**Bumper:** (***Scene from Story of Jesus for Children put out by the Jesus film Project - Jesus reads from the scroll in his home town)***

Welcome to Southside Church my name is Wynne Lankford and I serve here as the lead pastor.

I am so glad you are with us today!

Have you ever stopped to consider the toughness and determination of Jesus!

The demonstration of sheer will to achieve the mission that He had been sent to complete by His father in heaven was absolutely amazing!

What was His mission?

To take our place!

He was born to become the sacrificial lamb, who would take on the sin of the world, breaking the curse of death in our lives.

Simply put: Jesus came to take my place!

Jesus took my place in death so I might share in His life!

**Jesus didn’t just die for us, He died instead of us!**

Death is a consequence of sin and sin is when we reject God or push Him away.

God loved us so much that even though we push Him away, He presses in sending His son to take on death and deal with our sin…..

So through Him we can have a way back to life!

Jesus’ death on the cross was an aggressive move to deal with our stiff armed rejection.

And His resurrection provided power to deal with the curse of Death in our lives!

This is why we celebrate His resurrection on Easter!!

**He was resurrected for us, He offers to live in us – and He desires to put His power on display through us!**

Jesus offers to lead us into a life of victory and purpose by offering us resurrection power!

You talk about Tough as Nails, Jesus demonstrated GRIT with the resolve to live out His mission to reclaim us for Himself!

**SLIDE 2** Now when you hear the word GRIT maybe you think of old westerns with John Wayne.

Or an 80’s action flick like Rocky or Rambo, or maybe even something newer with Dewayne Johnson!

These action movies paint an attractive picture of toughness.

That with enough determination and self-motivation you can accomplish anything all on your own.

But, I’m not talking about old westerns, or gun slinging macho men.

I’m talking about the Son of God who came to take on a problem we all deal with…….SIN and DEATH!

Jesus’ determination didn’t come from some macho image that he was “the man” and could do it all on His own.

His GRIT flowed from clarity of purpose around the mission that God had given Him.

In fact His mission was declared at His Birth through –

Words from the angel to His mother Mary!

**SLIDE 3-5 *Luke 1:31-33 (NIV) 31  You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32  He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33  and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."***

Words from the angel to the earthly father Joseph who adopted Jesus as his own after hearing…..!

**SLIDE 6 *Matthew 1:21 (NIV) 21  She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."***

Jesus’ mission was foretold when he was a child –

With words offered by Simeon an old man at the temple when His parents Mary and Joseph presented him after his birth!

***Luke 2:28-32 (NIV) 28  Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 29  "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. 30  For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31  which you have prepared in the sight of all people, 32  a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."***

Jesus mission was even clear with gifts presented by the Magi when Jesus was about three years old

***Matthew 2:11 (NIV) 11  On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold (gift worthy of a king) and of incense (gift worthy of a priest) and of myrrh (gift to reflect his sacrifice).***

Jesus mission was declared by John the Baptist at the beginning of His ministry

**SLIDE 7 John 1:29 (NASB) 29  The next day he \*saw Jesus coming to him and \*said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**

Jesus had a clear picture for what God called Him to do.

He was on a mission to save humanity from sin, rescue us from death, and to reconcile us to the Father!

With a mission that important there was no way Jesus would ever back down.

He had to see it through!

Today we opened this message with a dramatic scene from the Story of Jesus for children put out by the Jesus Film.

In this scene we observed Jesus declaring His mission to a crowd in His home town of Nazareth.

Have you ever met or known a home town hero?

Maybe someone that you went to high school with, that in time became famous and back when you knew them you would have never expected it.

Many of you have heard me talk about the fact that when I was in high school I played football and we played against the team where Troy Aikman was the quarterback.

I was a starting defensive nose guard for the Harrah Panthers and Troy Aikman was the starting quarterback for the Henryetta Hens.

I don’t care if you have Troy Aikman as your quarter back, when your team name is the Hens you plan on getting beat.

**SLIDE 8** When we played them we slaughtered them, I even sacked Troy Aikman and took him out of the game for a few plays.

Now if Troy Aikman would have visited my high school in my junior year and told me...

“I’m going to be recruited out of high school play at Oklahoma University.

Be transfer to UCLA where I will be the Pac-10 offensive player of the year and be selected by the Dallas Cowboys as the overall fist in the 1989 draft.

I am going to win three super bowls and be inducted in the college and pro football hall of fame.”

I would have said, “Get up off the dirt and go tell your momma, because I think I gave you your first concussion!”

Their team in high school was not that good!

Yet here we are……..

This is how the people in Jesus’ home town felt as He stood up and declared He was there to fulfill the prophesies given by the prophet Isiah.

People in Jesus’ home town couldn’t believe what He was saying.

After all, they all knew Jesus. They grew up with him.

They would have played together as children.

They studied the Torah (first five books in the Old Testament) together in the very synagogue where He was standing.

They would have navigated childhood and adolescence together.

They knew Jesus’ mother, his brothers and sisters.

They all probably had a piece of furniture that Jesus and his dad built in their family carpenter business.

Everyone from this little town knew the reputation of the region they called home.

There was a well know mantra, “nothing good comes from Galilee,” and their little town of Nazareth wasn’t even the best place in Galilee.

So for Jesus to stand up as an adult, with a band of followers He had amassed and declare before His hometown, that He was the ONE!

The ONE who had come to fulfill the prophecy being read….was beyond belief.

That took GRIT

Everyone was **ASTONISHED** by His teaching yet they could not **ACCEPT** His declaration.

Even though His home town responded in **AWE** there was no **ACCEPTENCE** ….Yet Jesus was not deterred!

With Grit and determination He continued on His mission!

**SLIDE 9 Their rejection would not be His limitation!**

In fact, not too long after this event Jesus continued His mission by setting His sights on His final destination!

***Luke 9:51 (YLT) 51b  ………he fixed his face to go on to Jerusalem,***

Jesus set His sights on Jerusalem, the place He would sacrifice it all, facing death so we might have life!

Jesus demonstrated **GRIT over QUIT** with the mission His father had given Him.

One of the biggest concerns I have today, is that many are **ASTONISHED** by the teachings of Jesus, yet have not **ACCEPTED** His invitation to FOLLOW Him in every way!

Have we **ACCEPTED** that Jesus is the ONE who has come to deliver us from the bondage and brokenness created by the curse of sin and death?

Have we **ACCEPTED** the truth that over 2000 years ago the son of God showed up to break the curse in our lives?

Have we **ACCEPTED** that He is inviting us into a life where we too can have GRIT!

Jesus is inviting us into a Spirit Filled life.

His presence gives us **PURPOSE AND POWER** to face very situation life might throw our way.

**SLIDE 10 Jesus demonstrated Grit over Quit for His mission so we can have the opportunity to live a life filled with GRIT over QUIT in our mission even in the face of adversity!**

The question is, will we be like His hometown and stop at **AWE** or will we **ACCEPT** His presence and purpose and **let Him have control of our lives.**

One of the things I have noticed over this past year is a separation of people who simply are in **AWE of Jesus**, versus those who **really ACCEPT Jesus** and **live out the mission He has for our lives.**

There is a drastic difference between **FANS** and those who are **FOLLOWERS**.

**Fans fade** when things get tough, **back away** when things get hard, **jump ship** when things don’t seem to turn out the way they expected.

**SLIDE 11** But **followers dig in** when things get tough, **lean in** when things get hard, **strive for clarity** when things don’t go their way, **all with a power that is not their own!**

My prayer over the next several weeks, we will reflect on the GRIT of Jesus leading up to Easter and **GROW in our commitment** to be **FOLLOWERS of Jesus rather than simply FANS!**

**Jesus doesn’t need more fan’s He is calling for Followers!**

**And here is the coolest part!**

**SLIDE 12 Jesus isn’t looking for something FROM you He is wanting something FOR you!**

Jesus is inviting us into a provision He has already paid the price for us to receive.

Jesus wants to provide us with POWER!

POWER that leads us into a life of purpose and meaning, guiding us on Mission to make a difference in the lives of others.

Jesus wants to give us GRIT!

**Webster’s dictionary defines GRIT** as: firmness of mind or spirit, unyielding courage in the face of hardship or danger.

Here is the good news, the same **Grit that Jesus demonstrated in His life**, is what **He desires to give us as a gift when we say YES to Him.**

How would you like to have the ability to have Grit over Quit in life and find your life’s mission!

To live a life with the same Tough as Nails determination Jesus possessed where we can face the future despite any and all adversity we may face!

One thing is true, life has loads of challenges. Following Jesus does not guarantee a problem free life.

Jesus was clear when He detailed for His disciples providing a sobering list of challenges His followers would face.

This conversation is captured for us in John 14, 15 and 16 yet He concludes this with these words with an encouragement.

***John 16:33 (NIV) 33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."***

Jesus is telling us, I have overcome the world’s most difficult problem, the curse of sin and death.

I WANT YOU TO HEAR THESE WORDS directly from Jesus to you!

**SLIDE 13 I had Grit and didn’t quit, I overcame! I promise with me you will overcome TOO!**

If you would have told me all of the challenges I would face in life after saying YES to Jesus I’m not sure I would have wanted to go on the trip!

I wouldn’t have believed I could do it.

Things like reconciling a broken marriage, learning how to break free from destructive addictive habits.

Raising children through all of the challenging stages of life and development.

Moving far away from my family, serving in really hard situations.

If you would have told me I would have to navigate the death of my father, deal with the loss of a foster son, and lead a church through a pandemic!

I would have told you no thanks!

I don’t have the GRIT necessary, nor am I equipped with the firmness of mind or spirit, I don’t have the unyielding courage in the face of hardship or danger.

Yet with Jesus……Here I am!

As I look back realizing that as long as I kept my little hand in His big hand He has helped me make it through!

I’m still here and I’m still standing…..why?

Because I serve a Jesus who lived Grit over Quit toward His mission!

And He has given me power to have grit in my own life!

He is forming in me firmness of mind, soundness in spirit, an unyielding courage in the face of hardship and danger!

Jesus promised He would never leave us nor forsake us.

Jesus said don’t worry about what to say when you come against hard times I will give you the words.

I don’t know where you find yourself today!

Maybe you are in a place where you feel completely unworthy.

Feeling like no one could ever love you or accept you and that you don’t have the ability to make it.

You feel you have nothing to offer the world and you feel alone and isolated.

Covid has isolated all of us from a used to be life!

I want to remind you that Jesus did not QUIT and will not QUIT and is here with open arms asking you to trust Him.

YOU … ARE…the focus of His mission and He wants to empower you with a mission, too!

Jesus will not only meet you where you are, forgive you for everything you have ever done, He will also help you have the same GRIT over Quit spirit He possesses.

Maybe you’re here today and the events of the last year have caused you to become a bit disillusioned.

It is hard to stay focused when you feel isolated and stifled both in relationships and in purpose.

Run into the arms of Jesus…. who wants to - poor into you - the healing power of His presence and help you reclaim your GRIT today!

We MUST move beyond the place of AWE and ACCEPT that Jesus wants to place within you the same power that raised Him from the dead.

So you can have……..firmness of mind or spirit, unyielding courage in the face of hardship or danger.

Jesus had a crystal clear mission – He wanted to invite us into a relationship with God where He forgives our sins and delivers us from death into a life of purpose!

Jesus has a crystal clear mission for you too!

He wants you to impact the world by inviting others to experience that same life-giving power through the Good News of His forgiveness and reconciliation.

If you haven’t taken that first step, I want to encourage you today to Say YES to following Him!

As soon as you do He will fill you with power to step into the mission He has designed for you.

If you have said Yes to Jesus, I want to invite you to fully surrender to the life Jesus is calling us to.

Move beyond being a FAN.

FOLLOW Jesus into the Mission and purpose He has for your life!

Experience the power of God’s determination as He helps you SERVE others.

Join us in the effort to “Impact families to transform our world” by serving others!

We want to open the door for you to serve others by helping you share the message of Jesus.

**SLIDE 14** One quick and easy way for you to share Jesus is to sign up to Build-A-Basket and share Easter with a friend or Neighbor.

Who among your neighbors and friends would you like to serve by packing their family a basket of gifts and goodies to enjoy at Easter?

The basket will also have an invitation to our Easter services along with a way for them to access the **“The story of Jesus for kids”** that is produced by the Jesus Film” which is free.

Sign up for a time to build a basket at our Build-A-Basket day on March 27th and plan to deliver it on Palm Sunday weekend.

We believe the message of Jesus contains the power for everyone to experience Grit over Quit.

Why not make it our mission to share this good news with others.

Maybe you are wanting to get re-connected in serving here at the church.

I believe it’s time, why not consider signing up to serve in one of our serve areas on Easter weekend.

There is no better way to begin experiencing the power of mission in your life than by serving others.

We believe when we realize the power of Jesus in our lives we will begin to experience **GRIT OVER QUIT** and begin making a difference in the lives of others.

One thing is for sure, you cannot steer a parked car, you need to begin to move before you can begin to steer.

Why not take a step today and start moving! FOLLOW Jesus into a life of Grit over Quit and get in on His MISSION for your life!

Will you pray with me?

**Prayer**

**Response**

* **SLIDE 15** Say YES to Jesus
* **SLIDE 16** Build-A-Basket on website
* **SLIDE 17** Serve tab on website
* **SLIDE 18** Southside Start