

You Can't Cram for Tragedy

Hope That Exceeds Any Circumstance

by Jason Caldwell

Thursday October 20, 2016.

Downtown Westin Hotel Calgary, Alberta
Calgary Leadership Prayer Breakfast.

Scripture Reading: Luke 4:17-22 NKJV

And Jesus was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to *the* poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to *the* captives
And recovery of sight to *the* blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Then Jesus closed the book, and gave *it* back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.

Thank you, deputy MAYOR Jim Stevenson, and the prayer breakfast committee for the opportunity to COME and share a few words this morning. I also want to acknowledge the many family members, customers, and colleagues here this morning.

As Heath mentioned, I've spent the last 25+ years in IT service & consulting business.

It's AMAZING, how technology has become a BIGGER & Bigger part of our lives, every day.

For better, or for worse.

Sometimes it's hard to tell.

A few weeks ago, I was given an unexpected gift: **an Apple Watch.**

These '**smart watches**' are really taking our relationship with technology to a whole new level.

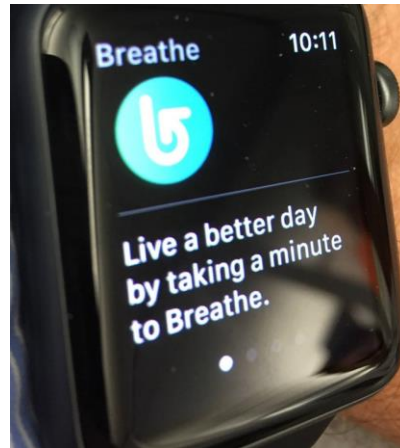
This particular watch has a **health app**

- constantly monitoring heart rate, activity, movement, exercise, etc.

A few days after receiving it, I had to attend one of those high-pressure meetings that we all love.

Intensity was building, everyone's blood pressure - rising, and just at the moment that I started to speak, I was stopped.... mid-sentence. My watch **erupted** with a loud beep, a buzz, and then it flashed a bright blue alert on the screen.

Breathe



So, if you see me pause and take a breath this morning, I'm just following orders... from the watch.

Just 1 year ago, I attended this breakfast with my 2 sons. Jordan & Evan. I snapped a picture to capture the moment.



Obviously my **first** choice this morning, would be - sitting down in the audience with all of you, listening to **this year's** guest speaker.

Year, after year I've attended this breakfast, - always anticipating the key note address

Some keynote speakers have been able to share because of God 's amazing provision in business, life accomplishments, sports success, or community service. But for myself, I humbly stand here in front of the microphone today because of tragedy.

I have 3 goals this morning. #1) Stir our faith regarding the power of prayer #2) communicate the Good News of God's Grace & Mercy, and #3) encourage everyone here today that no matter what place, position, predicament, or valley you find yourself in, **There Is Hope**

LIFE CAN CHANGE IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.

For the **first** years of my childhood, I was in this world, but I was **barely, barely** ABLE to breathe the air of this world. I was.... a bubble child. My view of the world was from inside a clear plastic tent. My diagnosis Asthma, My Lungs full of mucus.

No one had any answer for my bleak condition which seemed to be growing worse by the month. A year and a half into my sickness a Specialist from Vancouver told my father that I wasn't likely to see my 5th birthday. **But hope in God remained.** On a Sunday night, following an evening church service, my exhausted parents asked a visiting missionary to pray. There were no special words, and no special name on the outside of the church, just a simple, humble prayer, of faith, to God.

Later that night, as my parents slept, God visited my bubble tent and miraculously and instantly healed me. A couple days later I left the hospital, declared healthy, asthma free, no drugs, no inhalers, no medications, no follow-up, **but most notably** - no explanation, except for one. God had answered prayer.

Life changed in the blink of an eye, I stand before you today. I am that child. Every breath a gift from God.

Church was always the priority on Sundays. and I remember that very special morning, sitting in a small dusty chapel with beams of light criss-crossing the air above me.... The pastor had a simple message "the cross". When the invitation was made to follow Jesus Christ - I tugged on my dad's hand and said Dad, I need to go forward. A child's faith was stirred, and I can I tell you that I have **never** regretted making the decision to follow Jesus Christ.

For a young boy, Life changed in the blink of an eye, A soul reborn.

A couple years out of University, I was enjoying some modest success in a new industry called IT. But then it all, unexpectedly, came to a halt. I arrived at the place of my employment downtown and found that my key wouldn't turn. The locks had been changed.

A single sheet of paper on the door EXPLAINED WHY: Bankruptcy. It was 1993. Full stop.

God, what I am going to do now? - I prayed.

In the days that followed, customers kept finding me, and I soon realized that God was providing a new path: it was time for a step of faith

I started my first business at age 22.

Life changed in the blink of an eye, From employment stability -- to nothing, to suddenly being a young entrepreneur.

It's humbling, but an honour to share a few of the stories from the **highlight reel** of God's faithfulness in my life. But I know that given the opportunity countless people in this room could get behind this microphone and share similar and even more captivating stories, personal stories of God's amazing grace, provision, triumph, faithfulness, and yes, even miracles.

Of course, there has been lots of **fun** & laughs along the way too...

Our God is not a cosmic killjoy, I can't tell you how many times we've laughed so hard we cried...

A number of years ago, I was on the 14th floor of an office tower just a few blocks from here.

As I nervously rose to speak to the committee, everyone **dove** under the table as a **full-sized Canada goose** came crashing in to the window behind me.

But some crashes are far more serious, they are NOT close calls, they are.... the FINAL call.

Earlier this year,

On Saturday February 6th, our family experienced a crash -- **like that**. A sudden, shocking, devastating FULL STOP.

The last living hours of our twin sons...constantly replay in our minds... precious moments... Jordan & Evan, arrived home from school. We visited for a short time and then we shared a family supper together. I hugged each of them before they headed out the door to their church youth group event. My wife Shauna gave them a hug and a kiss.

Hours later, as they sat around a restaurant table with several other teenagers, a dreadful idea took shape. A hijinks toboggan ride down the Canada Olympic bobsled track. The zest for life and adventure had gotten the best of them. Those invincible, undeveloped, teenage brains never considered or calculated the danger, and none of their parents had any idea about the **catastrophe** that was about to happen.

In the wee hours of the next morning, I received a text message, "Jason - Do you know where your boys are?"

As we stood in the waiting room of the Foothills hospital, we came to realize that our boys weren't there.

I was taken out to a police cruiser, driven down the hill to the Medical examiner's office. and I fell to my knees between the bodies of my sons.

Newspapers, websites, radio and TV stations across the country spread the news, trying to understand: how could this have ever happened? Who were these young men? Two of Calgary's finest. A flood of grief. 2 High Schools in TOTAL shock.

A few days later, as I stood at the top of that bobsled run, I realized that this track is like a metaphor for our lives.... A wide, smooth, and inviting straight stretch at the beginning, but we don't know what's just around the corner. There's **no advance-warning**, saying Heads Up, you are approaching **the last turn of your life**, make things right --- Now.

This begs the personal question: are **we** ready for the next turn?

The boys on that track certainly didn't know... that **Just** around that first bend and down the slope was a steel chain, and a solid wall. A **dead end** that claimed the lives of 2 of their best friends and critically injured 3 others.

Some --have expressed criticism, pointing out that these boys were trespassing, they shouldn't have been there. This was all very unnecessary. wasteful, and, upsetting. Why is the flag at 1/2 mast? Why are we honouring such behaviour? What were these kids thinking? Why didn't their parents know where they were?

My wife Shauna and I would be the first to agree - and sincerely apologize. We were sleeping while tragedy unfolded. Those boys had no business being there that night. And they paid the ultimate price. The 3 boys who were critically injured will bear the scars for the rest of their lives. Given the opportunity, our sons and the other boys involved would take the stage this morning and apologize to this city **they never would have wanted this.**

BUT on the other hand, **MANY People** have been **so merciful**, in the days that followed an Internet fundraising site was setup to assist with the dental bills and other expenses that aren't covered by health plans. Over \$50,000 dollars was contributed. **Mercy in action.** For those here that donated, thank you.

By God's mercy, these boys are here with us this morning, I'd like to ask them to stand...

The bible says that "**Faith** is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen." **Hebrews 11:1**

In times of unspeakable sorrow, and grief,
In tragedies like this,

FAITH IS TESTED. – **the rubber, hits the road.**

Foundations are rocked to the core.

What foundation do you find yourself standing upon this morning?

As a believer in the God of the bible, I have tested the foundation of Jesus Christ.

Followers of Jesus have access to **hope** that exceeds any circumstance

Hope that exceeds any tragedy.

Hope that even exceeds death.

And this morning,

I want to share with you ---- Why...?

We have hope because of THE finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

When Jesus Christ died on that Roman cross just outside Jerusalem in AD 30, He **satisfied** the debt, the penalty, owing for all sin, past, present, and future.

3 days later, He rose from the grave, fulfilling centuries of prophecies, including His very own declaration that He would be crucified and rise 3 days later.

Even His own followers brushed His statements aside, at first. Even protesting. Who could imagine such a thing, rising from the dead?

I have experienced death. Death is the ultimate **reality check**. We can all have our own personal theories, but I can tell you that I have never felt more powerless in my whole life than the moment that I fell to my knees between the cold, lifeless bodies of my sons. My entire professional career has been focused on risk management, getting things back, from system crashes, to virus and cyber-attacks, always making sure we're prepared. But on that morning as I knelt on the concrete floor of the medical examiner's office, all I could say is thank God I don't have to worry about where my sons are.

At the bedside of death,

- whether you're on the bed
- or beside the bed

All you care about is TRUTH

TRUTH that is bigger than your own ideas. Truth that is backed by fact. By history and by the testimony of God's spirit inside us, giving peace beyond understanding.

When Jesus rose from the grave.

Who could argue? Who could contest any word that He had spoken. Here is Jesus, everyone had witnessed His public crucifixion, a horrific, bloody death, a spectacle, then

buried in a tomb for 3 days, but now here He is walking, speaking, eating and drinking in their midst for 40 days before ascending to heaven.

In the months and years that followed: countless Christians would be martyred because they would not deny Jesus. This continues to this day.

Those early followers **knew** what they had seen. **Jesus was alive**

And today, God's spirit works in us supernaturally testifying of the same truth: **Jesus Christ is alive**. Jesus proved there is life after death, He proved the grave is not the end.

This is hope. This is power.

In the hours that followed the COP accident, A young person left a hand-made sign, in **calligraphy**, at a makeshift memorial, at the top of the COP bobsled track, quoting a famous passage in the bible.

"O death, where is your sting? Oh hades, where is your victory?"

1 Corinthians 15:55



The thought that arrested me and I'm sure many others was this.... **How can a grieving, sorrowing, friend, a young person in their grief, write something like that...?** So quickly, just hours after their passing?

"O death, where is your sting? O hades, where is your victory?"

It's almost **provocative**. A declaration, so certain, so steadfast... so full of Faith.

That kind of hope can only come from one place ---

Jesus Christ. A tangible hope. We will be **RE-United** with our sons AGAIN, and it will be in heaven, and this is what makes it possible to get through such a tragedy. But some here might say, “excuse me Jason, doesn't that sound a bit **presumptuous**? Didn't your sons die, caught up doing something wrong? Even, a sin...??”

Well, that's true... there's no -- denying it. **But** this is where we **get to**, inspect, what the bible says --- about what happens after we die...

Like the **fine print** in an insurance policy. We're usually not that interested until we have a claim. I can tell you this, as their Dad, knowing the fine print of the Bible has become essential to our peace and hope. **It doesn't disappoint.**

Many people will say, “well I know what you're going to say... ‘All roads lead to God’...

And, yes, in fact the Bible agrees, this is true...except for one **fine** point of clarification..

All roads lead to God's ---- **courtroom.**

The bible says "It is appointed for men, once to die, but after this the judgment".
[Hebrews 9:27](#)

...and Like all courtrooms there's only 2 possible exits after the verdict is delivered, the bible describes these exits as eternal life (heaven), or eternal separation from God, hell.

Even as children, we are born with a comprehension of justice, fairness, right, and wrong.

We have an intrinsic expectation for Justice. How would this world function if there was never justice? Justice is essential for hope. Just ask some who has been a victim of a crime. The loving God of the bible promises justice,.

We all cheer for justice, when we're innocent.
But we can only cry for mercy, when we're guilty.

So how **CAN I KNOW THAT** my sons are in heaven today?

As Jordan & Evan entered that courtroom on Feb 6th, there were undoubtedly similar voices, like the ones we heard on **social media**, chanting GUILTY GUILTY GUILTY - NO MERCY, NO MERCY. If we could somehow have been spectators, our sorrow and grief would overwhelm us, how could we deny their guilt, in fact we're all guilty --- the bible says "[we've all sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God.](#) " [Romans 3:23](#)

This courtroom appearance probably didn't start very well. I'm sure if we could see, the judge's face, it was grieved, such nice young men, what a horrible, tragic end.

But before my sons were even asked to take a seat, the only advocate that humanity has in the afterlife, Jesus Christ, met my boys at the entrance and then brought them down the aisle to the bench and said, "EXCUSE ME YOUR HONOUR, FATHER".

"These ones are ours. These ones trusted Me for their eternity, I **know** their names. This is Jordan Caldwell and this is Evan Caldwell. They chose to believe and follow me on earth, they called me Lord, they called you Father. Yes, they made mistakes, but I shed my blood and gave my life on the cross at Calvary to pay the debt of their sin so that they can have eternal life. These ones are ours FATHER, the debt is paid."

Case closed.

Ladies & Gentleman

This is the GRACE & MERCY and Love OF GOD.

Will Jesus say the same for you?

The bible says in the book of Romans, Chapter 8: There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

My sons, Jordan & Evan, were not perfect. But they were Forgiven. Their eternity is assured.

Jesus said in his own words, in gospel of John 5:24, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

Case Closed

None of us are 'good enough' for heaven. This is why Jesus had to come. And He invites everyone to repent, to receive His gift of forgiveness, and to follow Him. And if we do, He will meet us at the door of the courtroom.

Ladies & Gentleman

This is the GRACE & MERCY and Justice OF GOD.

Grace that is greater than all my sin.

This is hope.

Life changed in the blink of an eye

But as sensational as this story is...

it's not entirely unique.

We are reminded in the media every day.

Another tragedy, another loss, another disaster.”

Just 6 days ago, another shocking crash has rocked our country and our province.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of our former premier,
Jim Prentice,
Dr. Ken Gellatly,
Sheldon Reid,
and Jim Kruk.

We know your sorrow, we share your heartache and shock.

The fine men on this plane had no idea that they were approaching the last turn in their lives, slipping from this world into eternity. Making their own appearance before God the Father.

Life changes in the blink of an eye.

Life is challenging, life is hard.

Tragedy and crisis are always just around the corner.

All of these events have a common effect... they unfasten us from this world, they cause us to seek answers to the deep questions of life, setting off a spiritual homing device in all of us. **CS Lewis said and I quote “If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.”**

If you're like me, you've crammed for a few things in your life. Exams, assignments, projects, deadlines.

BUT YOU can't cram for crisis or tragedy, you can't cram for that last turn

in the blink of an eye, you're in it.

We're experiencing some **crisis**, right now, here at home **in Alberta**.

Tough times. Very tough times.

Somedays it feels like we're circling the rim of disaster.

4 years of floods, fires, economic collapse, personal and community distress, the imagery still haunts us: families escaping the fires of Fort McMurray as the babies cried, and the burning embers fell like rain on the escaping vehicles.

Tough Times.

We were on such a roll!

Alberta was the envy of the rest of the country

debt free.

Billion dollar project announcements so common, they hardly made the news

Another crane on the skyline

Another skyscraper going up.

We even had Ralph Bucks, I'm sorry if you missed it.

- Just 10 short years ago in 2006. The government had so much money... they were giving it back... \$400 for every man, woman, boy, and girl.

Wow Those were, the good old days.

In the blink of an eye...

Here we are...

Humbled, searching,

So many challenges

So many unanswered questions?

Who?

What?

When?

How?

My prayer is that our economic **down**turn, will result in a spiritual **up**turn.

And we're on the right track this morning,

were' at the **Calgary Leadership Prayer Breakfast.**

What's needed now, more than ever, is prayer. – Amen?

It's challenging to be a leader in times like these.

People need **hope**.

I pray that we, as leaders, will not fall short in this hour of need.

But where do **we** turn to, for hope?

What is the source of hope for our families, our coworkers, our friends, our neighbours?

In this morning's Bible reading, we're taken to an early moment in Jesus' ministry. Jesus enters the room, locates a 400 year old document, and then proceeds to read it, ancient prophetic words, yet unfulfilled....

Then Jesus sat down, and looked everyone in the eye and said...

TODAY, THIS SCRIPTURE IS FULFILLED IN YOUR HEARING.

This Jesus is still alive today. – still fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy from 2400 years ago. Sitting at the right hand, of the Father in heaven.

Jesus is hope and He's continually fixed on the source of our problems: **the condition of our souls**: the poor in spirit, the brokenhearted, the captives of sin, the spiritually blind, the oppressed.

- Perhaps, you might fit in one of these categories this morning?

Hope begins with Jesus and putting our trust in God for our every need.

But our pride & independence is always tempting us with the notion that we can solve every problem ourselves. A little more time, a little more money, another program.

But it's just not possible.

Anything that doesn't have its foundation in Jesus will always be temporary and incomplete.

True, lasting, hope, starts and ends with Jesus Christ.

The same power that rose Jesus from the dead is available to meet our every need. But especially the condition of our souls.

This breakfast is going to close in a few moments, as it always has, with the singing of the Lord's prayer.

So many have said to me, **Jason**, I admire **your faith**

My response to you is, God **has given everyone a measure of faith...**

And it stirs in all of us.

When we see beauty, when we see God's design in science, biology, physics, and chemistry, a newborn child, when you experience, love, mercy, forgiveness, and grace, and when you hear truth...

FAITH calls out to you, please don't silence it, don't ignore it.

Consider placing YOUR FAITH in Jesus Christ this morning.

CONSIDER making this morning's LORD's PRAYER a **personal prayer...**

from your heart, in faith,

and let it be the beginning of a **deeper** relationship with God.

I believe that we are in a crucial point in human history, we need to call out to God in faith & sincerity like never before. This world is experiencing some dangerous turns, what's coming up just around the corner?

What I know for sure is that **Jesus loves us, He loves you**, and He says repent and follow me, let's deal with first things first, the condition of our souls.

On that fateful February night, there were 3 toboggans at the top of that icy track. My sons were NOT on the same toboggan as many have presumed. They were on sleds # 1 & 3.

Sled # 2 was the only sled that did not hit the barrier or the steel chain.

– BUT WHY?

- Their survival enabled those boys to call for help and rescue the injured.

- After sled #1 went down
- The boys on sled 2 sat waiting. The **all clear** text message - **never came**.
- But Sled 2 decided to go anyways....
- My son Jordan was the one who gave Sled #2 the push-off, and as he did... many of the boys present heard Jordan's voice bellowing **Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name... Thy kingdom come... Thy will be done.**
 - He was praying the Lord's Prayer over Sled #2!
- After the accident, the boys on Sled #2 testified of a miraculous unexplainable intervention that kept them hitting the barrier, that only seconds later would claim the life of the one who prayed for them_____

My son Jordan's last act was praying for his friends.

God is alive. Prayer works.

Let's keep praying.

Hope is available **today** no matter what place, position, predicament, or valley you find yourself in.

Hope for this world, hope for the next world, and hope for **whatever** "is just around the corner."

Thank you