



“Anxiety”

Red Letter City

July 17, 2016

Courage Church, Detroit, MI.

I am going to tell you guys this up front. And I don't mean to start things off so heavy, but you are just going to have to bear with me this morning. I didn't really sleep last night.

It was a very very difficult night.

Anxiety, which is the subject that we are looking at today, is something that I deal with some as it is, so putting together a message on the subject naturally caused me some, and in general this week I have carried more of it than I should...

Even as I was writing this sermon, I must of deleted and rewrote it 4 or 5 times.

I sat in my office, writing. Then I moved to the other office, then the sanctuary, then the prayer room... then I went out to Anthology when I couldn't focus here. I couldn't find the words or the structure that was right. On Saturday afternoon I deleted half of what I wrote and wrote it again.

and then at midnight last night, I did it again.

last night, after I had finally thought that I had figured out what God wanted to do through the message, I sat down in my back yard next to the bonfire we had going to try and flesh it out and write my slides and notes... and as I was doing that, one of the girls living in the house next door to us came running out screaming asking if I would call 911.

She said that it went to voicemail when she called, so I called right away not knowing what was going on... and it went to voicemail for me too.

and then I got through. and the neighbor kept saying that her grandma was laying on the floor, the dog had bite her and to send an ambulance... so I tried to communicate that over the phone, and the lady said she would send an ambulance.

At this point my neighbor was home and was in there with her so I didn't go in.

Then I went to the front yard, and the girl is on her porch just balling... so Dawn came out and went over and prayed with her and tried to comfort her and after about 8 minutes she said "are you sure they are sending someone? You should call again." So I called again.

and this time the dispatcher told me to go in the house and she was going to give me instructions for how to help until the ambulance got there... and so I rushed into the house, and I took one look at the grandma and I just told the lady on the phone...

This women is dead.

I am not going to give any details. But it was clear. It was the worst thing that I had ever seen.

In my entire life.

The ambulance arrived while I was on the phone... and they rushed in, looked at her, and walked out.

There was nothing that anybody could do.

and I went into a bit of shock. Truthfully. I couldn't stop crying, all night.

They set up a police line, and then the lady who was killed, her daughter came and they wouldn't let her past the line and she just kept screaming for her mom... and she begged to see her. But they didn't let her see her, and truthfully, I don't blame them.

And I sat in my front yard, all evening, until around 11:30, and watched as more and more and more officers came, and homicide came, and animal control came, and one by one they hauled each of the man's four dogs away. and I was reminded once again, by seeing this crime committed by a creature that isn't even a human... inside a home that sits next to the one that I am raising my children in...

Some things in life are just beyond our control.

and that reality causes people all sorts of problems, the foremost being anxiety.

So what I am going to do, before I even get to our scripture, is I am going to give you, in a somewhat general way, what I believe the only solution to anxiety that exists.

When someone signs up for Alcoholics Anonymous, which for many people is a last ditch effort... the first step that they are given on their path to recovery is this confession:

STEP ONE: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol— that our lives had become unmanageable."

Its the first thing they do... when they come to the end of themselves they make this confession, that the problem in their life is one that they can not solve on their own. So they need help, and that is why they are there in that particular meeting.

well, Their first step is also Jesus' first step.

We talked about this when we studied the beatitudes, because It is the first step in the beatitudes.

"Blessed are the poor in Spirit"

Blessed are the ones who know that they are not strong enough. Because it is then that you stop relying on your own strength.

Because I can tell you with certainty, you are not strong enough. and I am not either.

The lady that lives in the house on the other side of our house from the one that everything happened in... she leaned against the fence between our yards and told me, "you will never be able to get that image out of your head for as long as you live."

and I am afraid that she may be right...

and if that is true... what is that going to do? What is that going to cause me to think every time I see a big dog? Every time I let my kids go outside and play? I am afraid what I will see because of what I saw.

but I can tell you right here and now... I don't want to live that way. That is bondage, it is entrapment... it is fear... and what God intended for our lives...

But With everything that keeps hitting our world, if you try and make it in your own strength, you are going to find yourself absolutely miserable, and so so lost.

But Jesus tells us that he has the answer. and that answer is Him.

So lets look at the red letters of Jesus, found in Matthew 6:25-34 -

"Therefore I tell you, do not be **anxious** about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being **anxious** can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you **anxious** about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, *O you of little faith*? Therefore do not be **anxious**, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For

the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

“Therefore do not be **anxious** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be **anxious** for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Lets Pray

Billy Graham says that: historians will probably call our era “The age of anxiety.” He says that “Though we have it easier than our forefathers, we have more uneasiness.”

There are certain things that the bible says not to do, that people seem to think it is okay to still do. This is one of those things. But this one is unique. See, anxiety is NOT something that we do in rebellion is if we *want* to feel like our whole world is going to fall apart, all day, every day. Nobody wants that.

Anxiety is the result of a person who has not relinquished control of their life. and this is brutally hard for me because I want more than anything to believe that Jesus is in control of my life but I know that I struggle here.

Guys, I know that last week’s message was a hard one to hear. I am glad it is over and behind us. But Jesus carries that same train of thought right into the next section. Last week we saw that Jesus showed us that you can only have one God in your life. You can either serve God, or you can serve the god of mammom. A god who uses money as its primary tool to show you that you can live your entire life with you in control of everything.

But remember, people who live by this god, are always on edge. Even when they have enough, something in them tells them that they need more. Even when things are going just fine, something in them is saying:

“no. its not okay. you are not okay. this situation is not okay.”

anxiety is a mind game that will derail you from your mission and It will distract you from your purpose!

This is a big deal. Jesus dedicated a lot of red letters to this. And he gets very repetitive. Look at this: do not be anxious. do not be anxious. why are you anxious? do not be anxious. do not be anxious. tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

5 times. Don't be Anxious.

Jesus begins to sound here, like a **broken record**. If you are unfamiliar with that term... what happens is this... if you have an old record and you put it on the record player, but the record has a bad scratch on it, then the needle of the record player will not be able to get passed that groove on the record and it will just keep playing that groove... that one bar, over and over.

That is Jesus here.

He says the same thing.

Over and Over.. He talks about anxiety in the sermon on the mount more than he talks about lust, more than he talks about anger, more than he talks about divorce, more than he talks about oaths or being salt and light or even loving your enemy.

and truthfully, where some of the passages that he gives us are just so loaded and each line reveals something totally new... this section isn't so much like that.

Jesus literally, and I believe intentionally, repeats himself.

Do not be anxious.

And you may think, "this feels like it is getting a little redundant, Jesus" - Until you realize the truth.

Jesus is addressing one of the biggest problems in our world today.

So of course he would approach it like a broken record... it is EXACTLY what we need here and now today because our world is a broken record.

You don't need me to tell you that.

Its the same thing, on repeat.

Two weeks ago, a black man was killed by police. His name was Alton Sterling.

The next day, another black man was killed by the police. His name was Philandro Castile.

The next day, five police officers are killed in retaliation.

Their names were:

Michael Smith,

Lorne Ahrens,

Michael Krol,

Patrick Zamirripa,

and Brent Thompson.

and I listed their names, because for every blip on the TV, that to us can easily and callously become *just another murder... just another BROKEN RECORD...* there are parents who lost children. There are children who lost parents. There are wives going to bed alone... and if the injustices of our world can be reduced to only mourning the loss of a label that we give to a person,

then we have robbed our world of its humanity.

You turn on the news, and you read about a person killed by a dog... and its sad, but ultimately its just another person killed by a dog... until it is your neighbor and you actually see them there, and you realize how easily it could have been you or your children.

And until every label has a name and a face *and a family* behind it, they are all going to feel the same.

It is a broken record.

A couple years back, two other African Americans were killed by police... then a man went out and killed two Brooklyn police officers while they were sitting in their car.

a broken record.

Last June, a man went into a primarily African American church and killed 9 people including the pastor, with hopes of starting a race war.

A few weeks ago, an Orlando night club was terrorized and 49 people were killed. A few months before that, 14 were killed and 22 others injured in a mass shooting in San Bernardino.

Last November terrorists attacked Paris, killing 130 people.

and this week over 80 people were killed while they were gathering to watch fireworks... by a man in a truck in Nice, France.

We have A LOT to be anxious about right now, because recent history has told us that hatred is recurring, and its growing... That lives don't carry the value that they should, to a lot of people... and everyone is vulnerable.

Freak accidents. Terrorist attacks. Racism.

What news will we hear today?

What broken record will play again? to nobodies surprise at all.

But let me show you what happens when we get used to hearing bad news.

See, when repetition causes familiarity then before long what you have is a callous on society.

But what we don't realize is that our callousness feeds our anxiety... Because nothing feels right and yet it feels normal.

and there is unrest everywhere.

There is no peace in people's spirits.

and I have all week tried to think of how to explain what seems to be happening in people, and please understand, I don't know everything. I just look at what I see and I ask God to help me see it more clearly.

and I believe the Holy Spirit reminded me of this picture.

A few weeks ago, Tim came over and helped us cut down this tree in our backyard. The roots of the tree were getting into our sewer and backing it up so we had to get rid of it, and chopping it down was the first step.

But then we had this enormous pile of tree in our backyard. So we started breaking up the pieces, and began burning the tree in our fire pit. and of course, burning a tree when it is still green is never a good idea, but somehow we created a fire that was hot enough that it consumed even the the freshly cut down tree. But it took a very long time to get it going the first time, and it took a very long time to burn.

For three days straight we burned, all day long.

Each evening, we would let the fire die.

And each morning, when we woke up, we would go out back, and all that we would see in the fire pit were ashes.

But to start the fire again, we didn't need to light a match... all we had to do was throw a piece of wood in there, and stir the ashes. And from there the fire would re-ignite itself. Because even though the ashes on the top looked as if they had already run their course, the ashes underneath had gotten so incredibly hot that even after an entire night of cooling off... an entire night of *not* burning, they were still ready to burn the next morning. So something that the first day took a very long time to get going, on later days, became automatic.

and I think that is symbolic to the state of our world right now. I know, for me, it is symbolic for the way things have been affecting me.

And it is symbolic to a lot of our problems. Now please, understand, I am not trying to minimize what is going on out there. I know anxiety is not our only problem. Hatred is a real, disgusting, huge problem. Racism somehow still exists and seems to be running rampant right now. But I think that behind at least some of those problems is a spirit of fear... a spirit of anxiety.

and let me show you an example... Dawn and I have this friend...

He lives in Los Angeles and made a video last week, and it went totally viral. I mean, about as viral as it gets. Last time I checked earlier this week, it had been *shared* over a million times, viewed over 35 million times... because of it, this week he was on CNN, Fox news, Dr. Drew, and all sorts of other talk shows and news shows... a couple days ago, they flew him to Washington DC to meet the President and be a part of a town hall style session with him... it just blew up. Article after article was written about this video... many supporting, many *criticizing*, because what it was was a tutorial on what to do if you get pulled over, so that things don't get out of hand.

And he highlighted the fact that because of the tone of our world, especially if the driver is black, there is an added anxiety about the possibility that something could happen. And that anxiety easily could cause something to happen, that nobody ever meant to have happen. and his point was, that ultimately "everyone wants to make it home."

and, a lot of people took issue with the fact that a video like that would even need to be made, and I understand that. and he did too. Because sometimes you can do everything right, and someone else could just have something against you. you could be the victim of racism or a victim of a power trip... or a victim of a crime... and those are real issues.

There are things in life that we can't control.

but no matter where you stand on whether a video like that should have been made or not, over a million people who saw it were moved enough by it to share it with their friends and that should show you how real this is!

They flew him to meet the president, because of how much this resonated.

and I will get to the scripture in a couple minutes but today's message is simple guys. It's not deep. Jesus doesn't say anything so detailed that your mind will explode here. He says the same thing five times.

It's simple. It's clear. and it is repetitive.

It is a broken record because that is the only way to address a society that lives in one.

We live in "A broken record."

and most of us are too proud to play anything different.

So one question that I had to ask myself this week, is how should proud, anxious people respond to the things that are happening in our world right now?

Jesus says: Don't be anxious.

It is the Greek word *merimnaō*... and what it means is "to be IN PIECES, or to be troubled with cares."

It means that things are not the way that they should be.

and you get the feeling of anxiety when you buy into the illusion that your life is manageable, and that you are in control of it...

and then you start to notice that control slipping.

But everything in you is fighting it because everything in you wants to be in control.

But the whole thing is in pieces.

It literally is the definition of our entire existence right now. It is the definition of our world. Everything is in pieces. Nothing feels like it is as it should be.

Nobody is certain of anything apart from those who are in Christ.

It is the opposite of peace. Peace... Peace in the Greek is the word *eirēnē* (i-rain-a) meaning “freedom from worry.” - and peace in Hebrew is the word “Shalom” which means “to be whole.”

One means to be whole. The other means to be in pieces.
For many: Peace is the goal. but Anxiety is the reality.
and the two can NOT exist together.

They are opposites. It literally has to be one or the other.

So in our world where most people want peace, but instead are in pieces...
how do we respond to all of the brokenness?

The bible makes it very clear... you respond to those who mourn, by
mourning with them.

At equip a couple months back we talked about mercy... Blessed are the
merciful, for they shall receive mercy... it is the only beatitude in which you
actually get what you give. If you give mercy, you get it.

And I love the way that William Barclay, a commentator from 100's of years
ago defines mercy, in this sense... he defines it as “you get into someone's
skin.”

Not under their skin...

but into it.

Mercy means that you put yourself in their world so that you can see what
they see, and feel what they feel.

and even though you may not fully understand it, you at least will get a
better view. And who, while wearing someone else's shoes, has no
compassion for them?

If you can't at least do that.. if you can't at least be there for people when they mourn because you can't understand why they are mourning... then you are going to keep stirring the fire.

Seriously, I had to check myself on this late late late last night. Because yes, what happened with those dogs left me with ALL SORTS of mixed emotions but in that moment I was there to mourn with those who mourn. I had no business doing anything other than seeing the world through their eyes for that moment. And I cried and cried and cried.

But remember if you give mercy, you get mercy.

If you see the world through someone else's lens...

Then Jesus will look at the world through yours. and he will give you what you need.

But if you can never get out of yourself guys... you will go through your days, underneath that top layer, you are going to be burning with:

Uncertainty.

Worry.

Fear.

and the truth is, that is how a lot of people spend the majority of their life.

Anxiety runs rampant in our world causing so many problems... so Jesus addresses it like the broken record that it is. He tells us that we worry for no reason at all.

And Jesus gives us two examples that show us how ridiculous it actually is to be anxious about everything all the time... the birds, and the lillies.

“Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being **anxious** can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you **anxious** about clothing?”

This is talking about God's providence... his provision.

First, lets look at the second half of this...

We literally can not add even an hour to our life by worrying. But it doesn't take much to realize that if you let your life be consumed by worry, you can waste the whole thing while not adding a moment to it.

So there is nothing to gain, and everything to lose by doing it.

We have to realize, God will give us what we need. He provided every meal for Israel, every day that they wandered. He provides for the birds. He will take care of you.

Paul says in Romans 8:28 "And *we know* that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

We know.

Do you know?

Because if you don't know that all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose, then your life is going to be in pieces. Because truthfully, we know that things are going to keep getting harder and harder on this earth. We know it isn't going to all lighten up.

But we don't have to be anxious about that because we know that in the midst of everything, God is on your side.

Jesus is not promising that everything is going to be fun. And that everything is going to work out exactly the way that you want it to work out. He is promising you that it will work out for your good if you trust him. And he compares his faithfulness to the way that he treats the birds.

Birds are carefree. Birds don't worry.

They don't wonder where their next meal comes from. They don't get stressed out about things.

They don't sow nor reap. They don't plan their meals. They eat food when they find food, and they always find food.

God takes care of the birds, so why would he not take care of us? We are created in his very image. We have a soul. We are forever beings.

We are NOT BIRDS.

But when anxiety hits most of us... what is the first thought we have?

Flight.

The first thought is, "I wish I were a bird." David says it in the Psalms when he is completely filled with troubles... "Oh that I had wings like a dove I would fly away and have rest."

anxiety breeds more anxiety. Because it reminds you what you don't have, and why you think you need it, and why you will never have it.

But you don't need to have wings to find rest. You don't need to go somewhere else to find rest when you are weary. Jesus says "come to me, all who are weary, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Just like he takes care of the birds, he takes care of us. Just as we are.

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, *O you of little faith?*"

This is talking about God's love. He explains that lilies do nothing... grass does nothing, and God still knows what it needs, and he takes care of it.

Remember the Lord's prayer?

Our Father (or Provider), who is as close to me as the air that I breathe...

I think that a lot of us spend all our days anxiously trying to please God and we forget that he doesn't take care of us because we do things for him... he takes care of us because we are his children.

and if God takes care of these things that don't even have hearts, minds or souls, why would he not take care of his children whom he loves with all of his heart?

and if you read this carefully, you may notice something that I never noticed until recently...

Jesus says:

"O you of little faith?"

and then there is a question mark.

What we tend to read as a declaration, Jesus words as a question.

and I tried to research why... and didn't really come up with much, so I speculated.

Maybe Jesus is NOT telling us that we don't have faith...

Maybe he is asking us "Do you trust me?"

Maybe he is saying, "have I given you even a single reason, ever, to not trust me?"

Are the birds not enough proof that I am in even the little things?

Is the grass not proof that I am in every detail?

in Matthew 8:26 Jesus says the same thing... and he words it the same way... with a question mark!

He is in a boat with his disciples... He is right there with them, literally and physically as close to them as the air that they breathe... and a great storm came and huge waves crashed against the boat... and Jesus is just

sleeping through it. So the disciples come running to him and they wake him up saying:

“Save us Lord; we are perishing.”

And Jesus says to them,

“Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?”

He gets up, he takes authority over the winds and the seas and he rebukes them and then everything is calm.

When everyone else was in pieces, Jesus was whole. He was consistent. He was as he should be.

I taught you this during our fruit of the spirit series when we focused on peace... but the Hebrew word picture for peace is astonishing.

It starts with the letter sheen which is a picture of teeth and it symbolizes “to destroy” something...

and then the second letter is the Hebrew letter “lamed” (la-med) which is a shepherd's staff and it symbolizes authority. A shepherd assumes authority over his flock.

The third letter is the Hebrew letter “vav” a picture of a nail, which represents the concept of establishing something or connecting something.. if you were to put a picture on the wall, how would you do it?

by using a nail.

and then the last letter is the letter “mem” and it is a picture of a crashing wave much like the one that was smashing against the boat that Jesus was sleeping on... and it symbolizes chaos... much like what the disciples felt as Jesus peacefully kept sleeping.

So what the ancient word picture says is that in order to have peace...

you must “destroy the authority that is establishing chaos.”

Now, that is not saying that you destroy a person, or you destroy something physically... the idea behind this principle is that there is something in your life that is causing you to be in pieces, when you are supposed to be whole. And you will never be whole until you can first identify what that thing is, and get it out of your life.

In that moment the storm was the chaos.

In our lives it is anything that divides us from God. Anything that we allow to have more power in our life than God. We talked last week in so much detail, how for so many people it is money.

It is the spirit of mammon. It is a spirit that says “I can control this.”

but Jesus says, you can't serve both It is God, or it is Mammon, and if you chose mammon you will think you have control over it but ultimately it has control over you.... and then he shows us how that carries over into the other areas of our lives.

Because here is the truth... God wants all of you.

And most of us here will say all day that we believe in God... or even that we love God... but if we are going to be a part of the mission of God... the mission of seeing his Kingdom invade earth, we have to let go of ourselves and learn to actually trust God.

and have you ever heard the phrase “if you give someone an inch they will take a mile”?

If you try and control one area of your life, and typically for most of us the first area we try to control is the area of finances... then what happens is, it won't be long before we will be trying to control other areas in our lives... and of course eventually we will find ourselves seeking control over every area of our lives.

and the only reason that we are anxious is because we ultimately think that we are supposed to be in control and we know that we are not in control.

But if we give Jesus control of everything, then he will take care of everything.

That is what Jesus means when he says:

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”

What Jesus is saying is pretty clear. If you put him first, then he will give you what you need.

The word first is the word “prōton” and it means “no postponing.”

Don't postpone! You are no good in the drivers seat.

Don't be stingy. Don't be proud.

Let Jesus have his way in your life and you will have all you need.

“Therefore do not be **anxious** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

I think of the verse that says “God has not given you a spirit of fear...” (2 Tim. 1:7)

so if you have that spirit, it is not from God. and what that spirit will tell you, over and over and over again is what?

Nothing is under control.

But that is only a half truth. Nothing is under YOUR CONTROL. But God has everything under control.

But if your whole life you are constantly in pieces, constantly worried about what will happen tomorrow, what will happen next week... if you live your

whole life like the hot coals in my fire pit, always burning... waiting for another moment to be stirred... you will always get stirred at the wrong times. And you will always miss what God is trying to do in your life.

you will miss it.

Charles Spurgeon once said: "Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength."

It does no good. and it does a whole lot of bad.

So I want to ask you a question today:

What is robbing you of your peace?

What is it that is emptying today of its strength in your life? What is causing it? What is it that is leaving you in pieces every day? What is it that has established itself in your life and it is causing chaos?

What has the devil convinced you of?

What are you really afraid of?

God has a plan for your life, and it is good... but some of us may never see it this side of heaven because we are controlled by a spirit that is telling us that we are supposed to be in control. And its causing all sorts of problems. and judgments. and pain. and frustration.

But ultimately you can only have one God in your life. and if you want that throne, then you will always be all of the things that I just listed. But if you give Jesus that throne... He is the PRINCE OF PEACE. and He has been destroying authorities that establish chaos for 2,000 years.

Think about this last verse for just a second:

1 Peter 5:7 "cast all your anxieties **on him**, because he cares for you."

Think about this.

It is not saying to lean on Jesus in a time of need. It is not saying to share your problems with him.

This verse is saying “put all of the anxiety ON him...” because he cares so much for you, that he died for it.

And I think that the biggest problem that Christians face in our world is we don't understand the concept of the Kingdom that is happening right now. We don't understand that the cross of Jesus Christ is MORE than just an atonement for your sins so that you can go to heaven one day.

Jesus doesn't want us to live our whole lives on edge, paranoid, anxious, stressed out all the time, just waiting to see him in heaven. No! He died for so much more than that. He died to kill the hostility, he died so we could have joy. He died so we could have peace. He tells us here in 1 Peter to take the very things that are weighing down our lives and distracting us from our purposes... and to lay them on Him... because he already died for it.

So you don't have to live with it, anymore.

and this is the last thing I am going to tell you today. And thank you, for letting me just sort of speak my heart today. Next week will be much more normal and expository.

There were many police officers on the scene last night, but one in particular I think I will remember. I asked them all... if what I just saw was something that they see a lot... or if that was worse than most cases... I explained to them that I had three daughters, and suddenly I was just a little nervous for them.

and they let me know that sometimes, it is that bad.

and this one officer, when he had a moment he came into our yard and talked to Dawn and I. and he was just so kind. and we told him that we pastored Courage Church, and he was so excited about what we are doing. He started telling me a story about a church on the other side of town, and

some amazing things that had happened there... then he had to go back to the other house... but then right before he left, he came back into our yard, and this is what that police officer told me:

“right next store, that is an opportunity for you guys to be a light. They need a light right now...” and then he said “I am so happy you guys are in the neighborhood...” then he looked at us both and he said “I have a good feeling about you. I think your church is going to grow.” and he shook my hand and he went home.

In one of the darkest moments in my entire life, God sent a light, who spoke life into my heart, and hope into my future. And I hope that as *that* day is written in my memory, that the first thing I remember are those words.

Because in a world that has given me every reason to be anxious...
He came with words that gave me every reason to be hopeful.