination" literally means "pro-crastinari" I think. "Until tomorrow." Until tomorrow. And that's a will to death. I used to think that when people died climbing Mt. Everest, they would die in extraordinary ways: falling off a cliff, buried in snow, fall down some deep chasm. But in the majority of cases of people who die climbing Mt. Everest, that's not what happens. There's this thing called an Everest nap where as you get higher and higher, and the oxygen gets lower and lower, your brain begins to play tricks on you, and you begin to feel sort of tired and sleepy, or maybe like a little bit high, or something like this, and it just plays tricks on you. And everybody's trained for this, and yet it still happens. And they go up and here's what the overwhelming sense is – just take a nap. Just lay down real quick. Just take a nap. Very common. And the person lays, and they take a nap, and there's nothing anyone can do about it because at that altitude, you can't carry a person. They fall asleep and they die. In fact, Everest is full of bodies on the way up in bright ski clothes that now function as eternal markers for people to know where to go on their way up to Everest. Isn't that interesting? I feel that this Everest nap is a temptation to all of us who are on the great adventure of life. Yes, we need a nap from time to time – there's nothing wrong with that. Jesus liked naps. Next time you take a nap, tell someone 'I'm being Christ-like.' That's not what I mean. What I mean is giving in. Giving up. Falling asleep to life, and letting it happen. Don't let your life go by, even though you're in pain, even though you're hurting, even though you're tired. Let a will to life overcome you. Death gives in, but life gives it all! Life gives it all! Give it all you've got. Life finds a way. Just look at creation around us and how life always finds a way. Little crack between two slabs of concrete, just a tiny bit of dirt with almost no moisture at all, and somehow a seed from some weed gets in there and it finds a way and it grows. Chernobyl covered in plant life today. Isn't that amazing? The ant. The Bible says look to the ant, you sluggard. The ant.. it just goes. It finds a way. It finds a way around. Finds a way through. Every year, where I grew up in San Juan Capistrano, the swallows come back to the mission as they have for centuries from Argentina. Why? They just find a way. Life finds a way. And how true that is also even for you and for me in our spirit. Hospitals are amazing places, aren't they? When you go to a hospital, there's so much life and so much death; so much hardship and so much victory. Amazing how in a hospital you can have just feet away from one another one person passing on, and another person giving birth. What a strange scenario that is. And here's something about labor; labor is always messy, it's always dangerous, it's always noisy, it's chaotic, and it's what? Painful. And yet with all of those things at hand for the mother, I've never in my entire life met a mother who was nine months pregnant that wanted to wait just a little bit longer. Nine months pregnant women, despite all of those things that are coming, they're always ready now. And think about that. A woman who's giving birth to a baby, the average labor time for a woman is 14 hours of cramping and pain and anguish with a big finish at the end, the delivery. And what do they always say in the hospital? You've got like a bunch of cheerleaders – the doctor, the husband, the friends, whoever is there, they're all saying what? Push! And she says I'm trying! You want to give birth to a dream? Maybe you're ready. You want to give birth to a dream?

The Will to Life

Do not kid yourself. It's not like the movies. There's no Rocky scene. It's messy, dangerous, noisy, chaotic, slimy and painful. But its life, and it's worth it. Can I get an amen from the saints? It's worth it. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to keep growing. The Bible says I call heaven and earth as a witness that I've laid before two choices – life and death. I have placed before you life and death. And what does it say? Choose life. Why? Here's the answer – it says – so that your children. Choose life so that your children may love me with all their heart, will listen to my commands, will hold fast to me, and will live many healthy years in the land I'm giving you. Why do we choose life? For our children. Yes, you might say I don't have any kids. But proverbially we all have those who will come after us, who are looking to us to choose life. All of us have inherited tremendous possibilities and privileges and buildings and all sorts of things because those who came before us, imperfect as they were, had a will to live; a will to life. Keep growing, my friend. I want to encourage you today to keep growing. All that you have in life, you've attracted because of the person you've become. Keep growing. I remember in high school in a weight room, had a friend named Pedro, and he was trying to do the famous.. this is hard in high school.. 185 on bench press. Sixteen years old, training a lot, gave it a try, failed. Got all angry, all of his friends were watching, felt embarrassed, stood up, kicked the bar, made a big racket. What does the coach say? 'Pedro, it's not the barbells fault that you're weak.' That's a good line. Pedro. I want to encourage you to keep growing stronger. Here's why – the bar is not going to get any lighter. The bar is not going to get any lighter. We need to get stronger. We don't have to like it. Yes, life is unfair, life is hard. I'm not asking you to like the system, I'm not asking you to like the way the world is set up, I'm not asking you to like that things are hard, I'm asking you to understand it, and to become stronger in that kind of a world. As the man said, don't ask that it get easier, ask that you become stronger. Don't ask God to take away your difficulties, ask Him to give you more wisdom, and to give you more skills. Don't ask God to make life easy, ask Him to make you stronger. Keep getting stronger. Don't wish the barbell was lighter. Don't stop training, don't stop developing, and don't stop giving everything you can to becoming more, more, more than you could be. And don't quit after just doing it for a couple of weeks. Guy leaves the gym, he saw all of his friends in shape and strong, he says I'm going to go to the gym. He goes to the gym, does a workout with a trainer, and he leaves and he goes, when I walked into this gym, I was strong. Now I'm weak. When I walked into this gym, I felt good. Now I feel sore. When I walked into this gym, I had energy. Now I'm exhausted. I'm never going back here again. What a fraud. What a joke this place is, right? Doesn't work that way. You got to keep going. You got to keep going. You've got to keep training. And the longer you go, the more faithful you are to the process, the better. Amen? I want to encourage you to do that this morning. I want to encourage you to just continue to become all that you can be, and I believe that God will do the rest. He says you draw near to me, I'll draw near to you. That's what He asks of us – to just keep working on ourselves, amen? So I pray that for you. The last thing is, I would invite you this morning to make a decision to be at peace with God. We cannot sort out all of our sin and mistakes and flaws, and our past and our history and all of that on our own. It only comes through Christ crucified. And so I want to encourage you. Jesus laid His life down on the cross for you and for me. It's never too late to believe on Him. If you believe that this tremendous gift, the blood of Christ that was shed for you and for me, if you believe on that, you'll be saved and heaven will be your home. Not because you're some amazing person, but because He did an amazing work for you. It's a free gift because He loves us. And I want to encourage you just where you are to make a decision to receive Christ in your heart, and if you feel like you're not at a right place with God, maybe you're a Christian but you just don't feel like things are right, won't you pray in your own way right where you are for God to forgive you of your sins and to come back to God. I encourage you to do that. And if you do that, text me the word HOPE to the number on the screen so we can pray for you. Lord, I pray for my brothers and sisters here in this room, and watching online or wherever, I pray first that you would give us a faithful vision of what's possible for us. And I pray then, God, you would give us a path, yes a narrow path, yes a difficult path, but a path, a way to become more than we are now. I pray the right friends, and the right books, and the right classes, and the right churches would come our way. I pray that when we mess up, Lord, that we wouldn't stay messed up, that you'd pick us up. I pray that every step we take would be a step with intentionality and power and purpose and joy. And I pray most of all, God, your favor and grace over the heads of everyone who is under the sound of my voice, that they would be blessed with new doors, new opportunities, and fresh life. And we thank you. It's in Jesus' name we pray, all God's people said, amen.

Would you stand with me?