



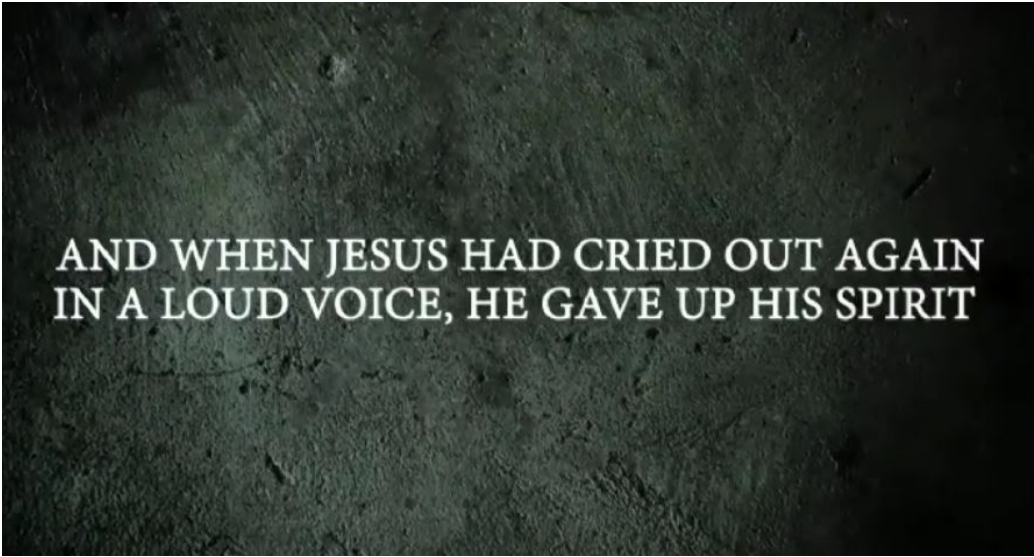
HILL COUNTRY
BIBLE CHURCH | AUSTIN



The Earthquake

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AND WHEN JESUS HAD CRIED OUT AGAIN
IN A LOUD VOICE, HE GAVE UP HIS SPIRIT



AT THAT MOMENT...
THE EARTH SHOOK, THE ROCKS SPLIT

The earth shook and the rocks split. Can you imagine that? I mean, I'm just thinking through what it would have been like to be at that mountain, at that moment when Jesus in the darkness suffering for the sake of humanity as he cried out his final breath. The earth shook and the rocks split.

I don't know if you've ever been a part of an earthquake. I haven't, so I don't have a whole lot of framework by which to kind of compare this to. I remember one time when I was serving in a small town in west Texas, there was a gas plant in a nearby town that exploded and it shook where we were at, and I remember people going outside all around the square there and we just had no earthly idea what had taken place. It was just absolutely frightening. We also, when we lived in Kyle down south, we lived next to a rock quarry and they had blasting zones and they would blast every once in a while. Just shake the entire house and the first couple of times we thought, what in the world is happening and we found out it was just a blast from trying to get the rock out. It really wasn't that substantial, nothing scary.

Probably the scariest experience I have ever had when it comes to being somewhere on something where it's shaking and you're insecure and there's no stability and you're fearful would be when I was at Pine Cove this last summer at a family camp. If you've ever been to a Pine Cove family camp, I had the opportunity to speak at it. Got to bring the family out. They have a lagoon, a zip line, a big old slide and a ropes course and a part of the ropes course is what they call a pamper pole. I don't know if you know what a pamper pole is. It's basically just kind like a telephone pole that goes straight up and on top of it it's got a platform about the size of a business card that you're supposed to stand on. The reason they call it a pamper pole is because when you get to the top of it you are



going to need some Pampers, right? It's the way it is. So, me and my oldest son, Milton, we decided we were going to do the pamper pole. I'll give you a look at it. We took a few pictures. There we are on top of this pole. And when you're up there, you know, when you're climbing up, it's not too bad. But the farther you get up, the more you get to the top, the more that pole begins to shake. And normally, when you, when you want to make sure you're grounded you spread your legs a little bit, you get your knees bent and you can kind of brace for it. Up there there's none of that. You're just kind of moving around. And every time the wind blows, even a bird flies by, it just feels like the thing is

shaking. So, here I am on top of that thing and then to make matters worse, Milton, he's climbing up and every step he takes it's shaking. It was just crazy. Well, we were going to do this in the 20 minutes prior to our turn going up the pole, there was a brother and sister combination and the sister, I kid you not, for 20 minutes was screaming, hyperventilating, asking for there to be any other way down the pole because the only thing you can do to get off of the pole is to jump out on the trapeze that's 10 feet in front of you. Yeah, it's scary. I mean every muscle in my body from the top of my head to the bottom of my toes was just tense. Don't move. Don't breathe. Right? Just endure this. I mean it had my complete and total attention. So Milton gets up there to make sure that we weren't going to have a 20-minute display of screaming and hyperventilating and all of that. Milton had already got up and said, hey, dad, I can't reach the trapeze but I'm going to jump and I'm, in my brain I'm like, uh-huh. So we did the whole belay, belay, I don't know, we're supposed to say a few code words. All I'm waiting for is the countdown. Milton is going to go first, three, two, one, jump. During the countdown I slipped my hand back here and when I feel his body tensed and they said jump -- zoom. I know, I know, I get it. All the dads are fist bumping and all the moms are like, shame on you. It's just the way it works. Man, I just needed off the pole and I wasn't going to leave him on the pole. So as soon as he jumped, I jumped and it was, it was good. When we got back down, it was so good to be on solid ground. It was so good to not have anything shaking. I mean, you could even feel me I was sweating. I mean it was just, I mean it was just like I couldn't relax. It had my complete and total attention. And not only that but when you're up there your perspective changes. I mean it gives you a completely different perspective. I'm not just talking about how far you can see. I'm just talking about just your smallness and how insecure you feel.



I can't really imagine what it was like. I can't really imagine what it would have been like to be on that mountain in total darkness knowing that

Jesus is dying and that as he cries out his last the earth begins to shake. Can you imagine that? Just shakes and you can hear the rocks splitting. I don't know about you, but it probably would have gotten your complete and undivided attention, right? If the darkness hadn't already, the earthquake was going to do that. Matter of fact, I think the earthquake shows us a couple of things today. I think it shows us that God was looking to get our attention. And I think he was looking to change our perspective. I want to show you three earthquakes in scripture this morning. Three mountaintops that they occurred on. One is Golgotha, there are two others, and I think I'm going to help us see as we walk through these passages, what it means to have our perspective changed and also for God to get our complete and total attention.

If you've got your Bibles turn with me to Exodus Chapter 19. Exodus Chapter 19, that's where we're going to look at the first earthquake on the first mountain, Mount Sinai. Don't need a whole lot of context here. As you're turning, Exodus 19 is the inauguration of the nation of Israel. And so this nation of Israel has come out of Egypt. They've been in captivity there for 500 years, slaves to the Egyptians. At this point they're really just the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and God had made that covenant with Abraham and passed it on to Isaac and passed it on to Jacob. And in Exodus 19, God's not just going to re-affirm that old covenant. He's going to make a new covenant. He's going to say this nation is going to be set apart for me and I'm going to give it a standard by which to live and you're going to follow me and you're going to do what I ask you to do, and therefore you will be blessed. So they've just come out of Egypt, the 10 plagues, seen the firstborn of every Egyptian die. Then they get to the Red Sea and you talk about a miracle of all miracles. God splits the Red Sea. They walk through on dry ground. The water collapses and wipes out the Egyptians. And then they make their way to Sinai and God's going to do something even greater. Let's start reading in Exodus 19, verse 9:

The Lord said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you."

So this is how it's going to work Moses. I'm going to come and it's going to be a dense cloud and everybody's going to hear me talking to you so that they're going to know that Moses is my man. Moses is the guy you listen to, Moses is the guy you follow so that they will trust you. That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to descend and they're going to hear me speak. That's really cool. And he goes on, verse 10,

And the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people."

So you got three days. Here's how it's going to work three days. First day, you need to wash. Second day, you need to bathe, clean your clothes, get the bleach out, not only that but consecrate yourself. You need to be getting mentally prepared for what's fixing to take place because I am going to descend on the top of this mountain and then on the third day that's when it's going to happen. Two days, two days, consecrate, wash, clean your clothes. Get ready. Verse 12,

Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. He shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on him. Whether man or animal, he shall not be permitted to live.' Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they go up to the mountain."

So he says this, you got two days. Do not go to the mountain before that time. Don't do it. Don't -- this isn't the new iPhone release where you can wait in line for it. Trying to get a front row seat. No, no, no. You need to be focused on you, getting clean, consecrated. This is not going to be a show. This is going to be God's display of himself and your proper response to it. Your response to it. So don't go to the mountain until you hear the horn blow. You need to be worried about getting your heart right, getting your mind right for what's fixing to take place. Verse 14,

After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes. Then he said to the people, "Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations."

Complete and total focus needs to be on what God is fixing to do.

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast.

Third day is here. What they've been preparing for the last two, they've been consecrated. They've washed. They've bathed. They hadn't come to

the mountain. They didn't want to die. They're waiting for God and then all of a sudden you start hearing, (trumpet sound). That's a trumpet sound it's loud and it's intense and we're going to learn that it's going to get louder and louder and louder and at that point you can come. And as you start to approach, you see this big ominous dark cloud that's got thunder and lightning in it. That's pretty cool, isn't it? Then it goes on,

Everyone in the camp trembled.

I mean, sometimes, we get a little kind of weirded out when the cloud do something crazy and it's a really wild lightning display. This would blow our minds on top of the fact that there's this trumpet blasting, And he goes on,

Then Moses led the people out in verse 17 of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire.

So not only is there a dense cloud, not only is there thunder and lightning, not only is there this trumpet that's blowing and getting louder and louder and louder, but now God's descending upon the mountain with fire. And now there's smoke and,

The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled,

How?

Violently.

Violently. This is no little bitty shake. This isn't just kind of a little wobbly. This is thunder, lightning, cloud, fire, smoke, trumpet and shaking. That's impressive. I mean, that's the way you'd picture God coming, right? I mean, if God's going to show up and he's going to descend on a mountain you're expecting fire, smoke, thunder, lightning, the whole thing and then the mountain just shakes. Visibly you can imagine -- violently.

What all does this tells us about God? I think each one maybe gives us a little bit of a different glimpse into what he was trying to communicate. The first thing we think about is thunder and lightning. Thunder and lightning are oftentimes associated with the presence of God. Revelation 4, talks about the throne room of God and there's thundering and lightning there. It's the presence of God, the dense cloud that was

oftentimes shown with the Shekinah glory when it would come over the temple of the holy of holies. A dense cloud represents the presence of God. Fire and smoke oftentimes in scripture is associated with judgment. We pass through fire, there's judgment. One day we're going to stand before God and fire is going to determine whether our acts were wood, hay, and stubble and disintegrate or if they revealed gold, silver and precious jewels. Fire and smoke is a symbol of judgment.

The trumpet it reminds us that every time we see it - most of the time we see it in scripture - it reminds us of summoning the people. There's going to be a trumpet blast one day when we'll be called to meet him in the air. That will be a pretty cool trumpet blast, won't it? And then the earth shakes violently. I think at this point it's to garner your attention. I think it's to make sure that you are paying attention. That you are not just wowed by the thunder and lightning. That you're not just enamored with the fire and the smoke and the trumpet, but now all of a sudden, everything's shaking. This is making you realize that God has come to the earth and as he descends upon it, it can't help but to shake violently. Something new is fixing to happen. God is fixing to relate to people in a way he hasn't done before. He's fixing to give the law. He's fixing to give his expectation for the nation and it trembles, and it's lighting, and it's fire, and it's a trumpet sound.

Let me ask you, what's your response to that? What's your response to that? Because I think all of those things together show that when God shook Mount Sinai he was displaying His Holiness. He was displaying his perfect holiness, his glory, his majesty, his holiness. What is your response to that? What is your response to the holiness of God? Is it, gee whiz, that's nice? It's pretty cool. I've seen better? What is your response?

Man, I think about the holiness of God. It is so important in scripture. Matter of fact, it is such an important attribute for God that he has four creatures designated to proclaim it for out-throughout eternity. They're called Seraphs. They have different faces. One has the face of an eagle, one has the face of a lion, one has the face of an ox, one has the face of a man. They have six wings and scripture says it has eyes all over it. And with two wings it covers his eyes. With two wings, they cover their face, and with the other two, they fly, and they hover, and this is the only thing they say for eternity, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." You tell me, is God's holiness important? What is your response to it? What is our response to that kind of a display of his holiness. Surely, it would be Isaiah 6, right? When he sees the temple filled with the glory of God that he would sit back and say, woe is me. I'm a man of unclean lips. I'm

unworthy. You would expect them to run away from the mountain, wouldn't you? You would expect them to just lay prostrate and say there is no way we deserve to be led by you because we are wretched. You want to know what their response was? Hear what God has to say, verse 23,

Moses said to the Lord, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai because you yourself warned us, 'Put limits around the mountain and set it apart is holy.'"

He also says in verse 21,

"Go down and warn the people so that they do not force their way through to see the Lord and many of them perish".

Can you imagine that? Like you're seeing this display of God's holiness, his majesty, his splendor, and you're sitting back and saying, I've got to get up and get a closer look. Like I'm good enough to do that. A lot of people read this and say, man, this is the problem with God. He's just-- he's an egomaniac. Now He's going to kill people for running up the mountain to Him. No, no, no, no. This has nothing to do, this has nothing to do just about the people and their close proximity even though there is some of that. This has to do with irreverence toward the holiness of God. I just sit back and this week. I just did an account on my life and I just recognized that the sin in my life most of the time comes from the fruit that I am completely irreverent to the holiness of God. I'm just completely irreverent toward it. I pay it no regard. I'm okay. I'm not that bad. But you're not as bad as they are. I'm okay, I can do this. I don't need God right now. Thank you, I know you created the world with your voice but I'm good. Like I can raise my kids. I can make decisions. I can love my wife. I don't...I'm good. I can approach you. I can do my own thing. Most of the time my sin just comes from the fact that I am completely irreverent. Pay no regard to his majesty and his splendor.

Let me be really clear. The reason why the earth shook to display the holiness and the majesty of God with the fire and the lightning, the smoke and the trumpet was so that when we look upon the holiness of God we would see what? Our sin. We would see how far off we are. How much we're in need of this Holy God to show us grace. To show us mercy and so what he's fixing to do is he's going to give the law and you know that the law is going to do? The law is just going to compound the problem. The problem is that we can't do the law. We will never be able to do every jot and tittle of it. We can't keep it, we can't obey it. All it does is

just show how sinful we really are. So, the problem gets even worse when we sit back and say God is holy and God is just. And if God is going to be holy and just, if he's really righteous, He will punish sin, won't He? But somehow, He's also gracious and merciful and loving to his creation so the problem becomes at Mount Sinai, how does the holy, just righteousness of God meld together with his grace and his mercy. How can he punish sin and accept us? Mount Sinai shook to make us completely aware of his holiness and the problem that was before us, and really before God. How was he going to be true to himself and be gracious towards us.

Which leads up to the second mountain. The mountain of Golgotha or Calvary. That's where Jesus Christ shows up because here in the moment of this darkness, when it's pitch black and Jesus is hanging, suffering, separated from God, crying out, "Why have you forsaken me." That forsakeness is God pouring out his wrath and his justice and his punishment for sin on Jesus Christ and so the same way the earth shook at Sinai to let everyone know something new was happening, the earth shook at Golgotha and Calvary to let us know, no longer are you under the law, which you couldn't keep anyway, but now there's something new happening and it's called grace. And, I'm going to pour out my wrath and my judgment and my anger for sin on my own son, Jesus Christ in the darkness. And we will be separated. Can you feel the weight of that? That God had to solve his own problem. That the only way we could be accepted in, the only way we wouldn't bear the punishment for sin it's for that punishment to be put on someone else. Let me just read a few passages to you, ready. Isaiah 53 says this,

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

And listen this, you're ready?

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Is that pretty clear? I mean, when that veil tore, as it was so beautifully illustrated last week, that we now have access to God. The only way we have peace with God is because the punishment was poured out on Christ. It had to be. Not only that, here are just a few others. Romans 5:8,

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

or 2 Corinthians 5:14,

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, that's Jesus, and therefore all died.

One person died for us. Or maybe Romans 3:25 says,

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—

The punishment had to come, and it had to land on Jesus and when it landed on Jesus, it shook the earth. Or in 1 John 2:2,

He is the atoning sacrifice –

The word atoning sacrifice there is the word "propitiation". It's a theological term meaning, God's wrath poured out on sin. It says,

He, Jesus is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Have you ever taken punishment for somebody else? Can you imagine taking that kind of punishment for everybody? 1 John 4:10,

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as propitiation for our sins.

He took the wrath of God so that we could see God's justice and grace. If Calvary shook Sinai to show his holiness, he shook Golgotha and Calvary to display his justice and his grace. He's just. He poured it out on his Son. He's gracious. He accepts us. We get to now live in a peaceful, reconciled relationship with God because of what Jesus accomplished. And at the

end of the day, I bet there's a bunch of people in this room kind of like me that say, I get it. I get it. I've heard it, Russ. God is holy. I'm a sinner. I know I need to be more reverent to that. I'm working on it. I know that Jesus died for me and he took my punishment. A punishment that I couldn't pay because I was sinful. So He took that and now it is by my faith and trust in Jesus Christ that grace has come and now I am in a relationship with Jesus, but there's probably some of you saying, I get that, but Monday's coming. Can you help me out with Monday? Because here's the problem. Even though the penalty for sin was paid and it shook the earth at Golgotha, we still live in a world that's broken with sin, don't we? Man, that's the problem for me. My problem is not to admit and believe and confess that Jesus Christ did this. My problem is, how do I live tomorrow when my feet start shaking, as the psalmist says, my feet are slipping because I live in a broken world with another person being diagnosed. Another set of layoffs. Another loved one lost. Another child disappointing. Another marriage on the rocks. Right? Thank you for taking my punishment. We live in a world that is cursed by sin. How do I do that tomorrow? What do I do when I get another thing of bad news? Russell help me with that.

I told you earlier that I really believe that the earth shaking at Golgotha wasn't just to get our attention but to change our perspective. And if the holiness of God doesn't change our perspective on ourselves with sin, and if the shaking of Golgotha changes our perception on who we are now in standing with Jesus. There's another mountain that I think gives us great motivation for Monday and Tuesday and when we hear more bad news because we live in a world cursed by sin.

Turn with me to Hebrews Chapter 12. I want to show you one more mountain. One more earthquake. Hebrews, Chapter 12. This is great. This is great news for us as we're going to find out that this isn't just about what happened at Sinai. It's not just about what happened at Golgotha, but there's going to be some more shaking. You ready? Hebrews Chapter 12. I'm going to start reading in verse 18. He says,

You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

The writer of Hebrew says, "you don't go to Mount Sinai anymore". We don't come to that mountain. We don't have to worry about the mountain of the law anymore. We don't have to worry about that. We don't have to worry about this terrifying site of holiness if we just stop wrong that all of a sudden death could happen. We don't come to that mountain anymore. He says we come to a new mountain. Ready? Verse 22:

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.

He gives three names for it: Mount Zion, heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. There is a mountain we're headed to. There's a mountain that we have access to. And it's not because of what we have done, but what Christ has done. Let's keep reading. He says.

You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant,

We come not to Sinai and the law but we come and press towards to Mount Zion and Jesus, the mediator, that's where we're headed. He says,

and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Then verse 26,

At that time his voice shook the earth, talking about Golgotha, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."

There's another earthquake coming. There's another earthquake coming. And it's not going to be just here. It's going to be over all things created. Heaven and earth. Everything is going to be shaken this time. There is another shaking that will occur. And look at how important it is. He says not only will it shake earth and heaven but verse 27,

The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken — that is, created things — so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

He says, you don't go to Sinai, you're looking forward to Mount Zion. Because when Mount Zion shows up, listen, it's going to be because you put your faith and trust in the sprinkled blood of Jesus Christ. And when it shakes its final time, one last time, it's going to shake earth. And it's going to shake heaven. And everything's going to fade away except what will remain. What do you think that is? God and his love and those of us who have put our faith and trust in him. Amazing. You want to just get a taste of it? Just a glimpse? Just let me read a little bit of a description for you. Revelation 21, says this,

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, Why? Because it was shaken, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

He says it's like watching that bride walk down the aisle to meet her husband. It's beautiful, it's breathtaking, it's gorgeous, this new city coming down.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

Listen, the veil was split so now we get to be in a relationship with him spiritually, but one day the heavens and the earth are going to shake and this won't just be a spiritual relationship. Guess what, it's going to be a physical relationship. We're going to be in his presence. That's pretty cool, isn't it? I mean, like, right now, it's great we get to be in relationship with him but if you think this is good there's coming an earthquake that's going to blow this out. It's going to shake all of these down and we're not just going to talk to God via prayer. We're going to walk with him. Wow, Golgotha, Christ forward. Remember Sinai, but look ahead. There is more coming. This is not your final home. Then to go forward he says this, this God that we live with,

'will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

Wow! It's going to shake again and when it shakes again it's going to leave what remains. And what remains is God and his love and those of us who have put our faith and trust in him, and we are going to walk with him

side by side. And there will be no more of this sin cursed world. No more bad news, no more tears, no more death, no more pain, can you feel that? Can you just feel the weight of that? You see how that changes everything. So Hebrews, Chapter 12, tells us this, therefore, since we've seen the holiness of God and we know our sin and Jesus Christ has died on the cross and he has bore our punishment and we receive grace through him, and now, there's this unshakable kingdom. He says,

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken-

He's going to tell you how to live tomorrow. You ready? This is the secret.

let us be thankful.

Thankful of the fact that this is not our final spot. Be thankful for the fact that God has a perfect plan and he is going to bring it to fruition. So when God shakes the heavens and the earth, he will be revealing his perfect plan. And that perfect plan, that eternal perspective is what changes for us. So, tomorrow when we get bad news or the next day when we hear another layoff or another whatever, we can sit back and say you know what, I can be thankful because this world is not my home and God's going to shake it again. And I'm going to be with him.

And then he goes on to say not only should we be thankful but we should,

worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

He quotes Deuteronomy. And he sits back and says, remember that reverence and awe we should have had at Sinai. We worship with reverence and awe, not because of fear, but because we recognize his holiness, his glory. We worship out of reverence and awe because of what Christ accomplished for us. And we live thankful, worshipful, reverent, awe-inspired lives because of what God is still continuing to do. The earthquake at Golgotha wasn't just to get your attention for what happened that day. It was to remind you what's happened in the past to be thankful for what Jesus Christ did at Calvary, and to be mindful that the earth and the heavens will shake again and we can find our firm foundation there.