



A Generosity Initiative

2024

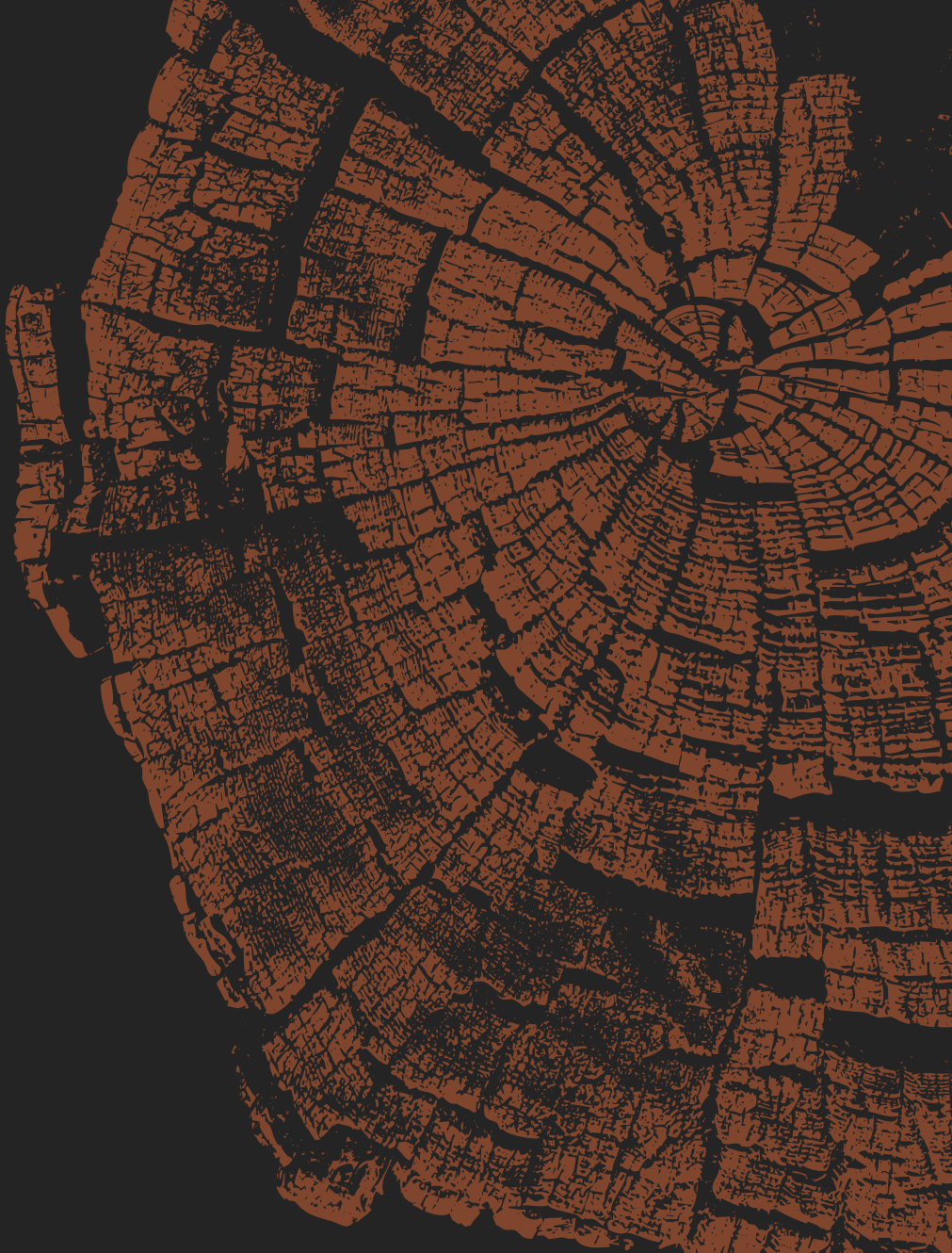
Marked.

[Isaiah 61:11 AMP]

"For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the LORD God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations."

Raise Up / Reach Out / Dig In

Marked.



[Isaiah 61:3 NIV]

"They will be called oaks of righteousness; a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor."



Our lives have been

MARKED by the Gospel,

MARKED by the love of God

and what God is doing through
Cross Point is **REMARKABLE.**

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A LETTER

From Pastor Kevin

At Cross Point, we believe, "With Jesus, Anything's Possible." It's not just a slogan, it came from Jesus himself. In Mark 9:23, he said, "Anything's possible if a person believes." We believe this is true, not just for our church, but we've experienced it in our lives.

When Rea and I first got married, we never imagined that we would move to Nashville to lead Cross Point. But in January 2017, God began to reveal it to us in prayer, before we walked through the doors of a campus or talked to anyone from the church. God whispered it to our hearts.

We prayed, "If you want us there, you'll have to come get us." Then we waited two and a half months! While waiting we were reading Isaiah. We came across Isaiah 61 and God began to stir our hearts for the kind of work he wanted to do, the kind of move that he wanted to bring to the church, our city, and across Middle Tennessee. One verse that marked us deeply was Isaiah 61:7, *"Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land and everlasting joy will be yours."*

I believe we are living into that prayer. We are getting to experience the double portion. Isaiah 61 also talks about rebuilding broken walls. We've seen just as the literal broken walls of our Nashville campus were rebuilt after the 2020 tornado, God is rebuilding broken families, broken marriages, broken relationships, broken lives. Through this church, he is helping people find restoration and healing. Using Cross Point's story, your story and our collective story to build something new.



At Cross Point, prayer is not the only thing we do, it is the first thing we do. Every week, we gather to pray for renewal in the church, revival in the city and awakening across Middle Tennessee. Now, we are coupling those years of prayer with strategic action, as we launch our generosity initiative – Marked. In the following pages, you’ll discover more about what this means and what we believe God has for us in the next two to three years.

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For now, let me encourage you: with Jesus, anything is possible. I believed it in 2017, and I believe it even more now as I’ve witnessed the story of Cross Point unfold in your lives and mine. Let’s trust God with the future and seek how He wants to display His glory and write His story through Cross Point in the years to come.

Kevin Queen
Lead Pastor



— OUR MISSION

**HELPING PEOPLE FIND
AND FOLLOW JESUS**



— HISTORY OF CROSS POINT

We know that Nobody's Perfect, and our story isn't either. When you look back through our history you can see seasons of struggle, spiritual drought, natural disasters and other kinds of hardships that have marked us. We've also seen the faithfulness of God, the love of God, the mercy of God, the mission of God, and how he has taken all of our imperfect stories and woven them together to make something beautiful. Our story is His story.

Many of us are aware that a tree's rings reveal its age. By counting each ring, you can estimate its lifetime, but these rings tell more than just the numerical years of existence. They also reveal the tree's life story, showing the quality of its years, environmental impacts and the challenges it faced from seedling to maturity. If a tree endured wildfires or flooding, the rings will reflect those experiences. Similarly, our lives are marked by pivotal moments, key individuals and significant encounters. If Cross Point were a tree, what story would our rings tell? What has marked us?

2002 - A small group of people planted the first expression of our church in an elementary school. There were 80 people at that first gathering. That group met with the faith that God would grow His church to point people toward Jesus, to reach those far from God, people who lost their way, who needed healing from their past and hope for their future. From the beginning, Cross Point has been committed to doing good both locally and globally. Within our first two years as a church, Cross Point purchased and began work on a church and feeding center in the Dominican Republic—all of this happening years before we ever owned a piece of property in Tennessee.

2006 - The church had grown significantly and the time came to move into a more permanent location. Our next phase of ministry, complete with daily access to our facilities, began when Cross Point relocated to a leased space from Park Avenue Baptist Church on Charlotte Avenue.


2008 - As Cross Point moved closer to the center of Nashville, it became clear that a lot of people were commuting from communities west of town, as far as Dickson County, to come to church. So, with a core group who were passionate about reaching their community more than 30 miles west of Nashville, Cross Point planted its first satellite campus in Dickson in 2008.

2010 - Cross Point Bellevue opened, but before even the first service, the new campus was used as a disaster relief location for the community when a flood hit the area.

2009 - The next year, Cross Point launched its North campus and, as we became one church in multiple locations, our multi-site journey began.

2011 - Additional campuses swiftly followed Bellevue, with a Downtown campus—serving college students—opening in 2011.





2012 - The Franklin campus launched south of Nashville in September of 2012. As Cross Point added campuses around Middle Tennessee, our broadcast campus at Charlotte Avenue continued to grow. In the spring of 2012, we raised money to acquire the historic Rexel Electric property in the heart of downtown Nashville.

2015 - In 2015, Cross Point launched the Mt. Juliet campus, God Behind Bars at the Debra K. Johnson Rehabilitation Center at the Tennessee Prison for Women, and a Teen Dream Center to serve at-risk, Nashville teens with one-on-one mentoring.

2013 - Strategically positioned a mile from the Tennessee Titans stadium, the doors on the newly refinished Cowan Street building opened just in time for Easter of 2013. This initiative also launched the West Nashville Dream Center.

2016 - In the fall of 2016, Cross Point's founding pastor resigned, and the church underwent a 10-month transitional period as we searched for our next Lead Pastor.

2017 - In August of 2017, leading with humility and a heart for prayer and revival, Pastor Kevin Queen joined to lead the Cross Point team.

2024 and beyond - Our hope is to use the lessons of our past, the good and the bad, to help inform our future. We believe the best is yet to come for Cross Point Church and Middle Tennessee.

2020 - In February of 2020, Cross Point launched a Hendersonville Campus to serve the attendees north of the city.

The city of Nashville fell victim to an F3 tornado on March 3rd, with the broadcast location in Nashville suffering extreme damages. Although the church was facing a challenge of its own, it became clear to the leadership and staff that the need to help was greater in the community than within the walls of the church itself. So, Cross Point became a hub for those looking for opportunities to serve within Nashville and the greater Nashville area.

Shortly after the tornado, COVID-19 became widely spread in the United States forcing the majority of the workforce into lockdown, this meant closing the physical doors of the church and sharpening our online presence. While the world was shut down due to the pandemic, Cross Point was able to complete enough work on the broadcast campus to open its doors again in October 2020.

WHAT IS MARKED?

MARKED is a generosity initiative to help us raise \$20 million, over and above our current giving, to Raise Up the next generation, Reach Out to our neighbors and Dig In to serve the needs of those around us.



VISION

We are praying for renewal in the church, revival in the city and awakening across Middle Tennessee. That's our legacy vision that is worth giving our lives to, whether we see it to completion in our lifetimes or not. We believe we are called to reach Middle Tennessee for Christ, specifically the ten counties surrounding our state capital in Nashville.

There are three stars on the Tennessee state flag that represent Middle, East and West Tennessee – as a church, we are called to reach one of those stars on that flag with the Gospel. The 10 counties of Middle Tennessee represent a population of 1.9 million people.

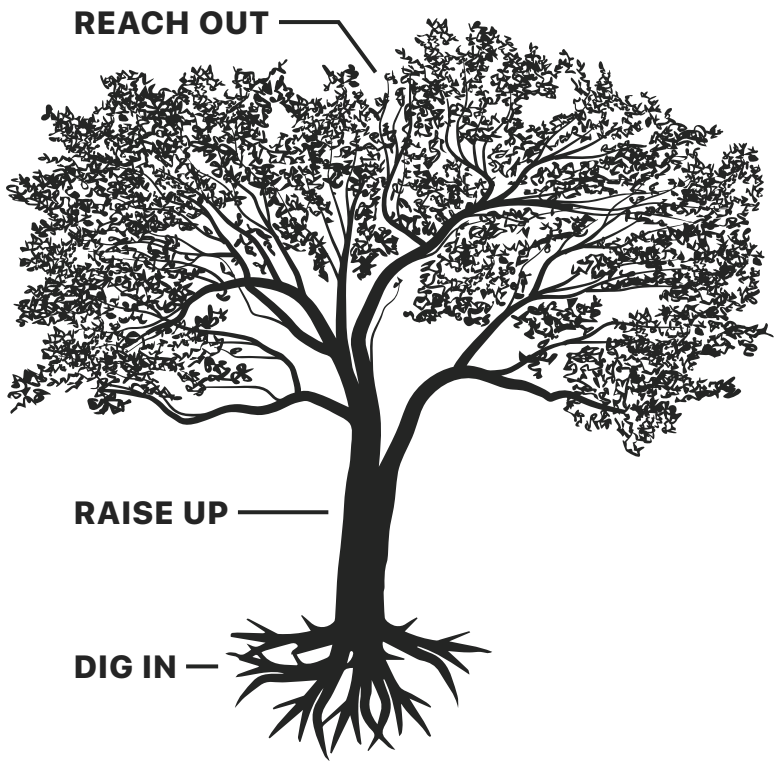
How are we going to do that?

RAISE UP: Investing in the next generation to ensure a bright and faith-filled future.

REACH OUT: Loving our community and neighbors through outreach and support.

DIG IN: Providing aid and resources to those who need it most.

WHAT IS MARKED?





— RAISE UP

Currently, we're in a leadership crisis in our nation and world. There is a significant need for leaders with Biblical values, strong faith and passion to influence their world for Christ. Statistics are telling us that 70% of students walk away from their faith after high school. With \$1.5 million, we plan to raise up a next generation of ministry leaders that thrive in their faith after high school through hands-on training, coaching, spiritual development and practical experience.

■ LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TRACK

With a focus on our development pathways for middle school, high schoolers and college students, we plan to create a leadership curriculum that equips our students to be leading influencers in the church, marketplace, education, politics and non-profit sectors.

■ RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Over the past three years, we have trained and developed 20 residents for vocational ministry and seek to continue to grow that program.

■ THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

Our inaugural cohort with Asbury Theological Seminary will offer a hybrid model of in-person and online courses at an affordable rate, making Biblical education attainable for many.



WHAT IS MARKED?

— REACH OUT

We are uniquely and strategically positioned around one of the top 25 fastest-growing cities in the country. With \$17.5 million, we plan to reach out to our neighbors by strategically strengthening and starting churches, maximizing our current spaces and launching a new Cross Point campus.

■ STARTING OR STRENGTHENING 10 CHURCHES

We know church multiplication is the most effective way to reach new people. For a city-wide move of God, we plan to strengthen or start 10 existing and new churches in middle Tennessee that share our heart and DNA.

■ CAPACITY AND CAPABILITIES

We plan on making investments in the places God has already planted us. We are experiencing incredible growth across all of our campuses, so we are planning to make significant building changes to our Franklin campus and build out our new Hendersonville campus while making strategic capital improvements at our Dickson, Bellevue and Nashville campuses.

■ LAUNCH ONE

As we look to reach deeper into the 10 counties of Middle TN, we plan to launch one new campus in a community we aren't already reaching.



— DIG IN

Isaiah 1:17 says, "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow."

In culture today, we can make the case that single moms and their children are the equivalent of the widows and the fatherless. Across our campuses, we have over 350 single moms, with 42% of the parents checking in their kids at Nashville being single moms. With \$1 million, we plan to dig in to supporting the single moms in our communities by providing solutions to the daycare crisis and partnering with other organizations committed to helping moms create businesses that provide a stable income and future.

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■ **SMALL BUSINESS INCUBATOR WITH THE ACADEMY**

In partnership with Corner to Corner, we will be able to facilitate two cohorts of The Academy – equipping 25 single moms and other entrepreneurs with knowledge, tools, and a network to create and flourish businesses.

■ **WAREHOUSE BUILDOUT**

In order to support the Small Business Incubator, we'll be able to develop our 35,000 square feet of warehouse space at our Nashville campus into a co-working space and wholesale warehouse for individuals to use to help grow their businesses.

■ **DAYCARE SOLUTIONS**

In order to address the need for affordable daycare for single moms, our plans are to build out our campus kids' spaces to equip them to function for daycare Monday-Friday, starting with our Nashville campus.



— MARKED TIMELINE

LAUNCH

Sunday, September 8, 2024

CELEBRATION OF INITIAL GIVING

Sunday, October 27, 2024



TOTAL MARKED GIVING PERIOD
October 2024-December 2026

Updates to when projects will be launching will
be available on crosspoint.tv/marked.

— HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN MARKED

PRAY

Prayer is not the only thing we do, but it is the first thing we do. Pray for the future of Cross Point. Pray about your involvement in the future of Cross Point. Pray and ask God how He wants you to give to this generosity initiative – whether once or recurring.

COMMIT

Fill out a Marked Commitment Card that can be found at the giving kiosks at all campuses to make a commitment to giving toward this generosity initiative.



WAYS TO GIVE



Text:* "MARKED" to 615615



Online: crosspoint.tv/arked



In-person: Use an envelope in service for cash or check and write "**Marked**". Drop in a bucket that is passed during service or at the giving kiosk in the lobby.

**You can unsubscribe from this list at any time by texting OPT OUT to 615615. Or text STOP to be removed from receiving ALL messages from Cross Point. If you need help, text the word HELP to 615615 or email info@crosspoint.tv. Message and data rates may apply. Message frequency may vary.*

— FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY IS THE GENEROSITY INITIATIVE CALLED MARKED?

Stories are powerful. Revelation 12:11 says, “We will overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony.” The Hebrew word for testimony literally means do it again. When you share your story, you’re telling God, do it again. When other people hear your story, they think, if God did it for you, He can do it again for them. Your story is powerful and the story of Cross Point Church is powerful too. We want to share with all of Middle Tennessee the ways we’ve all been marked by the presence and power of God.

WHY NOW?

It’s time. By God’s grace, we have never been better positioned than we are right now. Spiritually, we’ve never been stronger in prayer. Our reach has never been broader. Our discipleship has never been deeper. We are the healthiest we’ve ever been as a staff. We are financially in the best position we’ve been in our church’s history. We are primed to grow – to raise up, reach out and dig in.

WHEN DO WE EXPECT TO BEGIN AND HOW LONG WILL THE PROJECTS TAKE?

We want to be “shovel ready”, so as money comes in, we will begin projects. Continue to check out crosspoint.tv/marked for updates as we begin projects.

WILL THE RENOVATIONS AND UPGRADES AFFECT OUR CURRENT MINISTRIES?

Other than minor construction inconveniences during renovations, we expect no ministries within Cross Point to be affected and no changes to anything that is currently planned.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO GIVE TO MARKED?

Please see the previous page to learn how to get involved!

WILL I BE ABLE TO CHANGE MY COMMITMENTS IF I NEED OR WANT TO?

Of course! Unforeseen circumstances may cause you to want to increase or decrease your giving commitment in the future. At any time during the next two years, you can review or change your commitment online at crosspoint.tv/marked or you can grab another Marked Commitment Card at one of our giving kiosks in our campus lobbies.

WHAT IF I CAN'T AFFORD TO GIVE RIGHT NOW?

Even in times of scarcity, God wants our hearts. The widow who gave her last coin did not make a huge financial contribution, but Jesus said she gave the largest gift of all. Marked is about all of us coming together, giving generously and trusting God to do the rest. It may mean God is asking you to trust Him by making a faith commitment that you do not know how to fulfill right now. God has supplied our every need in Christ and we trust He will honor a heart that wants to give generously in response to the Gospel.

There may also be ways to be sacrificial with your lifestyle to create a margin for generosity in your life. Look for ways to involve the entire family in the process of giving generously. Use this as an opportunity to teach children and grandchildren to obey the Lord with a generous heart and to trust Him. This is a great opportunity to take a look at our overall stewardship of all that God has entrusted to us.

HOW ARE WE SEEKING GOD'S DIRECTION IN THESE EFFORTS?

The current direction of Cross Point Church is first and foremost covered in prayer. The direction of Marked is the result of these prayers and we encourage you to pray first in all of this as well!

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MARKED: A SEVEN-DAY DEVOTIONAL

Written by Josh Reed

We've all been *Marked* by something or someone. Whether good or bad, life has a unique way of impressing upon us words and experiences that leave an impression. A stamp. A *mark*. True markings are sobering. They have the ability to bring perspective because a true mark carries with it both pain and joy: the pain of the pressing and the joy of the change that comes as a result. Those marks have the ability both to tell a story of the past and write one for the future. Perspective, then, is critical when we view the things that have marked us over the course of our lives.

Every movement of God can be measured by the things that have marked those involved. The early disciples were *marked* by the cross of Christ and an empty tomb. St. Patrick was *marked* by the druids who kidnapped and enslaved him and, after his escape, the dreams he had to return and minister to them. John Wesley was *marked* by the faith of the Moravians on board a ship caught in a violent storm, worshipping the Lord and not afraid to die. Martin Luther King Jr. was *marked* by having to give up his seat on a bus at age 14 and the truth of Scripture that all men are equal in the eyes of the LORD. Anytime the people of God are involved in a movement of God, they are *marked* deeply by the pain of the world and the hope of the Gospel.

The Book of Isaiah is on the front end of a movement that occurred among ancient Israel. Israel had seen its apex, and because of the nation's idolatry and rampant sin, it was breaking apart at the seams. At this time,

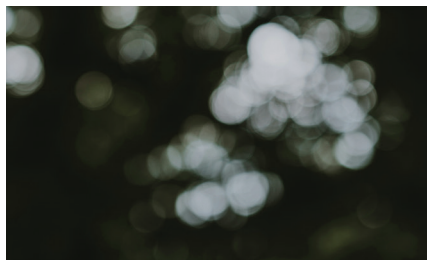
Israel had been conquered and ruled by other kingdoms. These atrocities had *marked* them and they were reduced to a powerless nation full of grief and sorrow. Some grew bitter. Some despaired without hope. Regardless, among them were a remnant that never lost hope in that which God had promised. As it progresses, it is clear the book of Isaiah is being addressed to that remnant, those whose perspective had been marked by both the pain of the world and the hope of the Gospel. In the book of Isaiah, this hope begins to take the shape of a kingly figure who is also a suffering servant. As the book stretches toward its ultimate aim, which is a vision of a restored world where the land is plentiful and there is no enmity or strife among peoples, chapter 61 is a poem written to encourage that remnant to press on – to live lives that emulate that suffering servant because they had been transformed by Him.



Read Isaiah 61 in partnership
with this devotional

As we work through Isaiah 61 together, and consider what a life of sacrificial generosity looks like in response, take a few moments each day to reflect deeply on the things that have both wounded and healed you. Also, take a few moments to reflect on the character, purpose and generosity of Jesus, and in the quiet place of prayer, let Him speak to those *markings* and what He might want to do with them in this season.

Our prayer is that in our current cultural moment may it be said that Cross Point, as a *church*, was *marked* by both the pain of the world and the hope of the Gospel – and we chose to do something about the reality of both.



¹The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
²to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,

*English
Standard
Version*





and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.
⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.
⁵Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks;
foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers;
⁶but you shall be called the priests of the Lord;
they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God;
you shall eat the wealth of the nations,
and in their glory you shall boast.
⁷Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion;
instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot;
therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion;
they shall have everlasting joy.
⁸For I the Lord love justice;
I hate robbery and wrong;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
⁹Their offspring shall be known among the nations,
and their descendants in the midst of the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge them,
that they are an offspring the Lord has blessed.
¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;
my soul shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
¹¹For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to sprout up before all the nations.

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START WITH THE END IN MIND

“For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the LORD God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.” – Isaiah 61:11 AMP

Everybody needs a Big Mike. Mike Richardson is a twice-retired mechanical engineer and construction company owner, husband, father, grandfather and churchman who despises the idea of retirement. He’s known to say, “The quickest way to a heart attack is a rocking chair.” So he built a garden in his backyard, at his church and in the backyards of anyone wanting to grow food with a willingness to work. He wasn’t going to sit still, or play, as long as there was time – there was good work to be done.

I called Mike after reading an article about how delicious his collard greens were and how generous he was with his produce to see if he would teach me how to grow food. After I introduced who I was, told him how I’d heard about him and got his phone number, he simply said, “be at my house in 10 minutes,” and promptly hung up the phone. As I arrived, he was already in the garden and he waved me down. As we shook hands and exchanged pleasantries, he told me to look around. I didn’t know it at the time, but he was imparting vision to me. Before we staked a plot, before we built a box, before we planted a seed, Big Mike showed me what it would look like. *He let me see a vision of the possible.* Then he took me inside and let me taste some of those collard greens and he gave me about five jars of homemade pepper jelly to take home. By the time I arrived in my own kitchen to put away those jars (aptly called Habanero Gold), it was settled in my heart: I was going to start a garden.

Verse 11 is the LORD’s declaration of what the world is going to be like. The prophet Isaiah leverages the familiar processes of an Eden-like garden to impart a vision of the possible to a hopeful people in the midst of extremely unfavorable circumstances. Before we work through verses 1-10, we need to start with the end of Isaiah 61 in mind: a world in which *“righteousness and praise sprout up before all nations.”* As the Lord so often does, He’s going to make sacrificial asks of both the original hearers, and of us, those who have been *marked* by both the pain of the world and the hope of the Gospel. That kind of sacrifice can only be sustained if the love of Christ has been witnessed and received.

I’m not sure how much Isaiah 61 influenced Big Mike’s method of teaching, but make no mistake, he is a master teacher, imparting vision and creating a longing, before we even lifted one finger. His sacrificial love *marked* me. Throughout the last 2000 years, righteousness and praise has sprouted up before all the nations in each generation because of the sacrificial love by those who were convinced that the ultimate Gardener, who in the garden of Eden started with the end in mind, is excellent at growing the things that matter most.



REFLECTION:

Look In (Personal Evaluation)

Who or what has made a profound spiritual impact on your life?

Look Up (God's Leading)

When you consider the end in mind, what time, skills, wisdom or resources has the Lord blessed you with to be able to sow into others?

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Look Out (New Possibilities)

Is there someone you sense the Lord encouraging you to take steps toward impacting their life?

Optional: Write a prayer in response.

"What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from." — T.S. Eliot



— 02 SET APART

[Isaiah 61:1 ESV]

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me..."

I can remember in 2003 when LeBron James was coming out of high school, he was so good at basketball that professional teams were accused of losing on purpose just to have a chance to draft him. The Cleveland Cavaliers, who had never won an NBA championship, ended up getting the first pick of the draft that year. Being that James was from nearby Akron, it seemed serendipitous that they would select this hometown kid. As the draft neared, the hype surrounding this possibility began to swell. James began to be heralded as the “chosen one” or the “anointed one,” somehow set apart out of the entire universe to be the one to lead a title-starved city into the promised land of (sports) glory. For basketball fans, this was a curious development, but for the people of Cleveland, this was a source of basketball hope springing up from a seemingly impossible scenario.

The speaker in Isaiah 61 describes himself as “anointed” which is another way of saying “messiah”. This speaker claims that the Spirit of the LORD God is upon Him because He is, in essence, the chosen one. In the context of ancient Israel and Biblical history, this speaker is saying He is the One promised in Genesis 3:15, from the promised lineage of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), David (2 Samuel 7:14) and a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). The expectations surrounding this very figure would be curious to a watching world, but for Israel – who had been *marked* by captivity in exile – this wasn’t just a source of hope, but *the* source of hope for those who were looking for God’s hand to act on their behalf.

When LeBron took the court, he did some incredible things, but it took 13 years before Cleveland won a championship. The chosen one had fulfilled the prediction (with lots of help, might I add). When they did win, the city of Cleveland was *marked*, but it’s here where the similarities end. While it is true that Jesus depended upon the hospitality and care of others during his 33 years on the earth, there was one thing that He and He alone was anointed to do: reconcile God and man. Before Israel could be who they were made to be, humans could be what we were made to be and the world could be what it was made to be – the infinite breach between God and man had to be bridged. The work of the anointed One did not look like most thought it would, but for those who had eyes to see, they saw it for what it was.

The Messiah would proclaim good news to the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to captives, open the eyes of the blind, and transform a motley crew of hope-filled humans into ministers and priests to the rest of the world. At the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus quoted Isaiah 61 (Luke 4:18-19). He was claiming to be the One who had come to set things right, starting with the human heart for all who needed it.

Far beyond bringing a basketball title to a city, Jesus was set apart to bring salvation to the world.

REFLECTION:

Look In (Personal Evaluation)

How has the grace of Jesus marked your life? List some specific examples.

Look Up (God's Leading)

How has gratitude for the work of Christ on your behalf fueled your generosity for the glory of Christ on behalf of others?

Look Out (New Possibilities)

Where are the places and who are the people you long to see reconciled to God through Jesus?

Optional: Write a prayer in response.

[1 Timothy 2:5]

"For there is one God, and there is one Mediator between
God and men, the man Christ Jesus."





"...that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified." - Isaiah 61:3 ESV

Master and apprentice, mentor and mentee, influencer and influenced, coach and client, father and son: All these relationships carry with it the idea that what one person has and/or does will get passed along to someone else. Christianity is no different. Jesus' last charge to the men He invested three years of His life into, was to go and do likewise. These relationships thrive off the principle of compounding interest, a finance concept where you earn interest on both what you have and what you continue to gain.

Often touted as the "eighth wonder of the world", compounding interest is truly the gift that keeps on giving, for those who put it into practice. Did you know, the kingdom of Heaven runs off this principle as well? In Isaiah 61, the kingdom agenda is laid out in the anointed One's work, but that work also includes reproducing Himself into the lives of others. Interestingly, it says that the recipients of His actions would be called "oaks of righteousness". An oak tree comes from an acorn that was dropped from ... an oak tree! The oak tree here is an analogy. The speaker says that the *recipients* of His grace would in turn become the *vessels* of that grace, with the intent that compounding interest would apply. The purpose is so that the Lord would be glorified.

From a logical standpoint, given the appropriate amount of time and favorable conditions, there is enough power in one acorn to populate the entire world with oak trees. One acorn would grow into a mighty oak that would produce up to 10 million acorns in its lifetime. Some of those would fall to the ground, some would be carried away by animals or wind, but the cycle would reproduce if the acorn would simply do what it was made to do. There's only one catch: For the acorn to produce another oak tree it had to do one thing – go into the ground, be buried and die. Only then, could new life emerge.

Though Jesus did not use the oak tree as His example, He did use this principle in John 12:24-26 ESV when He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me."

Jesus was the acorn that went into the ground and died so that new life could emerge. He rose from the dead and then sent His life-giving Spirit to dwell in His followers, who would share in His mission to spread the life that the new garden brings to the ends of the earth.

Jesus was banking on the principle of compounding interest when He laid His life down for others to the glory of God the Father.

REFLECTION:

Look In (Personal Evaluation)

How has your life been marked by compounding interest? Consider all the categories this applies to and record them.

Look Up (God's Leading)

Reflect upon compounding interest with the Lord. Seek understanding as to why this principle is so foundational to life. Listen to, and write down, what you sense Him sharing.

Look Out (New Possibilities)

Consider how the principle of compounding interest could be applied to the kingdom agenda laid out in Isaiah 61, but in Middle Tennessee.



"If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one." — C.S. Lewis

— 04 THE GLORIOUS WORK OF RESTORATION

[Isaiah 61:4 ESV]

"They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations."



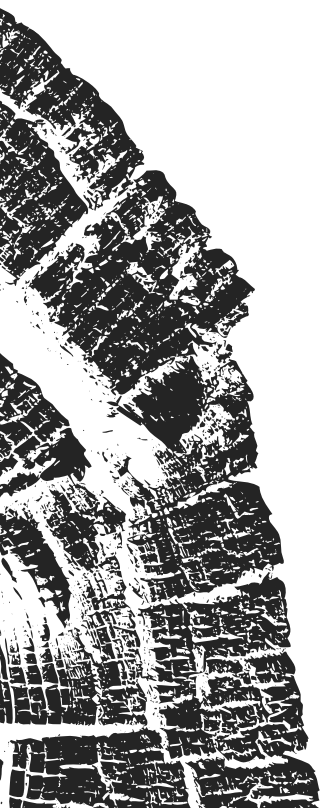
In 2023, the State of Louisiana embarked on the largest single ecosystem restoration project in U.S. history. The goal is to reconnect the Mississippi River to its surrounding wetlands and build up natural barriers to protect both wildlife and coastal communities, from the land loss crisis (primarily from storm surge) that has claimed 2000 square miles within the last century. Interestingly, the plan of the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion is to mimic natural land building processes by leaning into the power of the Mississippi River, working *with* nature to benefit wildlife and people alike in hopes of building a more sustainable and resilient future for many generations to come.

The work of restoration is hard work, but it is glorious work. The pride that comes from restoring an old piece of furniture, an old car, an old house or an old plot of land, or even whole ecosystems, leverages things like resourcefulness, creativity, empathy and grit. It gives a sense of accomplishment that few things can rival. When Isaiah 61 envisions followers of the anointed One responding to the *mark* He's made on their lives, the work of restoration is what is described.

Compounding interest works both ways, for good or for evil. For centuries, things like family lines, whole towns, religious institutions, corporate workplaces and entire cultures have felt the effects of the compounding interest of sin. When the people of God seriously put effort toward rebuilding what God always intended (for His glory), as a response to what Christ has done for them, it is meant to set off a reproducing effect of goodness as people from every tribe, tongue and nation experience sacrificial generosity from others.

This is the kind of life that builds a more sustainable and resilient future for many generations to come, and it mimics the life of Jesus by leaning into the same power that animated His life – the power of the Holy Spirit – who spreads the love of the Father through our hearts and gives us gifts to work together to accomplish even greater works than Jesus Himself did.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." - John 14:12



REFLECTION:

Look In (Personal Evaluation)

How has Jesus restored your understanding of giving and generosity?

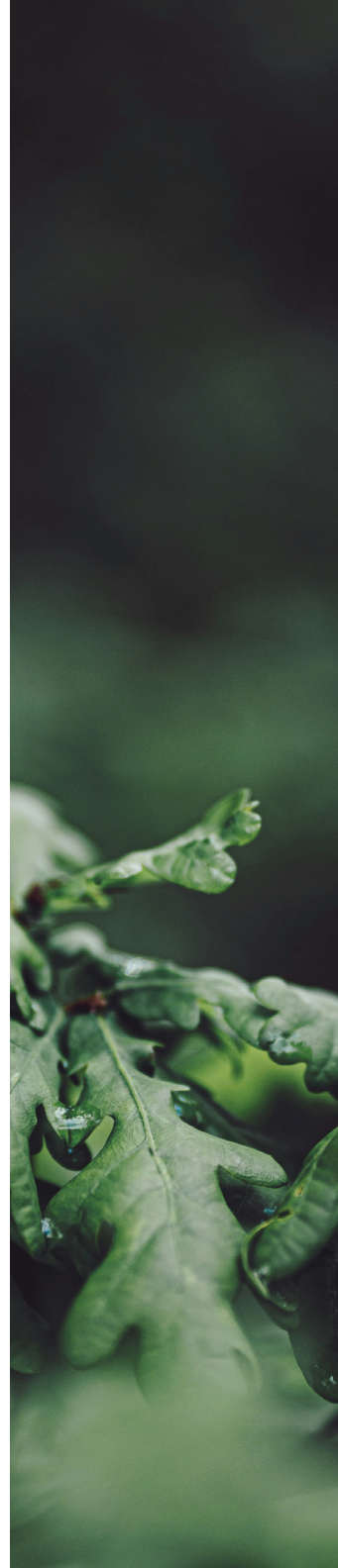
Look Up (God's Leading)

How does the call to the work of restoration teach you about God's character and what He is doing in the world?

Look Out (New Possibilities)

What are the most pressing things at Cross Point or in Middle Tennessee that need to be rebuilt and/or restored?

Optional: Write a prayer in response.



— 05

A KINGDOM WITH A LARGE TABLE

"Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the Lord has blessed." - Isaiah 61:9 ESV

What is the most people you've ever prepared a meal for – 10? 30? 200? Whatever it is, I'm sure it pales in comparison to the city of Lisbon, Portugal. In 1998, upon the completion of the construction of an 11 mile bridge, the city hosted a meal to commemorate its opening. This wasn't just any meal; they built a three mile long table that sat 15,000 people and served 10 tons of feijoada to set the World Record for the longest table ever! From vision, to preparation, to logistics, to invitation, to safety, to execution, the plan to pull off such an amazing feat exhausts me even thinking about it all.

Whenever feasts occur, there is something that happens by way of how the world works. Unless it is some cause driving the feast, those who are typically invited are family and friends. Culture is typically driven by "like-ness", meaning it is typical for people to be friends with those who look and talk like themselves. I don't mean that in a bad way, I simply mean that in a "this is the way the world works" way.

— 43

Imagine being in another country where no one spoke English and you are sitting down at a restaurant and overhear someone speaking English with that same southern twang you're familiar with. Chances are you will feel immediately connected and might even try to strike up a conversation. We're drawn to like-ness.

Scripture paints a different picture. A picture of a restored Eden. Here in verse 9, the result of the anointed One's disciples doing the work of restoration in the world, would be that all the different kinds of peoples in the world would see and acknowledge that the LORD has "blessed" them. When we see that phrase in the Bible, it is a callback for the reader to the promise in Genesis 12:3 that God made to Abram: "...that I will bless you...and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." In other words, when God blesses His people, He blesses them to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth, not just "the ones like us".

In the book of Acts, that's exactly what His early followers did. They began to take the Gospel to all the peoples of the earth, inviting them to their tables and joining them at theirs. It's amazing how the tables widen when our hearts do too. When the Holy Spirit spreads the love of the Father across our hearts, it's really hard to keep it quarantined from people made in His image, people that He loves deeply and longs to be reconciled to Himself.

"Hospitality is not about impressing others with well decorated homes or gourmet cooking. It's about loving our neighbor in the same way God has loved us. It's about incarnating the welcoming heart of God for the world." — Ruth Haley Barton



REFLECTION:

Look In (Personal Evaluation)

What is the easiest thing about crossing ethnic boundaries? What is the hardest?

Look Up (God's Leading)

What does this picture of a restored Eden show you about God's heart and the work He has called the church to?

Look Out (New Possibilities)

Where might the Lord be leading you to leverage your time, influence, resources, and/or wisdom to fuel this kingdom agenda from Isaiah 61?

Optional: Write a prayer in response.

— 06

CELEBRATE GOOD TIMES, COME ON!

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.” - Isaiah 61:10 ESV

Have you ever been to a wedding where every detail was intentionally designed to serve as a celebration of the couple’s love for one another? Where there was great rejoicing? Those are the kinds of weddings you remember. Those are the kinds of weddings that you tell stories about. The reason is because you were the beneficiary of someone else’s lavish generosity. A generosity that was the result of a joy that they wanted to share. Someone chose to foot the bill for that wedding celebration out of a desire for many others to share in the joy of two people sharing love with one another. I love weddings.

As we’ve moved through this poem this week, the result of the work described in Isaiah 61 is a celebration. The Messiah, reflecting on the work described in verses 1-9, is rejoicing with God because of all that the LORD is doing throughout the Earth! The language used to describe this rejoicing is a wedding, where interestingly, the speaker’s “robe” is compared to both a bridegroom and a bride. It’s as if the two have become one. This verse is a foreshadowing of when Jesus is going to return, and gather His bride, who the New Testament calls the *Church*, to Himself for a great wedding feast (Revelation 19:6-9). There will be great rejoicing because of all that the LORD has done throughout the Earth in bringing justice and causing righteousness and praise to spring up in every corner of the world. All present will experience the lavish generosity of God as a result of the joy that the

Father and the Son have been experiencing for all eternity!

Isaiah 61 reminds me of what Dallas Willard once said:

“We should, to begin with, think that God leads a very interesting life, and that he is full of joy. Undoubtedly he is the most joyous being in the universe. The abundance of his love and generosity is inseparable from his infinite joy. All of the good and beautiful things from which we occasionally drink tiny droplets of soul-exhilarating joy, God continuously experiences in all their breadth and depth and richness.”

One day we’ll be at the wedding supper of the Lamb, where we’ll dine at a long table with people from all the peoples taking in the abundance of God’s love, generosity and joy. It’s going to be indescribable, but I’ll bet we’ll try. Until then, the Church, the bride of Christ, helps create space by generously inviting others – through our time, skills, resources and wisdom – to smaller tables that point to *that table* so others can get in on that joy. The joy they, and we, were created for!



REFLECTION:

Look In (Personal Evaluation)

Describe a time where love, generosity and joy were all present. How did that experience mark you?

Look Up (God's Leading)

What does *joy* teach you about the nature of God and our nature as image bearers?

Look Out (New Possibilities)

When you consider opportunities to bless others, what ideas present the possibility where love, generosity and joy could be experienced by the recipients of that blessing?

— 47

Optional: Write a prayer in response.



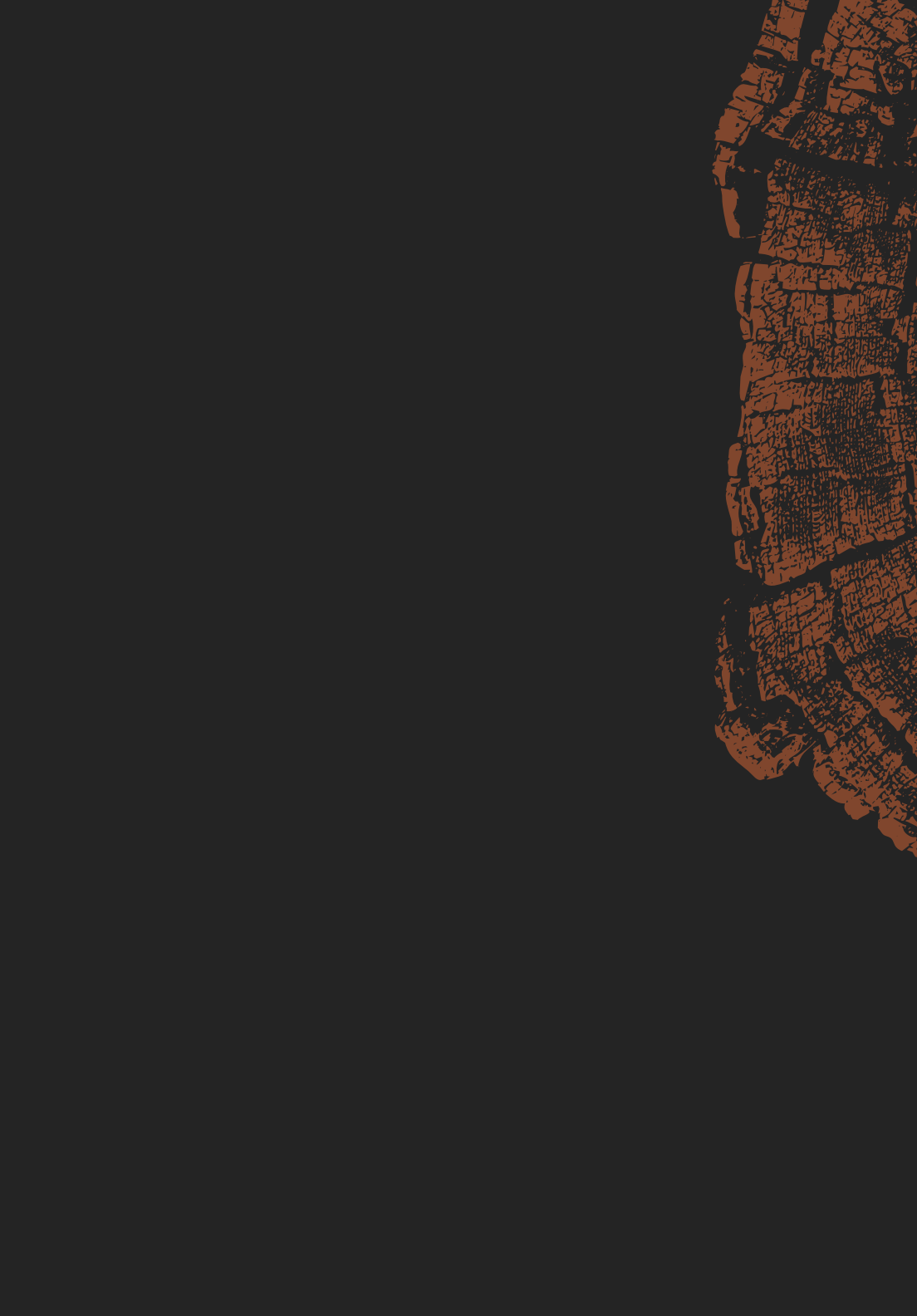
[Matthew 25:21]

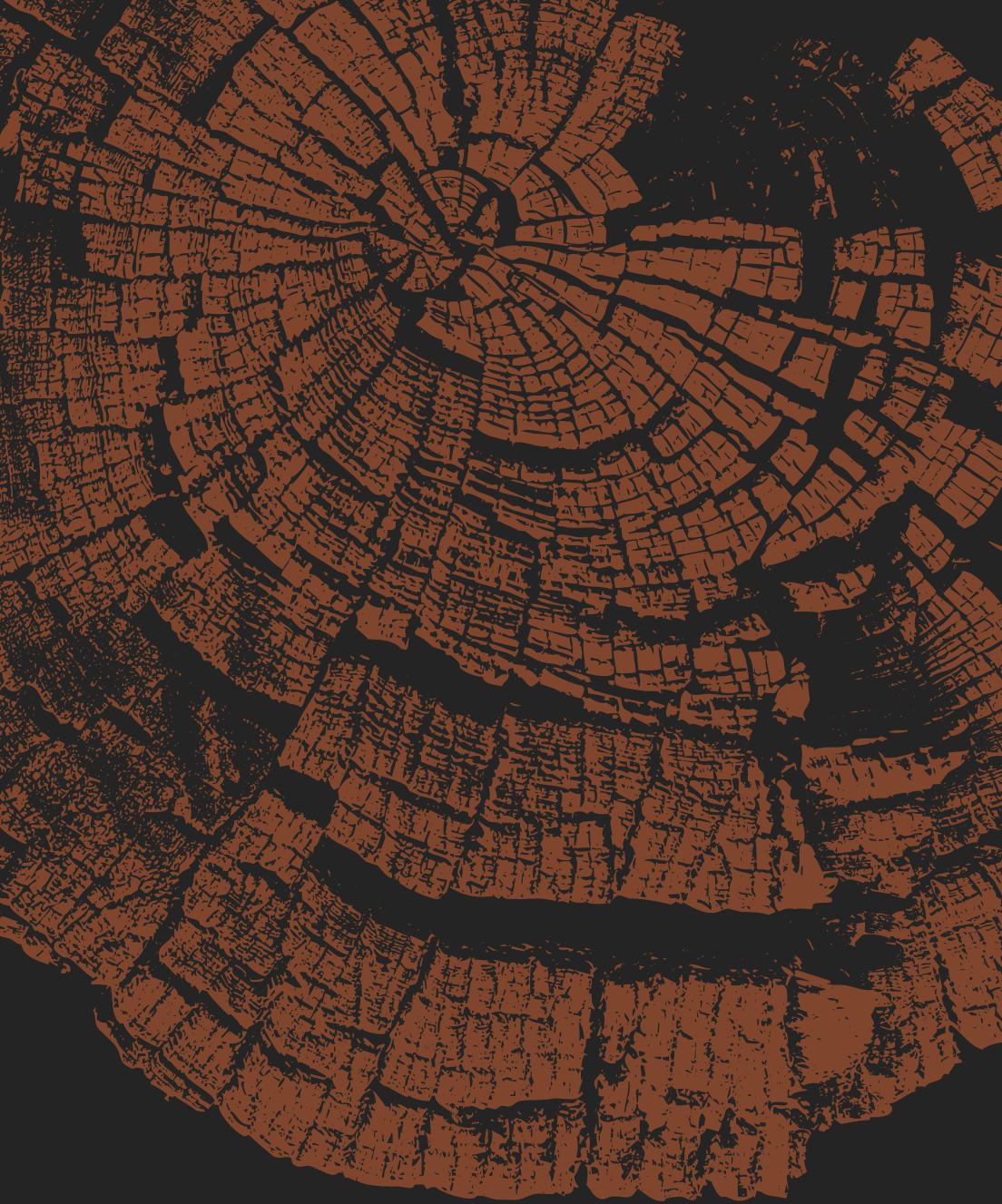
“Well done,
good and faithful
servant. You have
been faithful over
a little; I will set
you over much.
Enter into the **joy**
of your master.”

— 07 SABBATH AS GENEROUS HOSPITALITY

REFLECTION:

Write a prayer in response to all the Lord has spoken to you through Isaiah 61 this week.







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