

(0s):

Oh, good morning, everybody. It is great to be with you. Yes. If you do want to give, you can do that at [arise, denver.com](https://arise.denver.com) click the gray gift button. Or if you are in person, you can give on the drop boxes on your way out. If you're new to rise church, we're so glad that you decided to join us this morning, either in-person or online. We'd love to get to know you better help get you plugged in, learn about you and your family and get you connected. As we move into this new year, you can do that. If you go to our website, [arise, denver.com](https://arise.denver.com). Click the big I'm new button there at the beginning first page, or go to arisedenver.com/new. If you fill out that form, one of our staff members will reach out and we'd love to connect with you and get to know you better. Next week, we have an opportunity to be able to welcome you more personally, into our community.

(44s):

If you want to join us in person next week in between services. And then after this service have a cup of coffee, we'll be socially distant and we'll be able to talk welcome. You get to know you better allow you to ask us any questions you might have about the church. And we'd love to get to know you better. So that's next week. You don't need to sign up or anything. Just hanging out a few minutes after the service it'll be right outside and we will enjoy a cup of coffee and get to know one another this morning, though, we're going to dive in into a message kind of that I put together. We're starting our series, the quest next week, all about how the journey of following Jesus. And it is an adventure and requires a lot of different things that we're going to go into really excited about that. I think it'll be a lot of fun and really impactful for our faith.

(1m 26s):

But this morning, I'm kind of got the opportunity to go through the Bible and allow God to put some words in my heart. And I hope that they resonate with you as we start this new year. If you're unfamiliar with who I am, my name is Sawyer trap. I'm our associate pastor here to rise church and Oh, we're going to get started on how many of you make resolutions. If you're here in person, you can raise your hand. If you make a new year's resolution, couple people, there was like nobody for service. If you're watching online, leave a comment, say I make a new year's resolution. Maybe this can be that first step puts accountability. Let some people know they can follow up. But according to statistics that I looked into this week, about 70% of people make a new year's resolution seven in 10 people make a new year's resolution year after year after year.

(2m 12s):

And what would you say? How many of those seven people out of 10 actually complete the resolution Zero negative it's one, one person out of seven, 10% actually Complete their new year's resolution. Now that to me felt a little high too, because we know that new year's resolutions are inevitably a lot of hope at the beginning of the year and then February hits and then March hits. And basically by March, anything that we claim we were going to do either December 31st at the beginning of January falls by the wayside.

(2m 53s):

But there is that one person that 10% of people that actually complete their new year's resolution. But I think for the, for the 90% of us, right, that don't complete those resolutions either. We, we try to eat better. We try

to work out more read books, maybe in a regular year, we want to travel, learn a new skill, but why then do our resolutions fail? Why when year after year we make these claims, we make these big goals. Do we fall short? And I think it's because we run into two interconnected problems. And the first is that our willpower is a lot more in our minds than actually interactions that when rubber meets the road, when things get tough, when life gets difficult, when there's that cupcake sitting on the counter, or when it's just as easy to turn on Netflix, instead of going to the gym or when you haven't cracked that book in a while, or when we find out the travel is not even possible, right now, let alone expensive and requires a lot of planning that our willpower falls short that in our head, we have all this ability to face difficult situations to push through, to press on.

(4m 11s):

And yet when we put it into practice, it falls short. So that's one problem. And then the second problem connected to it is that our habits are a lot more ingrained than we think they are. The things we do repetitively, even small things in our life, transition from free choices to behaviors, to routine, to ingrained and entrenched Habits. And we often don't realize how entrenched those habits are until we try to change them. Right? That it's only when we realize that we do that every single day, we've been doing it every single day for the past year and a couple of years past.

(4m 56s):

And when we try to change any little thing about it, we realize, Oh, this is going to be a harder than I thought. So we have our habits and then we have our willpower fighting Against us. But if this last year beyond anything else has shown us anything, Is that things can change. Habits have likely changed this year. The way that you did things in 2019, the people that you interacted with, the things that you did for fun, the things that you did for entertainment, the ways that you work, the ways that you interacted with your family Have all changed Ways that we were living.

(5m 44s):

Even at the beginning of this year, this past year are now dramatically different. And even as we sit here right now, we're at a crossroads. Yes, many of us are still grieving. We're still in pain. We're still dealing with the loss of everything that we had to give up in 2020, maybe, you know, have someone have a family member in your own life who is succumb to this horrible disease. And you're grieving, you're hurting at some level, we're all grieving and hurting. And yet as we enter this new year, a year, that at least on the surface is hopeful.

(6m 28s):

We're at a crossroads, right? A moment because it's when we are in crisis, that we are actually the most apt to change that when everything falls apart with the ways that we were doing things before have all shattered and gone by the wayside change is not only possible. It's achievable. And it isn't, to me, that's telling you that the great Nobel winning prize economist, Nope, excuse me. Milton Friedman had this to say, he says that only a crisis actual or perceived produces real change.

(7m 9s):

Now his primary focus was macro economics and it's true there, but I think it's also true in our life when everything is good, when you're coasting, why change you see, it's only the moments where everything falls apart that we can begin to change. And this is not only true with our diets or our abilities or our skills, but it also is true with our faith. The great writer, CS Lewis puts it this way, that pain insists on being attended to that. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences and shouts in the pains.

(7m 50s):

It's his megaphone to Rouse a deaf world. And it is so easy for us to go deaf to the voice of God. Is it not? And beyond anything else in this year? I think many of us have come to again, hear the voice of God saying I'm with you. And I love you. You might've strayed from me, but let's get back on the ways of living. And I think as we start this next year, as we begin 20, 21, I want to keep things simple. I've seen a lot of posts online that we're supposed to like sneak into 2021 that we don't want to frighten the year that we want to keep things calm and collective and, and just make sure that everybody's okay.

(8m 34s):

Right. And even though the truth is that we don't have any effect on it. I just want to give you one simple goal for 2021 just in case. And it's this to know Christ and become like Christ to know Christ and to become like Christ. And on the surface, that seems kind of trite. It seems maybe over simple assists simplistic for those of us have been following Jesus for our lives that maybe is like, okay, yep. That's what we're supposed to do. Right. But isn't there something else.

(9m 14s):

And I would say that if this is not our goal, as followers of Jesus, we are missing the point. And for those of us who don't even know what Jesus, This Courage you to think to listen, because I actually believe that this is the goal, not only for 2021, but for the rest of our lives. And I hope by the end of this message, I can convince you that that's the case. So before we jump into the Bible, I just want to speak quickly to those watching online at the end of this, we're going to have communion. So if you'll find a piece of bread and maybe you have some crackers or a donut or something leftover, and then I get some juice or some wine, a beverage, and we'll take communion together.

(9m 58s):

And then also, if you want to find a piece of paper, anything we'll do post-it note notepad sheet of paper and something to write with. You'll need that at the end as well. For those of us here in person, all that has been provided for you. So benefit of coming in person, if you're on the fence, but we're going to jump into the Bible. We'll get started. We're in the book of Philippians today in chapter three, and Paul is writing this letter to the church there in Philippi, encouraging him in their faith and reminding them of the things that he's already taught them to keep them on the straight and narrow of following Jesus. And it starts off, we're

starting in verse seven. He begins like this, but whatever were gains to me.

(10m 38s):

I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, Oh Lord. And on the surface, this seems like a good verse, right? It seems like something we should say as Christians, but look at what Paul is saying. Think about all the things that Paul had to consider Loss Says he just he's describing himself a couple verses before. And he says that he's a Pharisee among Pharisees. Paul knew Our old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, like the back of his hand, he had the entirety of it, of the Pentateuch memorized.

(11m 25s):

The first five books of our Bible. He knew the law, he was a teacher of the law. People would come to him and ask his advice on how best to follow God. He Had jumped through all of the religious hoops And God calls Calls him has this traumatic and dramatic transformational conversion experience on the road to Damascus. And God takes this persecutor of Christians and turns it into the greatest missionary we've ever known. Paul helped spread the church from a small movement of disciples located around Jerusalem to basically the known world at that time.

(12m 10s):

So Paul could rest on a lot. He could say, look at all the things I've done. The things that I've accomplished, the skills and abilities I have Beyond All of his religious pursuits. He was also a tentmaker. He Could rely on a lot of the things that he has done. Look what he says. I now consider them a loss for the sake of knowing Christ. In fact, I consider everything a loss. He continues a little bit later on that. In fact, he considers it garbage Trash compared To even knowing Jesus.

(12m 53s):

So throughout our message this morning, I want to ask you a couple of questions in this time of reflection that we naturally have at the beginning of the year. I want us to think, I want us to reflect, to turn inward and see the steps that we need to take to know Jesus better become more. I like him. And so as Paul writes, he considers everything that he has every gains that he's made a loss, because I think he knows that it's so easy for us to rely on the things that we can do. The abilities that we have, the titles behind our name or the zeros in our bank account, the jobs that we have, the skills and abilities that we Possess.

(13m 43s):

That even for us who claim to be Christians, we don't really live like this. I don't really live like this. We don't really consider everything we are and everything. We have a loss compared to knowing Jesus. I'll be the first one to admit that I don't, I consistently and overwhelmingly rely on my own abilities. The things that I can do, even when over and over and over again, I fall. And I think as we reflect, as we think that is same as true for all of us, that when push comes to stuff that when difficulty comes our way, when a year like 2020 happens,

we all realize humbly once again, that we're not.

(14m 38s):

But the beautiful thing is that Jesus is More than enough. Everything compared to him, It's nothing. And so Paul continues on, he continues writing. We're going to pick it up a few verses back down, but you would think after that huge decoration of being like, I consider everything I've done a loss, even the good things, even the great things. Even the ways that God has used me in comparison to knowing Jesus. And so we might Be surprised when we pick it up a few verses later in verse 12, that he says, not that I've already obtained all this, or I've already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that.

(15m 21s):

For which Christ Jesus took. Hold of me. You see even Paul, this Pharisee among Pharisee, this missionary above all this quote, super Christian, right? Hasn't even obtained it. He's considered everything, a loss for the sake of knowing Jesus. And he said, I haven't arrived. I haven't. I made it. I'm not perfect. I'm not Jesus. I still have some work to do some areas in my life that needed to be transformed by God. Some sins that I need to repent of. Yeah. His writings to the churches.

(16m 3s):

Paul uses the imagery of a race of a runner running to symbolize what it's like to follow Jesus, to symbolize the Christian life. And you could see him a booking that imagery here. He says, I I'm not at the starting line. Like I've definitely started. I'm running. I'm going. But I still got a long way to go. I'm not even halfway. I'm not at the finish line. There's still ways that God is transforming me and molding me and making me new this morning. Maybe you're in two camps. If you are a follower of Jesus, maybe Certain moments, you feel like you've arrived.

(16m 45s):

Like you, you grasp it. Like you, You've kind of done everything. The Christian life is all about. You're kind of in a holding pattern and you're like, all right, I'm ready for heaven. God, whenever you want And friends, sadly, if, if Paul hadn't made it yet, you're I probably haven't either. So here are the words of Paul. Keep pressing on, keep working, keep growing, keep repenting, keep being molded and shaped by God, keep running the race. But you still got a while to go.

(17m 28s):

God is still calling you to bigger and greater and more transformative things. And maybe on the other side, maybe you feel like you've been running and you've tripped. Or you reached that point, that runners experience, maybe towards the middle of a race where they start to hit the wall, Your body to hurt And break down. And maybe this past year, maybe 2020 was that moment where you feel like God, I don't know if I could do it anymore. I don't know if I could keep running. I've lost my job. My family is sick. I can't interact with the people that I wanted to interact with. I'm stuck at home.

(18m 8s):

My family and work life are falling apart. And you just say, God, I can't do it anymore. In the words of Paul, say to us this morning, keep pressing, keep pressing on because it's in those moments of crisis in those moments of hurt and pain, that God is maybe speaking the most clearly to us, that we can hear the words of God it's in those moments of hurt and pain that were transformed. So it's not enough for us to rest on our own accomplishment. It's not enough to rest on the things we have or the abilities we have.

(18m 49s):

And it's Paul we'll continue on. He's going to talk about the biggest hurdle that we face. Many of us are familiar, at least with the tune of the song, old Lang XY. We hear it year after year at this time of the year, maybe if you're unfamiliar, I can kind of put it into your mind. After you see the ball drop there in times square and people are all celebrating. There's confetti going in a regular year that the streets are packed with people. People are kissing and celebrating and then the music starts to play, right? And it's that old familiar song that we hear over and over again, that's included in every new year's playlist. That is that celebration song at the end of it's a wonderful life.

(19m 33s):

And even though we know the song, right, we don't really know the song. We mumble through the words we kind of just hum along. We don't know the words, but I want to read them to you because I think it actually is an important reminder of what the song is about. So we want to pull up the lyrics. Is it should old acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind should old acquaintance be forgot and old Lang XY for old Lang XY. My dear for old Lang XY will take a cup of kindness yet for old Lang PSI. Now maybe I'm the only one, but before I looked into this and it started to research, I thought old anxi was a place, right? Like somewhere in the world, maybe that's the only one.

(20m 12s):

Sarah was like, no, it's not a place. What are you thinking about what it actually is? It comes from the Scott's language, which is the native language of Scotland. And it was a, it was a poem compiled by Robert Burns in the 18th century and the phrase old Lang's. I comes from the Scots for long since passed, which in their language basically meant for old time's sake that when we sing this song, when we mumble along to the lyrics that as we transitioned to this new year, this, as we move into the future, we don't want to forget about the past and we to celebrate that. We want to think about the good times we want to be nostalgic for old time's sake to take a cup of kindness yet to toast to the new year.

(20m 57s):

Yes. But also to the joys and celebrations of the past. And even then This year, it was kind of interesting to see how the various TV shows had that song play. Some of them showed imagery of the past year, these celebrations. Yes, but still within them, a lot of pain And hurt. And so maybe You right now, you're saying, I

don't want to remember old times. I want to forget 2020. I want to move past. Like it never even happened. But I bet In the midst of all the hurt and pain and frustration this year, you had some growth. I know I did.

(21m 38s):

I experienced some growth in my faith, in my ability as a father, Because when Everything breaks down, when the norm is out the window we change, we grow. So as we move into 2021, please, please don't forget the lessons of the last year. The reminders That it's not about everything that we can do The tendency towards busy-ness Our dependency on other things to entertain us and occupy our time. The reminder that family really is the most important thing Thing, and that Isn't about a building or a place it's about the body of Christ coming together, praising God and bringing about the kingdom.

(22m 31s):

We've learned a lot of good things this year As Paul is going to continue on. It is often our pasts that are the biggest hurdle that we have towards running the race of following Jesus. Yes. And is often our past that we feel like define us and disqualify us from what God is doing in our future. So that's why Paul continues on verse 13. He says brothers and sisters, once again, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But this one thing I do forgetting what is behind and straining forward towards what is ahead, Paul?

(23m 12s):

No, Just as well as you or I, that our paths often define what we think our future is the things that we've done, the things that we haven't done, the things that have been done to us, Maybe Even things from our childhood decades ago, still shape and impact our thinking, our actions and yes, even our relationship with you, God. But what Paul Paul Is saying that we need to call to forget it. Not in an absent minded way or way, but as a reminder, that if we are in Christ, we are new creations that the old ways are gone and the new is here.

(23m 58s):

And if you hear anything else this morning here, this is that your past does not disqualify you from what God is going to do in your future. That God is still working. That God is still transforming and renewing and reconciling and making all things new. And so maybe this morning, as you're sitting there reflecting, you need to say what in my past, do I need to forget? What do I need to start to move past? What do I need to get help for seek a counselor, go to therapy about what, who, who do I need to forgive?

(24m 40s):

Even when they don't even know what they've done to me, because it's only when we start to move past the things that hold us back, that we can live into who God is going to make us to be. And God wants us so desperately to say, God, I give it all to you transform it. I feel hindered by this. I can't make it over the hurdle. I've tripped. And I fall in, in this race. God says, I got it. Forget, What's behind set your eyes on what is ahead. So it's not about the things we've done. It's not about the things that we feel we can do.

(25m 20s):

It's not even about the things or even the failings that we made in our past. It's all about knowing Christ and becoming like him. And that's exactly where Paul wraps up this section. He says, I press on, I press on again towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me. Heavenward in Christ. Jesus Press on. I believe God is calling us each one of us to do the same, whether we're pretty far down the race, whether we're maybe in the, even in the final spread stretch, the final dash or perhaps this morning as you're listening, you're saying I'm not even on the race, not even in the starting block.

(26m 12s):

I don't even know Jesus yet. And if that's you this morning, maybe this is the year that you begin to know Jesus, that you accept that gift of salvation. You start running the race. But I think there's something that we often mess up that in Christianity. Our goal is not heaven. Now don't hear me wrong. Hold on for a second. But look, look at what Paul writes. If you wanna pull back up that verse, he says, I press onward towards the goal to win the prize. So that's different for which God has called me.

(26m 52s):

Heavenward so the prize is not heaven. The goal is not heaven. The goal is and is right now and will always be Jesus, Knowing him and more deeply growing in relationship being revealed about who God It is and becoming like him. Yes, <inaudible> might be the finish line, but it's not the end. The end is Jesus. And that has been the case all the way back in the garden. When Adam and Eve experienced perfect relationship with God unhindered by sin or shame, they knew God intimately.

(27m 39s):

And they were like him. And that's How it will be in the new heavens and the new earth and the new creation where God makes all things new. And we wants to get, have that full renewed relationship unhindered both with God and with each other, as we get to enjoy that for eternity, The goal is not heaven. It is Jesus. We think as, as we want to make this, our goal for 2021 in the years forward, We've run into those two problems again, right? That we started with our lack of willpower and our habits.

(28m 21s):

Even if we put out this big goal, this big resolution for the rest of our life to know Jesus and to become like him, Sad to say, we're going to fall short. We're not going to be enough. But the beautiful thing is that Jesus is enough. This is not this for the goal that I have for you or that you should have for yourself, but is the goal that God has for each and every one of us. And the goal that God has made a way in our life in sending Jesus as the baby, born in the manger, God in the flesh, still we celebrate it Christmas and the God, A perfect life.

(29m 6s):

The life that we couldn't live showed us how to live. Give us examples of how to love, how to speak, what to do, how to act justly and love mercy In Jesus. We see the fullest image of what it looks like to become like God, to live into our role as his image bearers. And yet we see, even though Jesus lived that perfect life, he still went to the cross and died. The death in our place, Experienced all of the pain, the grief, The hurt, the difficulty of our lives.

(29m 48s):

Millbrae youth is last Giving his life as a sacrifice for all who believe. And that God raises him up on the third day, conquering our sin and death saying, it's not up to you. I have done it. It is finished. See, Paul has already said that it's a bit hidden, but if we look back at verse 12, look at what he says, not that I have already obtained all this or arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of what of that, which Christ has taken hold Of me.

(30m 29s):

See Christ Jesus live the life that we couldn't and died in our place and was raised bringing victory, taking hold of our salvation so that we can take hold of him. That we can know him and become more like him. And that's why in Romans chapter eight, 29, he writes for God, knew his people in advance and he chose them to become like his son. And so that his son would be the first moral among many brothers and sisters.

(31m 12s):

Although Jesus did not live through 2020 and didn't live through 2021 as a human. He has shown us how to live, how to love, how to deal with hurt and pain and emotions and loss. And so I think if we actually make this our goal, if we said, God, I give you 20, 21 back to you, God, wherever you are taking me, I will follow God. I want to know you. And I want to become like you.

(31m 52s):

It's not simple. And it's certainly not easy, but it is the most important thing that we can and ever do is to know Christ and to become like him. The well accomplished biologist and evangelist, Henry drum, who did a drum and who did a bunch of other things. I love the way he puts it. He says this. He says to become like Christ is the only thing in the whole world worth caring about. The thing of, for every ambition is folly and every lower achievement in vain, everything else is a loss compared to knowing Jesus and so on your seats.

(32m 41s):

Or if you're watching online, if you get out that piece of paper, what I want you to do, whether you're a person who makes resolutions or not, I want you to make a faith resolution to declare this year. I want to know God and Christ more deeply. I want to grow in my relationship with him and become more like him. Maybe for you. That's actually diving into the words that he says in the Bible, learning more about him from the things that he has told us, the ways he's acted in history, the promises of what he's going to do in the future. Maybe it's actually committing to being a person of prayer, to being a communication with God, to

hearing the voice of the spirit inside of you, guiding and directing you.

(33m 30s):

Maybe it's committing to be a part of a community group. Not just because of the thing you should do, but because you long to be discipled and in relationship with other people who are following Jesus, small plugs, sign up, start next week. And maybe this year, maybe this is the year that you need to start. The race that you said. I kind of know Jesus. I know, I know things about him, but I'm ready to enter into relationship with him. I'm ready to accept that gift of salvation. I'm ready to take hold of it.

(34m 11s):

God, I want to know you and become like you. So maybe this morning you write on that card. I want to follow Jesus. But no matter what you write, don't let the card stay in this place or stay on your desk or wherever you have it, start to put it into practice. You don't have to do it alone. You don't have to rely on your willpower. Don't fall back into your habits. Allow the spirit to transform you to make you go more like Jesus. As you run the race. Heavenward towards perfect relationship with God.

(34m 51s):

If you want to pray with me, and then we're going to take communion together to celebrate the amazing gift of salvation that God has given us beginning on Christmas, culminating with Easter. And as we look forward to the second coming of Jesus, we gather at the table and say, God, I'm ready for whatever the future holds because I know you hold the future. Let's pray, God, I thank you for this morning. I thank you that you do hold all things in your hands. God that you see our hurt and our pain and our grief that you see the lingering effects of last year, God.

(35m 34s):

And as we look hopefully onto the that, you know that too, God, I pray over these resolutions that you're putting on people's hearts. They wouldn't stay in this place that they wouldn't stay on these pieces of paper. But God, when we would look back on year of 2021, we would see a year of transformation, a year of hope, a year of people knowing you more deeply and becoming more like you and God, I pray over anybody right now. Who's maybe thinking about taking that first step of faith that you've been drawing them for a long time, that they're at the edge of the starting line.

(36m 19s):

And if that's you this morning, if you join with me in this simple prayer, God, I want to know you more. I believe that Jesus was sent to the earth to live a perfect life. That I couldn't God, I know I mess up. I know I don't follow the ways that you call us to live and yet God, I'm ready to accept that gift of salvation. God, I want to start the race.

(36m 59s):

I want to know you more and become like Jesus. It's in his name. Amen. And if you prayed that prayer this morning for the first time, then you have started the race and I encourage you to press on to press on more deeply after a relationship with God to know him more and to be more like Jesus, we would want to celebrate with you, celebrate you and get you started because you plugged in. So if you go to a rise, deborah.com/follow fill out that little form, we'll reach out.

(37m 41s):

I think Matt is still giving out books and we just want to celebrate with you and join with you on the journey of the rest of your life. And let us all sing this song together and celebrate that we have a good, good father that we can know deeply and let us all become more and more like Jesus happy new year.