

One thing I ask, this I seek. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord forever and gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. One thing I do, forgetting what is behind and pressing on towards what is ahead. "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. And Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her." To the rich young ruler, "one thing you lack. Sell everything you have; give it away to the poor. You'll have treasure in heaven. Then, come and follow me." Jesus, we want You to be our one thing because You are the one thing.

Why don't you go ahead and grab a seat – whatever campus you're at?

You see, Jesus is the one thing. Jesus is the main thing. Jesus is the only thing. Whether we have chosen to make Him that in our life or not, it really doesn't matter, He is the one thing. In fact, Jesus can't just be a part of something. Jesus can't be left out of anything. Jesus can't be put to the side of anything. Why? Because He is the one thing. He is over all and through all and in all. All things were created by Him and for Him and through Him. In Him, all things hold together. In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God. And all things were created through Him. In Him, we live and move and have our being. In the beginning, God. Where can I go to flee from Your spirit? If I go to the heavens, You are there. If I make my bed in the depths, You are still there. He is over all, through all, in all. Jesus cannot be a part of something; He is the only thing. He cannot be left out of anything because He is in everything. He cannot be put to the side because He is the main thing. The only question is, "Have we chosen that for our own lives?" And so, today, we remind ourselves that Jesus is the one thing.

In fact, when we gather and we come to church and we come together as the people of God, that's what we're reminding ourselves of every week: That He is the one thing, the main thing, the only thing. Regardless of how I lived this week. Regardless of what's going on in my mind. Regardless of my heart and my relationships and my life. He's the one thing. And so, today, what we've intentionally done is we've removed all the things that we love. I love all the things we have around here: the technology, the production, the lights, the videos, the bands. Every week, that stuff enhances our experiences – helps us meet with God. I'm so grateful for the teams that serve us and create– the creatives we have, the creative opportunities that are there. It's amazing, but sometimes we can over-rely upon all that. Sometimes, we can actually hide behind that. Sometimes, we can make it about that and unintentionally find ourselves entertained or spectating or watching. And so, sometimes it's good to just take all of that away to just remind ourselves that Jesus is here – with or without all that stuff. That Jesus is with you with or without all of that stuff in your life. Because if you could have one day to remove the house and the car and the job and the spouse and the children and all the things, you would find that Jesus is still with you. And so, in a sense, this is even a prophetic declaration by taking some of that stuff out for an hour together to remind ourselves that Jesus is still here. That if I lost everything in my life, Jesus would still be there. Because He's over all and through all and in all, so He can't leave and He can't just be a part and He can't be pushed to the side. And

there's something so powerful and beautiful and sacred about just worshipping together with a single guitar or a single piano. I mean, what would it have been like if you were part of the Israelites after getting set free from 400 years of slavery when they crossed the Red Sea and Moses and Aaron and Mariam led the entire people of God with a tambourine and song of victory? What would it have been like to be with David and his mighty men and a single harp singing a new psalm to the Lord? What would it have been like to be with Jesus and His disciples when it says they together, a cappella, sang a hymn at the end of the last supper before He went to the cross? There's something sacred and powerful and unifying about that.

And so, today, we are starting season three of A Different Way. And we wanted to start it by making Jesus our one thing and making it all about Him. And if you're new with us and you're trying to figure it all out, we've been in this year-long series called A Different Way, where we're just talking about doing the things that Jesus did. And like your favorite show, we've broken it up into four different seasons. Today starts season three of that series, but we didn't want to just jump right into a practice. We just wanted to stop, remove everything, and say, "It's all about Jesus. It's not about practices and training and trying and striving and struggling and earning and performing and religion. Nope – it's about Jesus." And when Jesus captures my heart, it will transform my life. It's about reminding myself that, no matter where I am on the journey or how I feel about my journey, He is over all, through all, and in all. And He invites me to let Him become my one thing, my main thing, my only thing. And so, as we get ready to start season three of A Different Way, what I want to do just for a moment is I want to share something with you that's been really impactful to me in these last six months. I recently just shared this with all of our leaders last week at our Leader Summit, but I think it's so important that I want to share it with you. And it's a little bit rambly, so you just got to try to follow with me. In fact, Holy Spirit, I just ask right now. Just give us ears to hear and eyes to see and a heart to receive because You're here and You are the one thing, the main thing, the only thing.

And late in the spring last year, I was just in my morning time. I was studying; I was praying; I was seeking God. And I was reading, and I came across something that I'd probably read a hundred times before. But I'd never seen it. And for whatever reason, it just caught me. Like, it stopped me in my tracks. And for that whole day, all I did was look at this passage that the Lord showed me. And the next day, I spent all my time doing it. See, I never meet with anybody in the mornings. My morning times – the way I've arranged my life is that's my time where I study. I prepare. I seek God. I work on the message. But that week, all I did was look at this unique thing that I felt like the Lord was showing me. So, that Sunday was probably a really bad message. I'm hoping to make up for it right now. There was this little thing that caught me. It's in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles. We'll post about it later, and you can see where it is. But there's this little thing – it's talking about King Solomon, the king of Israel. And it says King Solomon built 500 gold shields. And when his guard would go with him to the presence of God into the temple, they would all bear those golden shields with him. And when Solomon builds these 500 gold shields, Israel is at the height of its prosperity. The kingdom is as large as it's ever been. The kingdom is wealthy. It's prosperous; it's wise. It says the whole earth sought counsel

with Solomon because of his wisdom and his prosperity. They were a representation of heaven on earth. They had built the temple. God was there. He was meeting with His people. He was revealing Himself. The goodness of God was everywhere. It says they had so much treasure that it basically couldn't even be counted. Silver was considered so invaluable that they didn't even count it. He builds 500 gold shields that his men use as they go into the presence of God. And after Solomon's reign, he dies. And his son Rehoboam takes over. But Rehoboam was not a good guy. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord. And because he rejected God and did evil in the eyes of the Lord, God allowed the Egyptian king to come in and conquer Jerusalem – conquer Israel, if you will. And they raided Israel and took all the treasures, including, it says, the 500 golden shields. And there's this little line that's fascinating. After that, it says, "Rehoboam, after the 500 gold shields were stolen, rebuilt 500 bronze shields. And his men would bear them when he would go to the temple of God and put them back in the guardroom when they were done." Now at first, when you read that, it feels like an insignificant detail. Until you realize that the moment Rehoboam rebuilds bronze shields instead of gold shields, he has just traded the glory of God for the glory of man. You say, "what does that mean?" Well, what is gold? Gold is divinity. Gold is royalty. Gold is deity. Gold is precious. It's powerful. It's a treasure. It has worth. It has value. It is soft. It is flexible. It does not tarnish. It does not corrode. It is created by God and only God. And it is one of the heaviest metals in the world, which is a picture of the glory of God. It has substance and weight and significance to it. But what is bronze? Bronze is a cheap substitute. Bronze is an inferior standard. See, bronze is something that's man-made. It's a little bit of copper and it's a little bit of tin, put together by man and shaped into whatever man wants it to be. And so, it's a mixture. And it tarnishes and it corrodes and it's inferior. It's cheap. It's a substitute. It has all these deficiencies and deformities within it. All these impurities lie within it. And you can see it is a quick trade for the glory of God for the glory of man. And when Rehoboam's soldiers first bear those bronze shields that first time, there must have been a sorrow – a heaviness, a brokenness – because they remember what the glory of God was like. They remember what the standard of the kingdom was like. They remember how powerful and how wealthy and how prosperous and how great life was under God's rule and reign. And now, they've got this cheap substitute – very light, very hard bronze shields. But after they grieved after a while, I think over time they actually preferred the bronze shields to the gold shields. Why? Because bronze is significantly lighter, so it's easier to carry. It doesn't have weight. It doesn't have gravity. It doesn't have glory to it, so it's easier to carry around. And I think they preferred the bronze shields because, at the end of the day, they could just throw them back into the guard room. Why? Because if they were gold shields, you'd have to watch them and guard them and protect them and take care of them and place them back where they belong. But bronze shields – nobody really cares, so they just threw them wherever. And this became normal. And so, that first generation would have remembered what the glory of God was like. But after just one generation, every generation after that would have thought bronze shields was the glory of God. That this was the pinnacle of the standard. This was the height of creation. I mean, we're the people of God and we've got bronze shields, so clearly, that's what God wants; clearly, that's God's standard. Clearly, that's the height or the epitome of life in God's kingdom. And it would have become a

normal way of life even though it was a cheap substitute for what God had for them. You see, when you think about gold and bronze all throughout the Bible, what you'll find is that bronze is a picture of man. It's a picture of sin. It's a picture of judgement. It's a picture of a form of godliness but no power. In fact, when you look at the tabernacle in the temple, it has a bronze altar where the animals were sacrificed, representing the sin of man – stain, tarnish, judgement. Then, the priests would go to a bronze laver and wash themselves after that – again, representing judgement and sin and tarnish and stain. But the moment you walked into the holy place, everything was made of gold – pure, powerful, soft, made by God. The table, the lampstand, the altar of incense, the very ark of the covenant itself – pure gold, representing the beauty and the power and the treasure and the worth and the standard of God. His ways, His Word, and His kingdom. And you'll see all throughout Scripture, bronze is used for the sin of man. Like when the Israelites sin in the desert and God tells Moses they got to build a bronze snake and hold it up so the people can be saved – judgement, sin, rebellion, tarnish. Or how about the last king of Israel? When they are conquered by the Babylonians, it says he is put in bronze handcuffs, representing that he is now enslaved to the standard of the world that he used to call the very standard of God. Bronze shields will always lead you to bronze handcuffs at some point in time.

Now, some of you, you're trying to catch this analogy. And that's okay. Just stay with me on this. I mean, think of a gold shield in and of itself. A gold shield is a paradox because a gold shield is a terrible weapon. Why? Because gold is incredibly heavy and it is incredibly soft. Pure gold – it's incredibly weighty and it's incredibly soft, so you wouldn't want to go fight somebody with something that's heavy and soft. No – you would want to go to battle with something that's bronze. Bronze is very light, but it is very hard. It was actually like a technological innovation. If you had bronze shields, it was like you were on the technological leading edge of the day because they were light and they were incredibly hard. This is what you want to go fight your own battles with. This is what I want when God fights my battles. This is why it's a paradox – a gold shield. When Solomon and his men would go into the temple of the Lord, it was basically saying, "We don't fight our own battles. He fights our battles. We stand here by faith and we let Him do that which He does."

See, gold shields represents trust, surrender, submission, belief, faith. In fact, in Ephesians 6 when it talks about the armor of God, it says, "Pick up the shield of faith." And then, 1 Peter tells us that your faith is being refined like pure [gold]. So, did you ever think when you read that passage on the armor of God that the shield you pick up is a gold shield? That's why it says three times in that little run, "stand." Stand your ground. Stand firm. Why? Because you have a gold shield. It's a terrible weapon to run out and fight with. You got a gold shield, so stand firm because you have one who fights on your behalf. But if you want to wield a bronze shield, go for it. You just got to go fight your own battles. And you got to go do your own thing. And you got to go make it happen. And this is an exhausting way to live. In fact, it goes on to say, "Brandish the shield of faith, which can extinguish the fiery darts of the enemy." Here's the interesting thing about gold: do you realize gold, once it's been purified, gold

cannot catch on fire? Why? Because all the impurities have been burned out of it. And gold cannot burn. In fact, if you melt gold, it actually gets brighter and purer. Bronze, however, because it has so many impurities in it, it can catch on fire. It can burn when it's heated up. And it gets darker and even more stained and tarnished than it already was. And so, what I'm trying to tell you is what happened to me that morning as I read that and I felt like the Lord said, "See this example. This is what has happened to my people." Egypt, the world came in and stole the gold shields. Rehoboam rebuilt bronze shields. And one generation away, that's what they thought. That's all they thought they had – that they had to fight their own battles. "This is how it works. We've got it. We're good." Tarnished mixture, form of godliness but denying its power. And I felt like God was just showing me that for 2,000 years, it's like the world has come in and stolen the gold shields from the people of God. The world has come into our lives and stole the standard – the realities, the glory, the weight, the worth, the beauty of God and His kingdom and His ways. And we have rebuilt ourselves bronze shields and think we're better than the world because they have iron shields, wood shields, clay shields, or no shields. But you're not better than someone that has an iron shield because you have a bronze shield. If you don't have a gold shield, all of it is an inferior standard. This is the problem with bronze. It can look good on the outside for a few moments, but man, it takes a lot of polishing. It tarnishes. It turns green. Gold is created by God. Man can't make it. Bronze is not made by God; it's made by man, so it must be maintained by man. Gold is created by God, and it is sustained by God. Bronze is, "you have to do it. You have to make that marriage look good and you have to make that job and you have to make those kids and you have to make your religion. And you have to make yourself. And you have to put on a face." This is all we talk about face and vulnerability and authenticity – it's like bronze. It's like we hold on to this bronze all the time. And here's what happens: I think the world has come stolen the gold – the standard, the ways of God – and replaced it with a bunch of bronze. So we run around with a bunch of bronze marriages, bronze homes, bronze lives, bronze mindsets, bronze attitudes, bronze perspectives, bronze behavior, bronze work, bronze calendars, bronze churches – a form of godliness but no power. Claiming to know God but by our actions denying Him. Why do you call me Lord, Lord and not do what I say? These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

I think we've rebuilt a whole lot of things in bronze because that's what's been modeled to us. We're the two or three generations down from Rehoboam's men. All we've ever seen is bronze, so we think this is the standard. This is excellent. This is the height of all heights. No, no, no, no, no – Gold is the standard. This is the way of the kingdom. It's a totally different reality. In fact – if you can catch this – in heaven, there is no bronze. What are the streets made of in heaven? They are made of gold. Oh my gosh. Pure gold – so pure that it's as clear as glass, it says. So heavy, so weighty, so full of glory, so precious, so worthwhile. That if everything in heaven is made of gold, why do I want to build anything of bronze in this life? If my heart's cry is "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," then I can't build anything in my life that's of bronze. Which means what? I got to first identify and acknowledge that this is bronze. This is an inferior standard for what marriage can look like. This is an inferior standard of parenting. This is an inferior standard of being a young adult. I don't got to do all

of this. I can put this down and go pick that up. But you first have to acknowledge that. And here's the problem: we're so used to carrying bronze, even like good-hearted – like, for so many of us, I think this is doing the best we can with what we've got. And we get so used to carrying around what is light and hard that when we put it down and try to pick up a gold shield, it's like, "Oh my gosh, it's heavy. Oh my gosh, the ways of God are so heavy. Oh my gosh, memorizing Scripture. Oh my gosh, I can't do it. Oh my gosh, the fear of the Lord. It's so heavy. Oh my gosh, purity. Oh, holi– fear of the Lord. Oh my gosh. Being a disciple, carrying my cross. It's so heavy." It's not that it's heavy; it's just you're so used to carrying bronze. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, which means you were made for it. We just look at the fall short part. Forget that part. Catch the part that you were made for the glory of God – the weight, the worth, the gold, the heaviness. So, you might be used to carrying what is light and hard, but God wants to create within you the glory of God on this earth. And it might be heavy at first. But guess what? Second Corinthians tells us that as we behold Him and as we look to Him, we are transformed into His image and go from glory to glory. It's like He will strengthen me to hold that gold shield with purity and power and weight and substance as my eyes get fixed on Jesus. In fact, it tells us that one of the names of God is that He is our shield and our great reward. He actually is the gold shield; we've just been so used to bronze that we don't know anything else.

And so, this whole Different Way series – you're like, "Why are you telling us about shields?" Because this whole Different Way series is this invitation – just a different analogy to try to connect with some of you – is putting down the bronze and learning to pick up the gold. But when you put down the bronze, here's what happens: you're exposed. You're naked. You're open kimono right there. That's all you got. And most of us want to be in control so badly that we don't trust God enough for the transition of setting down the bronze to be able to pick up the gold, so we'll just hold the bronze because it's lighter and it's harder. And I know how to fight with this. I don't know how to stand with that. And the interesting thing about gold is gold is God-created. Bronze is man-made. So gold you can never create it, but you can go find it. Do you realize if our faith is like gold, then that's true of your faith? You can't create it, but you can seek God to find it. Why? Because faith comes by [hearing] and hearing by the Word of God. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author, and perfecter of our [faith]. The author of it. So just like I can't create gold, I can't create faith. But what I can do is I can look at Him. And when I look at Him and I listen to Him, He shows me where the gold is and I'm able to harvest it. And it becomes a gold shield in my life that I'm able to stand strong by. The only question is, do you have the courage to put down the bronze? To lift up your eyes to maybe just maybe – there's more over here than we've ever begun to even ask or imagine. That there is a greater standard. There is a deeper reality. There is more of the glory of God available for your life, your marriage, your parents, your children, your work, your struggles. Your entire life is made for the glory of God, so don't settle for the cheap substitutes, the form of godliness without power. Do you know what this is? This is the Pharisees. You see it in the New Testament. The Pharisees, they get a bad rap, but they were trying. They just built their lives full of bronze shields. This form of godliness but without any power, trying to polish and look good on the

outside.

In fact, do you know Isaiah? God even says, "My people have bronze foreheads." You know what that means? That means, "My people have hard-headed realities with thoughts that are mixed of the world and the kingdom." Impure, tarnished, corrupted, corroded. A cheap substitute and an inferior standard. And he wants to give you golden thoughts. That's why crowns in the kingdom are always made of [gold] – golden thoughts. Right? The Pharisees carried around bronze shields. And if you can catch this – Jesus – after the gold shields were stolen, that was a physical picture of a spiritual truth. Remember: the Old Testament, physical pictures, spiritual truths. Real things that really happened that God shows us. That was a physical picture of a spiritual truth. And for all those years until Jesus came, the gold standard of the kingdom was gone. And then, Jesus shows up and in one moment when He gives the sermon on the mount, He reclarifies the standard. The sermon on the mount, when He shows up and says, "You have heard it said, but I say to you." He says, "You've been carrying around a bunch of bronze; let me tell you what the kingdom is like." You have heard it said, "Do not commit adultery." I know that's what you think; it's about the act. No, no – it's about being a person who lives free from lust. He says, "You have heard it said, 'Do not commit murder.' But, man, God's kingdom is that your heart would be free from anger. You have heard it said, 'Love your neighbor. Hate your enemy.' No, no – I want to teach you how to love your enemies and bless those who persecute you and pray for those who are against you." And He resets the entire gold standard, and it doesn't feel impossible because the whole message starts with "blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom." In other words, anyone and everyone who wants to live in the glory of God, it is here and available to them right here, right now, if they want it. They just have to put down their bronze shield. Does this make sense to you? See, for like three days, this is all – I mean – so I don't know what I preached on that Sunday. It was probably average. But I hope this makes it up to you because if you've been here for like the last 18 months, I've been telling you, you can see in the world God is moving His people from good American church to kingdom come. This is what I'm talking about. Good American church: many things. Kingdom come: one thing. Good American church: fear of man. Kingdom come: fear of the Lord. But good American church: entertainment. Kingdom come: worship. Good American church: consumerism. Kingdom come: communion. Good American church: selfishness. Kingdom come: servanthood. Good American church: transaction. Kingdom come: transformation. Good American church: polish and performance. Kingdom come: presence. Good American church: earth. Kingdom come: heaven. Good American church: bronze shields – a form of godliness with no power. Kingdom come: gold shields – divinity, royalty, soft, treasure, worth, value, uncorruptible, incorruptible, uncorrodable. It is the purity, the gravity, the glory, the beauty of God. This is what we're trying to become. Not just as a people but as individuals in our own lives on our own journey with Jesus.

We're just so used to bronze that gold feels radical, impossible, undoable. By yourself, it is. But with Jesus, it's normal. And it's time to change our mindset – change our perspective – and by faith, lay down some bronze. Even as I'm saying it to you, do you even start, "What is my

bronze? What is my form of godliness without power? What is my, 'I do it on my own?' What do I have to polish so it doesn't tarnish and rust and corrode? What have I taken and mixed together to make my own? Am I willing to trust Him enough to be exposed in the transition from the glory of man to the glory of God?" This is what a different way looks like. And for some of you, maybe this is the analogy that will help pop it to be like, "I want this." And everything we're talking about – the practices, all that stuff – is just putting down the bronze and learning to be able to pick up the gold because you can carry this in Jesus' name.

So here's what we're going to do. We are going to take communion together at all of our campuses because for this last week, we've been praying and fasting together as a church. Maybe you did that. Maybe you didn't. Maybe it went how you wanted it to. Maybe it didn't. Either way, that's okay. What we're doing as a people is we're seeking God and learning to lay down the bronze and pick up the gold. And communion is for anyone and everyone who has put their faith in Jesus, who by faith trusts Him, believes in Him, has surrendered and submitted to Him. And if that's you and you haven't done that yet, that's okay. I would just ask that you would pass it along until you do. Because here's what happens when you take communion. When you're taking communion by faith and you reach to that tray when it gets to you, in that moment by faith, when you take it, you're saying, "Jesus, You are the one thing. You are the main thing. You are the only thing. In the midst of my many things, in the midst of my side things, in the midst of my hustle things. In this moment when I take communion, I am reminding myself that He is the one thing. And I take communion to remember that that is true. Not only in this universe but in my life." And then, when we take communion, what happens is it reminds us that we're included in Christ. That I'm actually hidden in Him as I take His body and His blood. It's like Jesus is in me and I am in Him. Which means everything that is true about Him is now true of me. Which means I no longer live; it's Christ who lives within me. Which means I have died to sin and is no longer my master. It means I am a partaker of the divine nature. It means I am righteous. It means I am holy. It means that everything that is good of Jesus and true of Jesus and right about Jesus is now good and true and right in my life. When I take communion, it reminds me that I am no longer a sinner just saved by grace. I am a saint made holy by Jesus. That's what communion declares. You might think it's a religious thing and a cracker. It's a declaration that Jesus has made you a saint and declared you holy in His name. And as we take it, we're reminded that we are now a part of the body of Christ. Because this is the very body of Christ that was broken for you. And He has divinely assembled and placed you in it which means as you take it, you're reminded that you are divinely connected to the people around you. That we are His hands and His feet in this world and He is our head and we are united together one in spirit. And then, as we take it, what we're actually taking in is a fresh feeling of God's grace. Grace not just for forgiveness of sins. Yes, that happened. It's done. But grace – God acting in your life to do that which you cannot do on your own. A power, a strength, a victory that you are literally taking inside of you so that you can live the life that God has created and called you to live. His divine power has given you everything you need for life and godliness. Communion reminds me I don't have to carry a bronze shield on my own because His divine power has given me what I need to pick up



godliness and life, the glory, the very weight of God. When I am weak, then I am strong. His grace is sufficient for me. His power is made perfect in my weakness. That's what happens when I take communion. And then, what happens is I am reminded that this is how much Jesus loves me. That in a world of rejection and abandonment and feelings of insignificance and insecurity, feelings of a lack of worthiness or value, those moments where we don't feel desired or wanted or seen or known, or anybody cares about us, communion reminds me that God demonstrated His love for me. While I still was an enemy with Him, He did this for me. This is how we know what love is. That Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. You see, this small simple act of communion is a reminder that I wasn't made to run around with a bronze shield but that I was created for the very glory of God. And I don't have to go make it happen on my own because He's already made it happen for me. I just now open myself up to by faith receive His grace, His goodness, and His love.

You see, on the night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread and He broke it. And He gave thanks. And He said, "This is my body broken for you. As often as you do this, do this in remembrance of me." Can we receive the life of Jesus together? A life reminding you that He is the one thing, that you are included in Him, that you are a part of His body. That His grace is working mightily from the inside out and that you are deeply loved. Because after the supper, He took the cup saying "This is the cup of the new covenant. My blood, which is going to be poured out for you. As often as you do this, do this in remembrance of me." Can we receive life from above? The goodness and the glory and the gravity of the kingdom of God together.

So Jesus, by faith today, I lay some man-made things down, and I look to you. The one thing, the different way, the narrow gate, the small road but the way of life. You are the one thing. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.