

# **The Greatest Moment of Your Life is Available Now**

*By Chad Blake*

For those of you who are just joining us, Bobby is at the hospital with Cohen, and we are sending all of our prayers his way, and with the whole Schuller family, and just wishing them all the best and all of the doctors that are involved with that, and we're just expecting great news to come.

But so he called me on Friday and asked me to preach this morning, and I was a little nervous, a little excited, but it recalled in my mind something that happened just a few weeks ago that he mentioned. He was traveling back from Tulsa and he had a connection in Dallas, and he called me a couple weeks ago on a Saturday at about five and said, I may need you to preach tomorrow. I said like what are the odds? He's like I'm not sure. I'm stuck in Dallas and there are thunderstorms.

And so it's always a joy to be here, and always a joy to share with you, and I'm actually so thrilled to get to continue on this series, "Your Best is Yet to Come." Your best is yet to come. We believe it.

And that has been a rallying cry of Hillary and mine's throughout the last few years. We first heard it from some pastors in Florida, and we just believe it. We believe it with every fiber of who we are, that our best is yet to come. And it's kind of a two-fold saying, right? Our best is yet to

come. Yes, as believers, as disciples of Christ, as those who seek to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we believe that Jesus has the power over death. That death is not the final story. We know how the battle's going to end. We can proclaim victory. Absolutely the best is yet to come.

But there's a second piece of that phrase that matters, and that is that our best is yet to come now. Our best is yet to come in this life, in this moment. Our best is yet to come. So does the now matter if we're just talking about the future? Absolutely the now matters because the now is where we meet God. The now is where God is. The present moment is where we encounter God.

The central promise of the Bible is not I will forgive you. The central promise of the Bible is not that you're going to go to heaven when you die. Those are two promises of scripture absolutely, and those are important things that we hold onto, but the central promise of the Bible is I will be with you. I will be with you. All throughout scripture, we see that promise showing up through the words of Jesus, through stories from the beginning all the way to the end, I will be with you. That is the central promise of scripture that we can hold onto, and so when we realize and when we hold onto that promise, that I will be with you, we can confidently say that our best is yet to come. Our best is yet to come because God is with us.

A favorite author of mine and someone who was recently just here, John Ortberg, tells a story of two famous painters. The first is

Michelangelo. Michelangelo painted many things, but probably what he's most famous for is his paintings in the Sistine Chapel, the Creation of Adam. It's a beautiful painting. I have actually this painting framed in my office, but it's a beautiful picture of who God is.

And there's a lot that can be dissected from this. I am not an art critic. I depend upon art critics to help me interpret art, and as you look at this, you see some pretty interesting things about God. God is thrusting through the clouds, coming after Adam with passion. His whole arm is tensed. You can see every muscle as He's reaching towards man. He's reaching out, He's active, He's pursuing, all this passion is coming from God towards Adam.

And then we look at Adam, and Adam has quite a different posture. There's just a hair in-between their two fingers, and Adam's hand is limp. He's kind of laying back, his gaze is somewhere else. And it's as if God is telling Adam that all he has to do is lift his finger and experience the presence of God. Just lift his finger.

And it's interesting because before Michelangelo painted this, most artists depicted God as on earth lifting man up from the ground. And it was here that Michelangelo reverses that and shows God invading the now, God invading the present, and coming forward and reaching after Adam. People around the world for millennium have looked at this picture.. half a millennium have looked at this picture and said that's who God is.

Ortberg talks about a different artist, Martin Hanford. The name might not sound familiar to many of you, but I assume that you are familiar with his work. He's the one who did Where's Waldo? Where's Waldo? And how sometimes we picture God like Michelangelo painted God in the Sistine Chapel, and other times God feels like Where's Waldo? We know He's there, we just can't exactly find Him just quite yet. And the thing that's interesting about Where's Waldo is this is book one in the series is as you flip through, the first few ones, you're like there's Waldo; Waldo's easy to find. You flip through a few more, I spot him again. You get towards the end, and all of a sudden it gets a little bit harder. You have a hard time just trying to pinpoint exactly where Waldo is. And this is perhaps the hardest Where's Waldo I could find, and I spent thirty or forty minutes looking for Waldo, and then said to myself I need to write a sermon. But because I know there are some of you in this room who will not sleep tonight wondering where was Waldo, spoiler alert, there's Waldo in the green highlight on the bottom left.

But you know sometimes God feels to us like Where's Waldo. We know He's on the page, we know He's on every page, but we're just not exactly sure how to find him. So where do we find him?

You know there's Irish folklore, and I married an Irish girl. The Irish love their folklore. One historian says there's history, there's the truth, there's big stories, and then there's Irish stories. The Irish love

their legends and their myths. And there's a central character in many of the Irish folklores and his name is Finn McCool and he's a giant.

And the story goes that Finn is sitting there with his friends and he's asking them what is the finest music around. And each of them have a different reply. One says the finest music is like water babbling through a brook. That sounds actually pretty wonderful. The next says it's like wind rustling through the leaves in the trees. That sounds good. Another one says it's a little girl playing on a prairie. And they go around and around, and finally they get back to Finn, and they say Finn, what is the finest music in all the world? And Finn says the finest music in all the world is the music of what is happening. The music of what is happening. The music of the now. The music of the present. The finest music in all the world is the music that's happening now.

If I were to ask you what are some of the greatest moments in your life, make a top ten, top ten what are your greatest moments? Some of you are now thinking about it. I could name a few. I know you that well. You were born. Yes, you might not have gone there, but that's a pretty miraculous thing, so that's definitely in your top ten. You took your first steps. That's pretty miraculous. You spoke. I've got three of your top ten already. You're doing good. What are your greatest moments?

We all can make a list. But I believe that this moment, that today can be one of your greatest moments. One of the greatest moments of your life because this moment is the place where you can meet God. In

fact this moment is the only place that you can meet God. God is in the present. God is like the painting of Michelangelo thrusting through space, reaching out after you and all we have to do is lift a finger and we can meet God.

What do we say each morning when we start worship this morning? Tomorrow is the day that the Lord has made. Oh no, that's not what we say. I don't do it often. Yesterday is the.. oh no, no, that's not what we say. Today is the day that the Lord has made. The Psalmist reminds us that yes, absolutely, tomorrow will be the day that the Lord has made. Yesterday was certainly the day that the Lord has made. But today, this moment, this present moment, today is the day that the Lord has made. We unite around that each time we gather together in worship because we believe that this moment matters.

Hillary read earlier a portion of a story, a very familiar one found in Mark chapter 5. And it's important to set the context of this story because Jesus does something miraculous here. There's a lot we can unpack from this, and so I want to give the context of what is around the passage that Hillary read.

Jesus had just finished doing a miracle and He's traveling across the lake in Mark chapter five. And He gets to the other side of the lake and a religious leader, the elite, the person you want to know in society, the person with money and servants and all sorts of good stuff comes up to Him and he says, he pleaded. "He falls in front of Jesus and he says,

my little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” This man’s name is Jairus.

So he pleads with Jesus and asks for a miracle, asks for Him to come and for Him to show up. And you know what Jesus does? Jesus agrees. We’ve set the scene. We’ve got prime time drama happening right here in the midst of scripture in Mark chapter 5. This little girl is on her deathbed, Jesus is showing up. He’s going to do something miraculous. Here we go.

So they start walking and the crowds walk with them. “A large crowd followed and pressed around Him, and a woman that was there who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors, and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better, she grew worse.” This woman is the opposite of who Jairus is. She is an outcast. She is the lowest. She is unclean. She is not allowed in synagogue. She is not allowed anywhere near the temple. She probably has no friends. She’s a woman in that day. There are all sorts of things going on, and Mark interjects her story into the midst of this.

So she heard about Jesus. “She came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His cloak because she thought if I just touch His clothes, I will be healed. Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.” Beautiful. Beautiful.

So we've got this scene. We have the emergency. We've established that Jairus' daughter is dying, and Jesus is over here coming to Jairus, and on His way, He gets stuck. He stops. Scripture tells us that He stops to talk to this woman. And He asks one of my favorite questions in scripture. "At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from Him. He turned around in the crowd and asked 'who touched my clothes?'" The disciples, probably the same answer I would give if somebody asked me this: "you see the people crowding against you," His disciples answered, "and yet you can ask who touched me?" Probably thinking there's a lot of people who touched you.

"But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it." He stops, He acknowledges the woman. He tells her that her faith has healed her. It's a beautiful passage of scripture. But put yourself, for just a second, in Jairus' shoes. He's got an emergency! His daughter is dying. His daughter is knocking on death's door. Jesus has already agreed to come. Why are you stopping? Why are you stopping, Jesus?

"While Jesus was speaking with the woman, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. 'Your daughter is dead,' they said. 'Why bother the teacher anymore.'" His worst fear has happened. Jesus got stuck and so his daughter died.

"Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him 'don't be afraid, just believe.' He did not let anyone follow Him except Peter, James and John. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a

commotion with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, 'why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead, but asleep.' They laughed at Him. After He put them all out, He took the child's father and mother, and the disciples who were with Him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha koum!,' which means little girl, I say to you, get up. Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around. She was 12 years old. At this, they were completely astonished."

This passage of scripture is the classic example of what theologians call a Mark-in sandwich. A Mark-in sandwich. Mark takes a story, starts telling it, cuts in a whole other story, tells that story to completion, and then picks up on the first story. But the two stories say something about each other. The two stories are important. And there's a lot that you can unpack from all of this. We see that Jesus is signaling that He has power over death, that our best is yet to come, that we believe that God is doing great things, but what we also see is Jesus is present in the moment. Jesus is present in the moment and Jesus is okay getting interrupted.

How many of you are list makers, by a show of hands. How many of you make a list? Right? I mean making a list is good. I'm getting better at it, but making lists is good. It helps us get things done. My wife, she is a list maker. She is a master list maker. And I can tell you from firsthand experience, there is nothing better than checking that thing off the list.

Woo! Man, it just like sends adrenaline through your blood, checking off the list. Hillary is so crazy about it that sometimes she will write things she's already done just to check it off the list. It feels good. It feels good.

And you know what is the ultimate? The ultimate. Those rare days. Oh those days where you write a list in the morning and you get to the end of the day and everything's off the list. Everything's been checked off the list. It's a beautiful thing that we feel so accomplished, we've gotten stuff done.

But what does Jesus show us here? We've got to be okay getting interrupted. We've got to be an interruptible people. We've got to be the kind of people that acknowledge interruptions. We get all sorts of interruptions and they can be all sorts of things. It can be a child coming in, a grandchild coming in. It could be a phone call, an email, an emergency, a tragedy, traffic. All sorts of things that we need to acknowledge. But God often shows up in the interruptions because the interruptions happen in the present moment. The interruptions happen in the present moment, so by acknowledging the interruptions, we acknowledge the present instead of living in the future.

Tell you how many times I walk around this campus, I'm almost never in my office because I'm constantly walking around, and I've got some list in my head, some thing I need to accomplish, and I walk by somebody. I don't even see them. They're hey! Oh hey, hey, sorry, sorry,

yes I was just thinking, I'm in nowhere land. I'm off getting my list done. I'm not living into the present moment.

Henri Nouwen writes this. "When visiting the University of Notre Dame, where I had been a teacher for a few years, I met an older experienced professor who had spent most of his life there. And while we strolled over the beautiful campus, he said with a certain melancholy in his voice, 'you know my whole life I've been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted until I discovered that the interruptions were my work.'" My whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted until I discovered that the interruptions were my work. It's beautiful.

Be an interruptible person. Jesus exemplifies this. Jesus tells stories of this. The story of the Good Samaritan is someone that's okay being interrupted.

So how do we invite that? How do we acknowledge that? How do we live into the present moment? When there's a few things, a few easy things that I think we can do. But first, before I get to that, I just know that God wants to heal some of us in here. That there are some of us that have been trapped in the past. That something that we were victimized. Some tragedy happened to us. Some sort of suffering that we're carrying, and its preventing us from stepping into the present, stepping into what God is doing in our lives now, and to you, if that's you, God wants to say be healed. God is reaching out after you because scripture tells us where

the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Chains are broken, chains are broken when God shows up. And God is showing up now and saying be healed. He is crying with you, He's acknowledging what has happened, but He's saying be healed.

For others of us that just get too busy, just get too worked up in what our to-do list is, just have too much on our plates, there's a few easy things we can do. We can just invite God in. We can remember as the ancients did that the day begins at night. Scripture tells us that there was night and then there was day. What does that tell us and how does that frame us and allow us to be interruptible? It tells us that when we go to sleep, God goes to work. And that we're waking up midway through God's day, not our day. We're waking up in God's reality. That our day begins at night. I go to sleep, God goes to work.

It might look like morning prayers for some of us. You know I set my alarm on one of these. So what happens when my alarm goes off? Turn my alarm off.. oh, got 17 emails overnight. Oh.. wonder what that person's doing on Instagram. Oh.. Facebook. The next thing you know, the first thing I'm doing is looking at the 45 things that are competing for my attention before I've even gotten out of bed. There's this new feature on here – it's dangerous and scary, called screen time that tells you how many times you pick your phone up in the day; how often you pick it up, how much time you spend on particular apps, and when you open it and look at it, you're like wow. What a distraction.

And so maybe it looks like just waking up and praying, God, I give you my day. I give you the traffic. I give you my meetings. I give you the annoying people that I'm going to encounter. I give you the weather. I want you to be present in all of it.

Now some of us aren't morning people. I am, I love the morning. Man, there's nothing better than the morning. But other people, no. Don't beat yourself up over it. You know if you're tired going to God in prayer, God's probably tired, too. So find a time in your day where you can just be present, where you can be present with God. You know a shower is a great example. Again, all through ancient times, that bathing was very symbolic and ritualistic. It was a cleansing. And so maybe tomorrow as you shower, you just say Lord, as this soap is cleaning my body, just wash over me with your spirit. Let me be covered in your spirit today. Just a simple acknowledgement of God's presence in our lives, and something as silly as a shower.

Maybe it can be like carving out the first thirty seconds of your day at work, just saying Lord, praying over your calendar: be present with me in these meetings, with these people as I go about my day. I think the most important thing is don't get crazy. Don't get crazy. Make it simple. Don't try to go and create a day that doesn't look like your regular day. You're not going to be successful in the long run. Find ways to invite God in to the ordinary, to invite God in to the now. To invite God in to the present moment, wherever that present moment might be: driving in

traffic, oh boy. Would we drive differently if we invited God into the car? Would God be looking at us like well I need to put my seatbelt on. Would we be muttering different things under our breath? Would we have a different posture? Something I need to do. Next time I'm stuck in traffic, Lord, I invite you into this car. Be present with me in this moment. It's the little things that can allow us to shift our perspective, that can allow us to see God in the present moment, to meet God, to have the God of Michelangelo's reaching out and we can just flick our finger up and encounter God and meet God.

John Ortberg, I'll close with this. A quote from John Ortberg that says "where is Waldo? He's right around the corner. He's lurking where you least expect him. He's right there on the page. He's anywhere people are willing to see the whole world with eyes incapable of anything but wonder, and with a tongue fluent only in praise." He's closer than you think, and I believe that your best is yet to come. Amen.