

The Water Crossing Ark

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Date: 22 August 2021

Preacher: Jesse Kincer

[0 : 0 0] Hey, good morning. How are y'all doing? Doing well? Good to see you. Good to see you. And for all those that are listening to this online, just thanks for Keenan. I realize that those of you who are listening to this through the website, that there's probably good reasons with Delta coming back and all that craziness happening and spiking that it may be safer for you to stay home, but glad that you're able to keep in touch at least through the sermon series. I just want to say to you, for those of us in the service today also, it's like, hey, we realize that these, you know, things are changing a little bit.

We're kind of in a new wave. And if you're more comfortable wearing a mask, we are by no sense like a church that says, how dare you wear a mask? If that's what you're more comfortable doing, go for it. And we totally understand. And we're thinking about just ways to even like expand like a social distancing section for our church just to make it so you feel more safe and secure coming in person as well. All right. So we're going to jump into our series, which is called Look to the Rock, the rock being Jesus, not a pet rock or anything like that. If you guys remember that weird craze of the 1990s. But it is what we're doing is we're going through the Old Testament. And when we're looking at chronologically, these various stories and events that happen in the Old Testament and seeing how they point to Jesus. And so we're picking up as this beautiful mosaic, this painting of all these different events cobbling together and seeing actually we're learning more about the character and nature of who Jesus is.

Why is that a big deal? Because it shapes our belief. Like the more we know about Jesus, the more we see him clearly in the fullness of his glory, the more it affects our worship to him. And worship affects how we follow. Worship directs our lives and how we live our life. And we're meant to live fully surrendered, fully sold out, fully loving God with all our hearts and on mission for him. And so today, what we're going to do is we're going to look at all that in the book of Joshua. We're going to be in Joshua chapter 3. If you have your Bible, you can turn there. If you don't have a Bible, the verses are going to be up on the screen. And let me just kind of like shape the context of Joshua before we, you know, jump right into it. If you haven't been here, like go back and listen to some of the other sermons.

It'll really be helpful. But just by like, let's just run through a quick recap. God saves the nation of Israel out of slavery to Egypt. He brings them through the wilderness. And finally, after 40 years, they are on the precipice of entering into the promised land, the inheritance that God had established for them. All right. But this land, which is Canaan, is on the other side of the Jordan River. They have to cross this big river to get over there.

And it's a land also occupied by many nations and peoples that don't worship God and aren't just going to like let Israel walk in and take the place. Right. There's going to be some battles ahead of them. So with that in mind, let's read Joshua 3 verse 1.

[3 : 01] When Joshua rose early in the morning and they set out from Shittim. You guys can get that. Let's just get that out of the way right now. Let's get the giggles out. All right. And they came to the Jordan and he and all the people of Israel and lodged there before they passed over. At the end of three days, the officers went through the camp and commanded the people, as soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it. Yet there shall be a distance between you and it about 2000 cubits in length or 10 football fields. Think of it that way.

Do not come near it. Do not come near the ark in order that you may know the way you shall go. For you have not passed this way before. Then Joshua said to the people, consecrate yourselves for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. And Joshua said to the priests, take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people. So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. The Lord said to Joshua, today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, when you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan. And Joshua said to the people of Israel, come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God. And Joshua said, here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will, without fail, drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. Now therefore, take 12 men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing. And the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap. So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of water. Now, parenthetical statement here, now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest.

The waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is besides Zerathon. And those flowing down toward the Sea of Ereba, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off, and the people passed over opposite Jericho. Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan. Pretty cool story, right? But I want you to notice something. Like at the beginning, Israel had to stop and wait. And I don't know about you, but I hate waiting. I am very, very impatient. And the more excited I'm about something, the harder it is to wait for it, right? Parents, if you want to mess with your kids, like put out presents weeks before Christmas happens, and just watch their agony, right? This year, my son Riley and I, we turn, he turned 13, and so me and him, we took a trip. We went whitewater rafting, kind of a father-son thing, fun thing that we did, and we were really pumped. We had been talking about it for a while, and so the day finally came, and we woke up too early, arrived at the place way too early, had to wait around and keep ourselves busy because we were super bored, right? We played cornhole, we drank, we got our water bottles filled up, sunscreen, got coffee, everything that we could do to keep ourselves busy. Finally, the guide was ready to go, so he got us like coached up on how to do this ride. He got us geared up, and then we were supposed to load up, but that didn't happen for a long, long, long, long time, and we waited and waited and waited. I mean, it was like super painful, and this is what it must have been like. I can only imagine for Israel, like after 40 years, getting to the banks of the Jordan, and then God's like, okay, cool, we're going to cross over, but wait, wait, wait, wait. They could see their inheritance on the other side, but you know, following Jesus is like that, and if you're already following Jesus, you need to learn this, or maybe you already know this. It's not all about constant movement and busyness and finishing one thing and immediately going to the next thing.

It's not always about like constantly like, all right, 24-7, what am I doing? Am I making disciples? Am I pushing back darkness? Like, what's going on? I can't waste one second of my life because actually there's purpose in the waiting. Pausing and waiting with God is actually essential. It's actually essential to following Jesus, and here's why. In the waiting, some of the most important work in our life gets done. Look at what verse 5 says. It says, then Joshua said to the people, consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. So there are certain types of work that God can only do when we slow down. Before all the action and excitement that Israel was going to experience crossing over the Jordan and then fighting those battles, what does God say to them?

Slow your roll, consecrate yourselves. Take some time. Be with me. In the New Testament, that word consecration is sanctification, all right? Those of you who've been around church a lot, you're like, oh yeah, I understand what that is. And here's what it's saying, man. Before we step into strength, we have to step into our weakness. And consecration, sanctification, if you're like, wait, this is like new ideas to me. What does this all mean? Well, consecrate does mean to sanctify, which means to be set apart, to be made holy. And the big idea behind consecration has to do with our devotion. What are we devoted to? And consecration and the way God uses it and how he works it out in our lives is his work of shifting what we are devoted to. So let me use prayer as an example. Sanctification changes our prayers. We can have a prayer life that is always, Lord, give me the desires of my heart. Can I have this? Can I have that? Can you do this for me? A consecrated, devoted, sanctified, when the Holy Spirit comes and sanctifies us, our prayers start to shift from that to, Lord, put your desires in my heart. Lord, move me towards your heart. Lord, help me to understand your will and tuck into that more and more and more. And so what we see here is God preparing his people for the mission ahead by slowing them down to wait on him so that his work of sanctification could take place. See, this slowing down for the sake of growing our devotion doesn't keep us for mission, and it's not meant to sidetrack us from the mission. It actually prepares us for it, and it fuels us for the mission. Satan's most effective tactic to interrupt God's mission that God is accomplishing through the church is to go after our devotion to the king.

[10:23] So he makes it hard for us to stop and wait so that we might be sanctified. We all know that, right? Spending time with God, good thing. Actually doing that, really hard. But we got to do it because it is an essential part of following Jesus. When we stop and we wait and we push pause and we push into that abiding in God, what it does, it gives us time to tune into the Holy Spirit and the truth of the gospel, which, guys, there is no much more magic sauce than that. That is how God sanctifies us. It's spirit and truth, spirit and word. That's what he works through. That's what he always works through, and that's what he always will work through. In John 17, verse 17, Jesus prayed to God the Father for his disciples while he was with us. He said, sanctify them. Speaking of his disciples, he said, Father, sanctify them in the truth. Your word, the message, the gospel is truth.

And Jesus also promised his disciples in that same time that when the Holy Spirit comes, he would guide them into all truth. And I think we would do good to check ourselves and check our hearts and check the state of our lives. And you know what? If it's found wanting, man, just be okay to acknowledge and confess our sin. Many of us stay too busy to stop for sanctification. And you know what? That's just what Satan wants for our lives. He wants to convince us that we are too important to slow down and do what Henry Nguyen calls wasting time with God in word and prayer. Or Satan tries to convince us that it's too boring. And if you don't see immediate results or have an amazing experience every time you go to prayer or every time you read your word, you know what? Just stop doing it. It's just not worth it.

Not getting anything out of it. But when you look at the life of Jesus, he did a lot of mission, but he also did a lot of wasting time with his heavenly father. He got away to spend time with him on a regular basis. He knew that God's consecrating work is necessary for God's mission.

Before God can send us first, he must change us. I mean, think about this. Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah, he has this moment in his life, this life-changing moment in Isaiah 6, right? Like, I saw the Lord seated on the throne high and lifted up. The train of his robe filled the temple, right? He looks up and he sees the holiness of God. He sees this God that is unlike anything he's ever behold. He saw his glory. He saw his majesty. And his next response was he saw himself rightly. What does he say? He doesn't say, hey, man, being God, you know, we're cool. He says, woe to me. I'm a man of unclean lips and I dwell with the people of unclean lips. So we look up and we see God for who he is. And that causes us to look in and see ourselves rightly for who we are.

And so before we can go out, before God sends Isaiah out, he has to deal with those things. He has to see God's holiness. He has to acknowledge his weakness and his brokenness and his sin and let God in there.

[13 : 35] And if we don't do that, what we end up doing is we go on mission in pride. We go on mission in arrogance. We go on mission with legalism. We go on a mission judging others and thinking we're better than everybody else. But man, when we stop and we do the consecrating work, God gets into our souls and he does that work. We realize as much as the world needs grace, oh my goodness, so do I. I am an object of God's grace and mercy. I need it badly. You need it badly. His church needs it badly. We need to stop.

We need to take time to wait on him. Waiting is important. Use that time wisely. Press into God.

And yet, I want to say this, as important as that is, we can't turn waiting on him into settling. And that's the temptation when God shows up. And we just want to stay in that place and just hit repeat. Oh, it's so good. When God's presence shows up, when you meet him, it's just like, man, it is so good. We just want to stay in there, right? And that's why the church tends to fall in love with programs or methods of doing church. You know, God was in it at some point in the past. So we keep trying to recreate that same experience. We end up shifting our devotion from God to a formula or a method or a program or a strategy. And so what we end up doing, we keep repeating the same thing over and over again, hoping God is going to show up like he used to. All the while, God has moved on. Peter, at the Mount of Transfiguration, like, man, case, like, perfect case example, right? He's up there. Jesus' hidden glory is suddenly revealed. They see him for who he truly is. And Peter's response is, you know what we should do? Is we should build houses and just stay up here, right? And God has to interrupt him and say, no, Peter, you shouldn't do that. Because before he could pick out a hammer and start swinging, Jesus was already halfway down the mountain, okay? Peter could have stayed there, but Jesus wouldn't have been with him. See, God isn't about keeping his presence confined within his church or your Bible study or your prayer closet or whatever it is. He is on the move. And that's what

Joshua 2, 3 points out. It says, at the end of three days, the officers went through the camp and commanded the people, as soon as you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from that place and follow it. The Ark of the Covenant, that represented the presence of God amongst the people of God. Whenever Israel stopped, okay, thinking about all the book of Exodus, all the desert wanderings that they experienced, and here in the book of Joshua, when Israel stopped, when they would set up the tabernacle, they would camp out in a place for a while, the Ark was put into the Holy of Holies where nobody could go into. But when they were on the move, when camp broke, guess who went first? The Ark went before all the people of God. And the trumpet would sound, and the Ark would start moving, and then Moses would say this beautiful thing. He would say, Lord, let God arise and his enemies be scattered. May those who hate him, all his enemies, may they flee before him. And that was the liturgy of Israel being on the move all the time. They would pause when the presence of God would pause, and they would move when the presence of God was moving, right? And this is difficult for us. We have to learn how to do that. There's times for waiting, but there's times for moving on as well. And when you realize this, you realize the necessity of being in tune with the Holy

Spirit and part of a body that is filled with the Holy Spirit because we are all doing this together, right? Following Jesus means we are all moving in the same direction. At the end of the day, Peter left the Mount of Transfiguration because, you know what? He didn't want to fly solo.

[17 : 43] Jesus and the rest of his disciples were down the mountain. He joined the ranks. And when Jesus ascended into heaven, he sends the Holy Spirit. He sends the presence of God. And when the Holy Spirit comes in the book of Acts in chapter 2, what did they do, man? They followed his lead.

What's fascinating about the early church is that they weren't really given any instructions of, here is how you do church. But instantly, 3,000 new converts on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit shows up. They all moved in the same direction. Isn't that amazing? What did it say about them? It says they were devoted to the gospel. They were devoted to meeting together. They were devoted to communion or fellowship, breaking bread and prayer. Imagine that, moving in the same direction.

You know what's missing from all of this? There's no programs. The Holy Spirit leads and guides the church in the same direction. Our job as the people of God is to look and to listen. What did he say to the people of Israel, right? He says, look to where the ark is and follow him. And I think that's probably a lot of our problems is we spend so much time looking at ourselves, being caught up in our own little world.

We don't spend any time looking at God and figuring out when he's on the move and when he's not on the move. And this may sound like, man, this sounds like a recipe for just failure because how am I going to know that? How am I going to know when God's moving? It's a lot less mystical than it sounds.

How do I know if I'm moving in the same direction as the church? Well, much of what we know about the church and what it should be doing is actually in the New Testament. We are to be loving each other.

[19 : 30] We are to be loving God. We are to be fighting our sin, repenting of sin. We're going to be sharing the gospel with others. And the more a church is united in that same direction, the more effective we are going to be for God's mission. Now, following Jesus together is how we are called to live, and it's going to lead us through some good times, and it's going to lead us through some bad times. There's going to be these amazing mountaintop moments, and there's going to be long stretches of the fruitless plains in the middle, right? Not any deviation, just like if you've ever driven through the Midwest, it is the most boring drive you will ever make because you're just at some point, you start begging to see even just like even a little slope of some kind. And then there's the dark valleys that he brings us through, but we have to follow him through all of it. Following Jesus, as Eugene Peterson says, is a long obedience in the same direction. Thank goodness that we get to do it together, and by implication, doing it together and following Jesus means that you and I don't get to go our own way or run from the parts that we don't like. You know, that's what wandering off looks like.

That's a compelling reason. Just think about that. That's a compelling reason to follow God in community together. It keeps us from getting ourselves lost, and that's what he told Israel here. He said, you got to follow me because guess what? You don't know the way. I do. I know where I'm going. Thank goodness we have a God who knows where he's going and knows where he's taking us, and that's pretty humbling, right? Especially if you're a dude. We don't often like to be told where to go and what directions to take. Something on my bucket list before I die is to do a seven-day backpacking trip through the Yosemite backcountry. That's like my dream. I want to accomplish that before I die. Somewhere that's just this beautiful place far away from civilization, far away from safety, and it is out there, right? And I don't know the way. If I get myself into the Yosemite backcountry, I do not know the way. And I'd be a fool to try that on my own, right? If it's just me and like Google Maps, things are not going to go well. Thankfully, they have these seasoned guides that you can pay that will guide you. They've been there. They've done that. They know the way, and they can take you through it safely. So it would be wise for me to get one and follow them, right? But still, as good as any of those guys could be about knowing the way and leading me from point A to point B without getting lost, I'm not sure if we ran into a bear or a mountain lion like that guy would get me through alive. But that's the thing with God. That's exactly what he promised to do for Israel. Verse 9, he says, Joshua said to the people of Israel, come here, listen to the words of the Lord your God. And Joshua said to them, here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing before you into the Jordan. Now, therefore, take 12 men from the tribes of Israel, each tribe a man. And when the soles of the feet of the priests, bearing the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap. God says, follow me, and I will fight your battles. Right?

It's pretty important. We often fight battles God doesn't call us to fight to, and then we wonder why we aren't winning. Follow God. Fight the battles he chooses. Fight the battles he's leading us into.

He tells Israel, you're going to run into a bunch of mighty nations and a bunch of people that will oppose you. You're going to come into places where sin is rampant. People are worshiping false idols.

You'll be tempted to take some of those idols. You'll be tempted to adopt those gods as your own gods. And guess what? These nations, they don't want you to succeed. They don't want you to be there.

[23 : 57] They're going to look big. They're going to look strong. They're going to be in impressively walled cities that you won't be able to break down. But despite all that, I will bring you through.

Not because of your strength, because of my strength, God says. God goes before us to fight for us. Now, I want to say it's one thing to hear God promise that he'll fight for you. It's another thing to believe that he will and that he'll win. And then off of that, follow him wherever he takes you.

Now, we can look backwards at those things like the book of Joshua and say like, oh yeah, man, that was cool. That's easy to believe. I would have been like right there with Israel just following God no matter what, no questions asked. It's easy to look backwards and think that way. It's a whole other thing when you're facing it and you haven't entered into it yet, but you see it right in front of you, what you got to walk into. And it looks tough.

I've known guys that chose following Jesus over a steady paycheck. They knew that God was calling them out of their job. That battle for them, what they were about to walk into, what they were about to face, they had families, was stepping off into a financial cliff. Looking backward, they could see how God has brought them through it. But in that moment, looking ahead, it wasn't clear what the results would be. That's not an easy thing to do. Jesus told Peter at some point in his life that someone else would dress him and lead him to a place he wouldn't want to go. And it was talking about his martyrdom, how he would die for the name of Jesus. That's like a horrible sales pitch if you're trying to make a disciple, right? But what kept Peter from running away and following his own path?

Of saying like, yeah, yeah, I got, Jesus, I love you for all the cool things that you do for me, but like, yeah, that like leading me where I don't want to go. Yeah, can we just, can we just maybe do away with that part and just focus on this stuff over here? What caused Peter from running away and following his own path? What caused Israel to move forward and trust God that he would win their battles and bring them into the inheritance? And why should we today, why should God's church today live this way?

[26 : 15] It's because we are all looking to the same event. God says, look what I'm about to do to get you to the other side of the Jordan. Verse 14, so when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant before the people, and as soon as those bearing the Ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the Ark were dipped in the brink of the water, now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest.

The waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethon, and those flowing down to the sea of the Arab of the Salt Sea were completely cut off, and the people passed over opposite Jericho. And what we see here, we see the Ark go in front of Israel into the Jordan River. Remember the Ark represented the presence of God. Wherever the Ark was, that's where God was. But just as interesting is the Jordan River and what it represented. And you know, there's this interesting little parenthetical statement. It's like, oh, by the way, the Jordan River was flooded.

So it's saying here, it's flooded, right? And so we see the presence of God going before his people to bring them through the flood. And here what's, yeah, some of us are kind of making connections in our head already, right? And here's what's even more interesting. In the ancient world, floodwaters represented chaos and death and judgment. And so we see something bigger at play. To get to the other side of the Jordan, Israel, to get their inheritance, Israel would have to pass through the floodwaters of chaos and judgment and punishment and death. And there was a high possibility that many would drown and die in the attempt. This was not an easy traversing. This was dangerous. But God intervenes and goes before them. His presence holds back the waters of the Jordan River so they can pass through safely. Similar to how God saved Noah and his family through an ark that carried them over the flood.

The ark here in Joshua's day held back the waters again to bring all of God's people through. And ultimately, this points to Jesus. He was the presence of God come to earth. He was the fullness of God who came down to earth. He put on flesh. And on the cross, he went ahead of us into the waters of judgment and death because of our sin. When Jesus cried out on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

This is actually him quoting Psalm 42 verse 9. And just a few, just a little bit earlier in that Psalm, it talks about how all of God's breakers and waves have gone over me. That's why Jesus felt forsaken.

[29 : 10] He was drowning in the floodwaters of divine wrath for our sin. And he cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? On the cross, Jesus faced down the greatest enemy. Jesus fought the impossible battle for us and won so that we could go through and get our inheritance. Sin and death cannot claim us.

We will not drown in that flood because Jesus is our ark that went before us. And by faith in him, we pass through the waters of death to the other side, to our inheritance of eternal life. That is the good news of the gospel. And that's why we can boldly follow him today. As the church, we boldly follow him no matter where he leads us because we look to the cross, we look to our ark and see what he has already done for us. He's got the victory, that final victory. Every other enemy we're going to face, every obstacle, every difficulty, it all pales in comparison to what Jesus did for you and me on the cross. The question for us today is, do you believe this? Do you and I believe this?

As the band comes up, if you're here, you're not yet a Christian. I want to say to you very clearly, very soberly, very lovingly, the day is coming where you will face the floodwaters of death.

We all will. And then we will stand before God in face of judgment for our life. There is no escaping that. And without faith in Jesus, you will be swallowed up in death forever. But the good news is, is that God offers salvation. He is offering you salvation today. And I want to call you to repent and believe and trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, the one who went before us and died on the cross for our sins. His blood was shed to forgive us for our sins. And we receive that through faith in him.

We hold on to that faith for the rest of our lives. And when I invite you to do that and come and be a part of his people that are devoted to him and move together as we follow his lead. And I want to say to those of us in the room who are Christians, if you do believe, are you living out of that faith?

[31 : 41] Are you living by faith in what Jesus has done? Do you take time daily to look to Jesus and follow him? That waiting work, that good waiting work of consecration. It's easy to forget about that and get devoted to other things that are seemingly more important. You know, what's interesting is that on the other side of the Jordan, God commanded Israel to go and get 12 stones. And they got the 12 stones out of the Jordan and they planted it and they made this big altar. And then their whole camp camped around it. And there's this visual sign, this visual remembrance where they could say, remember what Jesus did for us. And they could say that to their kids and their grandchildren, their great-grandchildren. Why is that altar there? What are these stones stacked up all about?

Oh, let me tell you about the time. Let me tell you about what the Lord, what am I doing? Let me tell you about what the Lord did for us. We are a people who live remembering. We live remembering what Jesus has done. We live remembering this, this, this great King. He went before us.

Would you stand with me, please? One of the ways we remember is by taking communion. This is why we do this. This is one of our rocks of remembrance. And we take this together as God's people and we take it and it's a confession of our devotion to him, our being set apart for his holy purpose, not our own holy purpose, right?

We're saying as we take this, what we are communicating to everybody else is, you know what? I'm continuing to follow Jesus. I'm continuing to trust in his death on the cross for my sins and his resurrection, that he defeated sin and death. And I'm believing that. And we get to take that together as his people. And so on the night that Jesus was betrayed, he broke bread and he gave it to his disciples. And he said, take this in remembrance of me. Let's eat the bread together.

And then he took the cup and he blessed it. And he said, drink this. This is the cup, the blood of the new covenant, shed for the forgiveness of your sins.

[34 : 10] Take and drink in remembrance of me. Let's drink together. Guys, sin and death tried to swallow up Jesus, but he ended up swallowing it for us. And let's praise him right now. Let's sing to him with all thankfulness, all gratitude, all of our passion. Let's go for it, guys.