
VISION FORWARD



AS THE EARTH SHAKES

Growing up in the country of Mexico I remember being hit by several earthquakes. The sound of a rushing train. The feel of moving beneath your feet. The sight of light fixtures swaying, pictures shaking, decorations falling. It's quite unlike anything else. And the higher you find yourself, the more intense the shaking.

Some of the epicenters were close, real close. Some were hundreds of miles away. The magnitude of the damage depended on proximity. But not always. It did, though, always depend on foundation, structure, building integrity.

Over the last 2-3 years there has been violence, a pandemic, wars and rumors of wars, and so much more. There is a feeling of movement beneath our feet. Our hearts are shaken. If only for a moment, we know our lives are on less solid ground than we imagined or hoped. There's a sense of danger, anxiety, worry, fear in the air. Of what we don't know. Of what we can't control.

We could find it easy to identify an "epicenter" for the shaking we hear, feel, and see. But Scripture reminds us that when the shaking of things comes (and it will), the epicenter may not be on earth

Whatever our scientific explanation for how, where, and why an earthquake occurs on earth, the explanation for a different kind of earthquake is found in Hebrews:

"Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." (Hebrews 12:26)

"I will shake" – God from heaven shakes the earth. The epicenter is His throne. And the shaking has a purpose.

The shaking reveals many things, one of the first being our hearts.

In days such as these, it is imperative that as the church we believe the "solid rock" on which we stand is not one we have built by nor for ourselves. It is a foundation established, laid, and built for us by God: Christ Jesus. As disciples, we are called to dig deep and to build our lives on the solid foundation that is Christ and His Word. He is

faithful, immovable, unassailable, unchangeable. His Word will both come to pass and will never pass away.

“And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.” (Matthew 7:25) Let us not run to other sources of strength. Let us not flee to other grounds for refuge. Rather, let us sing and pray, “Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer; from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Psalm 61:1-2).

The writer of Hebrews goes on to say that “This phrase, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (12:27-28)

The shaking by God of things on earth is purposeful. It is to reveal our hearts, but also to reveal to our hearts what remains: a kingdom that cannot be shaken. The kingdoms of this earth are not our home. Our final rest and joy is not here. Our true life, comfort, and hope is not ultimately founded on the United States of America.

Our true life, comfort, and hope is found ultimately in Jesus and as citizens of a new kingdom. God "has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Colossians 1:12) – the Son of God, Jesus Christ. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him, because He alone is preeminent in all things. Our trust is in Him:

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." (Colossians 1:15-20)

Dear Elim Grace, as the earth shakes, what do our eyes fix on? Where do our feet turn? Where do our thoughts run? Where does our heart find its hope? “My flesh and my

heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” (Psalm 73:26)

A PODCAST AND A BOOK THAT HAVE RECENTLY CHALLENGED ME

[THE RISE AND FALL OF MARS HILL - podcast by Christianity Today](#)

“Founded in 1996, Seattle’s Mars Hill Church was poised to be an influential, undeniable force in evangelicalism—that is until its spiraling collapse in 2014. The church and its charismatic founder, Mark Driscoll, had a promising start. But the perils of power, conflict, and Christian celebrity eroded and eventually shipwrecked both the preacher and his multimillion-dollar platform.”

It’s hard to put into words how difficult it was for me to listen to this. It’s long. 11 episodes, each at least an hour long. Many of you may not remember Mark Driscoll and his church, Mars Hill, but it’s a recent enough story that I remember it well. The podcast was very sobering, moving, and humbling in its lessons on church culture and leadership, celebrity pastors and pastors in general, Jesus and His Word. It’s meant a lot of deep examination for me over the last few weeks. “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man” (1 Cor. 10:13).

[HOLIER THAN THOU: How God’s Holiness Helps Us Trust Him - book by Jackie Hill Perry](#)

“If God is holy, then He can’t sin. If God can’t sin, then He can’t sin against you. If He can’t sin against you, shouldn’t that make Him the most trustworthy being there is?”

In Holier Than Thou, Jackie walks us through Scripture, shaking the dust off of ‘holy’ as we’ve come to know it and revealing it for what it really is: good news. In these pages, we will see that God is not like us. He is different. He is holy. And that’s exactly what makes Him trustworthy. As it turns out, God being ‘holier than thou’ is actually the best news in the world, and it’s the key to trusting Him.”

I don’t want to study God, I want to know Him. I don’t want to open the Bible because I have to preach, I want to open the Bible because I love God. This book is stirring up a deeper hunger within me for the holy God and for a holy life.