

Hi. Pam dropped her note.

I am Nick Mullis. I am not Tim Thompson, in case you were confused about that. I am much taller than Tim, and I rarely wear plaid.

It was just so you weren't too confused that I wore a little bit of plaid today.

It's been a while since I've been here to— in, in this spot. I was with you a few weeks ago, just hiding over here with a friend of mine, uh, visiting. But it's been a while since I've been in this spot, and I feel like I should let you know, uh, that I will be at Spring Mill on October 18th. So if you would like to show them who the real A-Team is, you can all come join me on the 18th. It's good to be with you.

It's good to be in this place. I've got to do some math real quick. Okay, I don't want to keep you here all day, so I got to know what time I'm supposed to be done. I was speaking at a college one time and they said, our worship team isn't here tonight, so you've got the whole hour if you want it. I'm like, you sure about that?

They said, yeah. I said, you're going to regret that. An hour later, I finally shut up and went home. So it's good to be with you. It's good to know what time I'm supposed to be done so we can all go have lunch.

Let me pray and we're going to get into it. Father God, I thank you for this morning. I thank you for this time and this place.

You're good.

You're so, so good.

We just have to— we have to pause in that goodness for a minute, Father God.

Thank you for allowing us to come together freely and openly. So many of our brothers and sisters around the globe are meeting in basements and, and out in the forest so that they can stay safe while they celebrate you and your goodness. And here we sit on top of a hill. Father God, thank you. I pray that you would be with us, Holy Spirit.

Be in our midst. Remind us of your goodness. Remind us of your call on our lives. And above all else, Father God, I pray that you would get me out of the way, that this time would be about you. This time would be about the way that you're speaking to our hearts and the things that you're calling us into.

Father God, just be with us now. And we'll give you praise and glory in Jesus' name. Amen. It was, it was interesting. I woke up this morning and It Is Well with My Soul was on my heart and I was singing.

I don't sing very often, even at home alone, but this morning that song was there. And then I got here, I did a complete rewrite on this morning's sermon last night because I just wasn't comfortable. With, with where I was and why, what I had written down. And so I started reworking it. And the idea is the same, but the way I'm going to say it is a little different.

And then I felt confirmed when I came in and Kamel and I just instantly started talking about weird rules. How many of you have those moments in your life where you think that's just silly? Like, that's just a silly rule. It's just a silly instruction. How many of you— this, this is looking around, this is a slightly older crowd, my age and above for the most part.

How many of you had the TV experience as a childhood where you know what I'm talking about if I talk about rabbit ears? Yeah. And the things, the strange things that we had to do with rabbit ears. Remember those? You stick aluminum foil on them and then you're like, you, your siblings and you create like a line and And you're just kind of standing like this, holding on to the antenna, hoping that you can see Saturday morning's cartoons, and they're just kind of out there.

You remember those moments? I remember those moments growing up in town. For whatever reason, we didn't have one of the big antenna towers. We had rabbit ears, and we played those games as a kid. And then we moved to the country, and we had an antenna tower on our house.

And then Dad decided that he needed better reception, so we added another 10 feet to the top of it and watched Mom go into a nervous panic as Dad climbed the tower to add on the extra 10 feet. And then it had a little motor up there that ran to a cable that ran to a box inside the house with a knob. You remember those? Yeah, and you turn the knob and it makes the antenna start to move. And they were great.

They made a terrible racket. It was like, for you younger ones, it's like the internet kicking on for the first time in the '90s. But we were trying to— and then inevitably you would go too far. It's like, I just wanted to watch Lamb Chop. And I gotta go all the way back around the dial, and you gotta fine-tune and get it in there just so you can watch Barney in the afternoon, or so you can get Barney on so you don't have to listen to your little sister cry all afternoon.

That was more my case. Or maybe today you, you, you have this experience where you look down at your cell phone and you're like, you're hoping for 4 bars or you're hoping for 5G and you look down and it's not there. You know that sense, that moment of panic that just kind of hits you in the gut? Like, how am I going to make this phone call? How am I going to make my purchase on Amazon because I don't

have enough signal?

And so we start to go through the acrobatics of getting one extra bar. We hold our phone out. You've seen people doing that. They hold their phone out, they'll walk over to the window, they'll be leaning against the wall. I'm guilty.

There's a building I know I go into it every week, and I know, I know I am never going to have signal in that building. It's a metal building, it's a giant Faraday cage. And still, I'll stick my arm out and I will lean on the window and I will hope and believe with every ounce of faith that I have that the second I get that bar and I bring the phone back to my ear or back in front of me, it's not going to go away. It's irrational. We have these silly instructions that we go through.

Maybe some of you have a cookbook with your grandmother's or your great-grandmother's recipes. You know those cookbooks that families pass down, and there are just all of these instructions in that cookbook, right? And there are things penciled into the side, and it's just like, you have to put everything in, in this order. And then with the salt, you have to turn around backwards, and you have to lift your left leg and sprinkle the salt over your right shoulder and into the bowl. Otherwise it won't work.

And for some reason For some reason, in that moment, it does work. All those things, those silly little things, they work. We don't know why great-grandma's recipe works if you do it right, but we know that it does. A few years ago for Christmas, we decided- I've got a bunch of siblings- we decided instead of buying gifts, you had to make gifts, and it had to be something homemade. And so 2 of my siblings and I, unbeknownst to each other, decided that we were going to make Great Grandma's chocolate chip cookies.

When she passed, my aunt and uncle pulled out all of her recipes and made cookbooks to give to all of us, and we all made chocolate chip cookies.

And I'm not going to brag, but I am. I was the only one who made good chocolate chip cookies. But I followed the instructions exactly as they were written out by great-grandma. And apparently they did not.

Those instructions, they just work. We don't know why they work. But they seem to work. And sometimes it feels, you know, I've talked about antenna, I've talked about cell phones, and I've talked about baking chocolate chip cookies. And so sometimes it can feel very much like this is just the modern world that has- we've got, we've got the circumstances in our lives to create a series of just weird instructions.

Like, we've got the technology, we've got IKEA, we've got ways to produce just bizarre instructions. We have the infrastructure of human resources to give us weird rules that we just kind of scratch our heads at. But it's really not anything new. In the ancient world, they had their weird instructions. I want to take a look at some of those weird instructions this morning.

So if you've got a Bible I'll give you a second to get it out and turn to Exodus chapter 29.

And I'll give you a second, and while you're looking it up, I'm just going to give you a fair warning, okay? It's a little gross, just so you know. It's not worse than anything that's on TV today, but it is a little gross.

Exodus 29, verses 19 through 21 say this: You are to take the second ram, and Aaron and his sons to lay their hands on the ram's head, and you're to kill the ram and take some of the blood and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron. And on the tip of the right ear of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand, and on the big toe of their right foot, and then splash the blood all around the altar. You are to take some of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil and sprinkle it on Aaron, on his garments, on his sons, and on his sons' garments with him. So that he may be holy, he and his garments, along with his sons and his sons' garments. Now, I don't know about you, but those instructions seem very odd.

Seems a little bizarre to me. Uh, anybody else think it's a little odd? Yeah, so on its own, it is strange. Like, if we just read that out, it is a very strange set of instructions to sit with.

And really, without the story, Aaron just has blood on his ears.

Israel had this great struggle through their entire existence. Almost seemed like from the very beginnings with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, there was just this sense of struggle between what would be the nation of Israel and God. And even now, as they've walked out of Egypt, There's this sense of struggle from the moment they leave Egypt. They're at odds with God at every turn. There's like this sense of just the, the, the weird high school relationships that you see where it's like, we love you.

Stay away.

Where are you?

I love someone else. And just hit the repeat button. And they just keep going through that cycle over and over again. We love you, stay away. We want you, we need you.

You're our everything, go away. There's somebody else, repeat.

And they just keep going through that cycle. And finally God says to the people of Israel, he says, stop, let's talk about this. For a minute. And if you turn back a few pages to Exodus 19, in verses 5 through 6, you have God saying this to the nation of Israel. He says, and now, if you will diligently listen to me and keep my covenant, then you will be my special possession out of all the nations, for all the earth is mine.

And you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you will speak to the Israelites. God gives these words to Moses and says, okay, go tell the people I love that I have a higher calling for them.

And this is how Israel responds to that. In Exodus 24:7-8, they say this: He took the covenant, or the book of the covenant, and read it aloud to the people. And they said, we will do and obey all that the Lord has spoken. So Moses took the blood and splashed it on all the people and said, this is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you. Accordance with all these words.

We love you. This is what Israel says: we love you and we will do whatever.

We love you. And so Aaron the priest, who we met a little while ago, he becomes the image of what they're supposed to do. He becomes the image of of the whatever that Israel has agreed to. He gets anointed a second time. He was with Israel when, when they were all anointed by Moses a little while ago.

We just read it. And here he gets anointed a second time, but in a special way with his sons.

And we look at these instructions and we think, this seems so very odd. Why the ear? Why the toe? Why the right thumb? Why these things?

Why not just dump it on his head and be done with it? Why these specific spots? But each means something special, and it lays the groundwork for you and for me. As we walk through this life. Each means something in the relationship with God.

The ear— Aaron's ear gets anointed with blood and oil. And what's the ear? The ear is the reminder to hear and obey. The first rule of the priest, of the high priest Aaron, who was that you will hear and obey when God speaks.

And so we anoint the ear to remind us to hear and obey. And then the thumb.

Why the thumb? Why not the little finger? And it's to serve as a reminder, that dexterous thumb. It's to serve as a reminder to do the work the kingdom.

You as the high priest, you have things you have to do, sacrifices to be made, words to speak, and so you must do the work of the priests. And so we anoint your hand, we anoint your thumb to remind you to do the work.

And then the toe, such a weird thing.

Feet are weird.

They're odd. And they get dirty and they're gross.

And yet we anoint the toe because it serves as a reminder to the people. It serves as a reminder to Aaron and his sons who are exemplifying what's supposed to happen. That they're to carry the light. They hear and they obey and they do the work, and then they go.

They go and they carry the kingdom forward because Israel wasn't supposed to just be this isolated group of people. Israel was supposed to be a people who were the light of humanity, to draw all humanity to a good, loving God. We see it all throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. We see it all throughout the story of God, that God wasn't just calling Israel, he was calling all humanity, and he was using Israel to make that call. And he was training Israel by giving special instructions to the priests so that they could see, so that the people of Israel could see in the priests what they were supposed to do, that they were supposed to hear and obey, that they were supposed to do the work of the kingdom, that they were supposed to reach out and help the vulnerable and the weak and the lowly, and that they were supposed to go and they were supposed to carry the light into the dark places of the world.

That was the charge that was set before them in the anointing on Aaron. And Jesus gives us the same imperative. Some people want to say, well, it's in the, it's in the Hebrew Bible, it's in the Old Testament, so it doesn't necessarily apply to us. But the reality is that Jesus sets forward the same imperatives in a different way for all those who would come after him and call themselves followers of the Christ. And he says In Acts 1:8, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the farthest parts of the earth.

You are to hear the Holy Spirit and obey.

Yours to do the work of the kingdom where you are. And then you are to go and share the kingdom with a hurting world. It's the same

imperative given to every person who would come after Jesus to carry it into the world in which we find ourselves.

And then in 1 Peter 2:9, you can say, well, I'm not a priest, so maybe it's not really for me. But Peter writes to a group of believers, a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles.

And he writes these words: But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may proclaim the virtues of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Every person in here who claims to be a follower of Jesus is in this text.

We are the priests of God Most High.

We are the ones who are to hear and obey, who are to do the work and carry the work into a dark and hurting world. We, like Aaron and Israel, are a kingdom of priests It's who we are. It's what we are. We are called to have the same anointed ear and thumb and toe. It is a calling on our lives.

And so the question becomes, will we respond wholeheartedly to the call of all believers? Will you?

Or will we be fickle in our covenant to be followers of Jesus? Will we live it out in every day? Will we live it out in the choices that we make and the way that we interact with the world?

Or will we just be followers of Jesus here and then maybe there, but maybe not so much there? Maybe not so much there, maybe not so much with that person because they really annoy me.

Who are we going to be? Are we going to be the priesthood that we've been called to? Are we going to be the ones who hear and obey and do the work and go?

Are we going to reject it for that which we find more convenient? That which we find easier.

Let's pray. Father God, thank you for this morning. Thank you for this time and this place. And in a moment, as we head to communion, I just pray that you would be with us, that you would remind us in that moment of who you are and the way that you're working and what you're doing. Just be with us now, that we would heed the call that you set on our lives.

We give you praise and glory in Jesus' name. Amen. In a moment, we invite you to respond to this sermon, this talk, this idea by recommitting yourselves to obey, to do, and to go. The instructions around communion can feel strange— body and blood.

As you receive communion, We remember that our great High Priest Jesus set an example for us, and we drink the cup and we eat the bread. We remember the sacrifice that he made, and we commit ourselves to his call on our lives as believers. Let me pray one more time. Father God, thank you so much again for this morning, this time, and this place. And as we go to the table, remind us of the sacrifice that you made and the way that you lead us, the way that we can see you and join in with you as we take communion.

We give you praise and glory in Jesus' name. Amen. There's communion on the table in the back.

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