

I. Introduction

- A. Our order of worship is a little different today because we are making room for something massive.
- B. At the end of my talk, over the course of our 4 church services this weekend, we are going to see a few people do a very brave thing. They are going to step into the waters of baptism.
- C. So I'd like to welcome you and your family and your friends. We are proud to know you all.
- D. I said a few, and by a few, I mean 51 people. So we've rearranged our entire service for this golden moment.
- E. And the timing is perfect, because this is the absolute perfect conclusion to the journey we've been on talking about anxiety.
- F. This is the third and final installment of our series, Anxiety Detox. Over the last two messages, we have dismantled the mechanics of worry.
- G. We've been saying that:
 1. Anxiety is a chain reaction, so one thought leads to another.
 2. And not only that, it is a logical chain reaction, so your worries always make sense to you.
 3. And then on top of that, it is a logical chain reaction that gets habituated. So you run down the same patterns of anxiety and worry again and again.
- H. I said that I wasn't going to stand here and tell you not to worry. Instead, I suggested you go ahead and keep on worrying. Yes I did.
- I. But at the same time forged a new chain of thinking... one of hope and faith... that is forged by thinking about the wonderful promises of the Bible, and not just that... but by meditating on it. Literally muttering it and giving God's Word a voice in your life.
- J. Now, I want to wrap it up with one more lesson.
 1. **Switching From Defense to Offense**
- K. The ultimate victory over anxiety isn't just finding inner peace or a quiet mind. The ultimate victory is taking action toward your Massively Transformative Purpose—your God-given life mission. When you are operating in the power God gave to you, you do not just play defense. You play offense. You take ground.
 1. To show you exactly how to do this, we are going to look at one of the most intense case studies in the entire Bible. The scene is the ancient city called Samaria. The story is in 2 Kings 6 and 7. The city is surrounded by an enemy army. But this is not a frontal assault; it's a siege.
 2. That means it's a waiting game. The Syrians have cut off all the supply lines. Nobody in. Nobody out.
 3. The people are literally starving to death. They are trapped, hunkered down, waiting for the end.
 4. But outside the city gates sit four men. Four unlikely heroes. They are going to choose a very specific action that will change everything.
 5. Let's see what that is.

II. The Unlikely Heroes

- A. *"Some time later, however, King Ben-hadad of Syria mustered his entire army and besieged Samaria. As a result, there was a great famine in the city.... Now there were four men with leprosy sitting at the entrance of the city gates. 'Why should we sit here waiting to die?' they asked each other. 'We will starve if we stay here, but with the famine in the city, we will starve if we go back there. So we might as well go out and surrender to the Syrian army. If they let us live, so much the better. But if they kill us, we would have died anyway.'" (2 Kings 6:24, 7:3-4)*
- B. In the ancient world, a person with leprosy was the ultimate outcast. They are rejected, marginalized, and cut off from society.
 1. If you want a picture of that part of you that feels inadequate and disconnected, this is it.
 2. Besides suffering leprosy, they are trapped in a no-man's-land.
 - a) Behind them is a city starving to death.
 - b) In front of them is a massive, heavily armed enemy encampment.
- C. And this is exactly where anxiety wants to keep you. Stuck at the gate.
 1. Maybe you're there today. Maybe you're hunkered down.
 2. It could be that you've tried a lot of things, but nothing worked, so you've given up.
 3. Anxiety does this to you. When you are gripped by worry, the instinct is to freeze. You hunker down. You tell yourself that if you just sit still, if you just keep doing what you're doing things will get better.
 4. Anxiety makes people check out. They blank out.
 5. That's when you numb yourself with endless scrolling, overworking, or withdrawing from the people who love you. You manage the "stuckness" by distracting yourself from it, or normalizing it, over-medicating it, anesthetizing it.
 6. It can be a form of slow-motion self-sabotage through inaction because of fear.
 7. But the harsh reality of anxiety is this: the longer you sit at the gate, the more you starve.
 8. This precious thing called life—your life—is draining out of you drip by drip: your marriage, your career, your family, your energy, your morality, and your calling, getting drained one boring, groundhog day at a time.
 9. But then, something profound shifts in the minds of these four men. They ask: "Why are we sitting here until we die?"
 10. They do the math and come up with only three options.
 - a) **Option one: They can go backward into the city. But the city is in famine and therefore death.**
 - (1) You have a past self, a present self, and a future self.
 - (2) When your present self feels overwhelmed, you naturally retreat to your past self.
 - (a) You return to the old habits you gave up long ago.
 - (b) You call up the old ways of doing things that never worked before and never will. Old addictions. Old friends you know aren't good for you. Old temptations.

- (c) If your past self lived a story of tragedy, hurt, abandonment or loss, going backwards where you came from is death.

b) Option two: They can stay exactly where they are. They can remain frozen at the gate, letting the siege dictate their future.

- (1) This is your past self convincing you that your present self is all there is and all there ever will be.
 - (a) I'll always be a worrier. I'll always be afraid. Life will always be more than I can handle. I'm born that way, made that way, shoved that way, stuck that way, locked that way, predestined that way, frozen that way.
 - (b) I can't change. It's who I am. It's my personality. That's just me.
- (2) If that's your thinking, I want to remind you of one promise and one invitation from God.
 - (a) The promise says: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* (2 Corinthians 5:17)
 - i) Meaning when you answer the question "Who Am I" and everything you say is negative and dark, then you have not yet come to grips with your new creation in Christ.
 - (b) The invitation says: *"Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 3:13-14)
 - i) Meaning God himself is inviting you to dream bigger and aim higher.
- (3) I'm telling you what the four leprous men at the gate would tell you: If you want to guarantee the death of everything you hope and dream and long for, just stay put... but there's...

c) Option three: They can walk straight toward the camp of the things that scare you most. They can walk directly into the very thing that terrifies them.

- (1) Listen to their logic in verse 4: "Come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they let us live, so much the better. But if they kill us, we would have died anyway."
- (2) But these four outcasts realize a massive spiritual truth: moving forward into their fear is the only place where there is even a possibility of life.
 - (a) You do not conquer your anxiety by sitting at the gate and trying to think happy thoughts.
 - (b) You beat it by standing up, making the only decision that leads to a life worth living, and walking directly into the great unknown.

- 11. That could be anything: starting that business, working to save your marriage, starting trade school or college, advancing your career, asking for someone's hand in marriage, or just asking for a date, or stepping into the ministry you've been avoiding, or just bringing yourself back to God—you have to leave the safe gate you've gotten accustomed to.
- 12. You have to take a leap of faith.
- 13. You have to move from defense to offense.
- 14. Because when you stop playing defense and take that first step of kinetic, forward motion, you just might discover yourself triggering the logistics of Heaven.
- 15. And all the facts causing your anxiety are way less real than you thought they were.

D. Walk Forward

- 1. So get up, leave the gate, and walk into the twilight toward the enemy camp. They are expecting the worst. They are bracing for spears and swords.
- 2. But what do they find?
 - a) *"And they rose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians; and when they had come to the outskirts of the Syrian camp, to their surprise no one was there."* (2 Kings 7:5)
- 3. Silence. Tents left open. Food still cooking over the fires. Gold and silver tucked into backpacks.
- 4. What was the time of day? [at twilight]
- 5. What happened to the enemy? What happened to that big scary thing in the bushes?
- 6. *"For the Lord had caused the Syrian army to hear the clatter of speeding chariots and the galloping of horses and the sounds of a great army approaching. 'The king of Israel has hired the Hittites and Egyptians to attack us!' they cried to one another. So they panicked and fled at twilight, abandoning their tents, horses, donkeys, and everything else, as they fled for their lives."* (2 Kings 7:6-7)
 - a) What time did the enemy panic and flee? [at twilight]
 - b) The moment they switched from defense to offense, they triggered the logistics of heaven.
- 7. But, let's be fiercely honest.
 - a) In this story, the enemy fled.
 - b) But in your life, sometimes you move into your fears, you walk into the camp, and the enemy is still there waiting for you with a sword drawn.
 - c) For every one that gets a miracle, 99 get a tragedy.
 - d) I am not one of those preachers that promises God is going to make everything okay.
 - e) Cancer happens. Bankruptcy happens. Heartbreak happens. For every miraculous, happy ending, there are 99 tragic endings. Sometimes the very worst-case scenario you were imagining actually comes to pass. That's what makes anxiety so logical!
- f) Even so, God is already in your tomorrow.**
- 8. No, He hasn't promised to always drive away your everyday enemies, but He has already destroyed your ultimate enemy. **The cross of Christ promises that the worst thing that can happen to you is never the last thing that happens to you.**
- 9. Because Jesus Christ walked out of his own grave, suffering, tragedy, and death do not get the final word.

- a) This is what it means to have a bulletproof soul. When your eternity is secured by the blood of Jesus, you have zero liability in this life.
 - (1) If you step out in faith and fail, God's grace catches you.
 - (a) If you hurt, he comforts you.
 - (b) If you sin, he forgives you.
 - (c) If you get lost, he guides you.
 - (d) If you need help, he helps you.
 - (e) If you die, he carries you up to heaven.
 - b) That's what the four leprous men at the gate finally realized. Might as well try; there's nothing to lose.
 - c) They do what anyone would do. They gorge themselves. They eat, they drink, they grab silver and gold and go stash it. They are finally safe. They are finally provided for.
 - d) But then, right in the middle of their feasting, a massive shift takes place.
- 10. *"Finally, they said to each other, '...This is a day of good news, and we aren't sharing it with anyone! ...Come on, let's go back and tell the people at the palace.'" (2 Kings 7:9, NLT)*
 - a) Anxiety starts as self-protection. But the longer it goes, it turns into self-preoccupation. It is a hyper-focus on your safety, your reputation, your provision, and your future. There is only one way to redirect that hyper-focus away from yourself.
 - b) The ultimate victory over anxiety is stepping into your life's massively transformative mission.
 - (1) The city is hungry, and we've found food.
 - (2) The city is dying, and we've found life.
 - (3) The city is broke, and we've found a treasure.
 - c) We cannot stay here and keep this to ourselves. We have to go.

III. The Massively Transformative Purpose

- A. In the church, this is called evangelism. Evangelism isn't a church program. It's the urgent, transcendent realization that you have found the bread of life, and the people around you are hungry.
 - 1. *"For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, 'Come back to God!'" (2 Corinthians 5:19-20)*
- B. We have good news. The best news in the history of the world.
 - 1. God has made a way to no longer count people's sins against them.
 - 2. God has made a way to reconcile unholy people to himself, without compromising his character.
 - 3. God extends an offer of total forgiveness. Absolute freedom. Personal sovereignty. Abundant life.
 - 4. God through Christ offers victory over this giant pain machine called earth.
 - 5. God offers a mansion in heaven where every tear is wiped away, every day is an exciting adventure, and every moment is joy unspeakable and full of glory.
- C. Even if they don't realize it, this is what people are looking for. They are starving for it. They are starving for a hope that doesn't collapse when the economy dips or the biopsy results come back.
 - 1. They need a Savior.
 - 2. So we are ambassadors for God. Try that on for your identity, Christian. Live up to that name, that glory, that importance.
 - 3. You are part of something big. You are part of something that matters. And when you embrace this part of your identity... when you can stand up and say, "I am an ambassador of grace and truth in a culture of confusion and pain..."
 - 4. When you choose to make your life a part of this massive, transcendent mission of reaching a lost world, something miraculous happens to your brain.
 - a) Your anxiety shrinks because your universe just expanded.
 - b) You stop obsessing over self so much because you are suddenly burdened with the eternal survival of somebody you actually care about.
 - c) **It turns out that one of the solutions to anxiety is this crazy little thing called LOVE.**
- D. The chain of your anxiety fades away as you forge a stronger chain of love for others. You have a family to feed, a neighborhood to reach, a mission from heaven.
 - 1. Love breaks your fixation with yourself.
 - 2. Love gets you carrying another person's load for a minute.
 - 3. Love delivers the best news of the only Savior and a best friend a person could ever have in Jesus.
 - 4. In just a few moments, 51 people are going to step into these waters to be baptized. Fifty-one!
 - 5. Do you know what that means? That means 51 times, someone in this church left the gate behind, walked into the unknown, found the Savior, turned around, and delivered the treasure they found to someone else they cared about.
 - 6. So today, we do not end our look at anxiety by looking inward. We end by switching from defense to offense, and declaring victory! 51 victories.
 - 7. I'm preaching to you today that the siege is broken.
 - 8. You are not a victim of your circumstances; you are a carrier of the greatest news in human history. You are equipped, you are anointed, and your soul is absolutely bulletproof.
 - 9. It is time to step out of the bunker and do the most loving thing a human could ever do: to bring the grace of God to a very hungry, desperately searching world.

10. And now in these baptisms, we are going to see just a little bit what that love looks like when it changes a life and sets a person free.

IV. Prayer

- A. Father,
- B. I pray for every person in this room today.
- C. I ask that You would lift the heavy weight of anxiety off their shoulders. Show them that they don't have to stay stuck at the gate anymore.
- D. I also want to pray especially for our guests this weekend. I know many of them are here simply to support a friend or family member taking this big step, and we are so honored to have them.
- E. Father, I pray these guests feel incredibly loved and welcome in this room. I pray they sense that hope, and feel the message of a Savior we are putting on display today.
- F. Father, I thank You for the 51 incredible people stepping into the waters of baptism.
- G. As we celebrate their courage and their faith, I pray it inspires every single one of us to step boldly into the abundant life You have prepared for us.
- H. In the loving and mighty name of Jesus,
- I. Amen.