

# A Lion in the Marble

## By Gordon Macdonald

Speaker 1:

Torrey Memorial Bible Conference, January 1980. This message is by Reverend Gordon McDonald entitled A Lion in the Marble.

Gordon Macdonald:

I have a friend here who's a student, and I call him a friend because his family is a friend of mine and a friend of our congregation. And I'm speaking of young man by the name of Rick Bailey, who received word last night of the death of his mother. Rick's mother and father, and along with their family have been missionaries in Pakistan for a number of years. And if my memory serves me correctly, about 18 or 19 months ago, in a rather routine examination in Pakistan, Rick's mother, whose name is Kitty Bailey, found that there was some traces of cancer in her body and that caused the family to have to come home where they've been living in New Jersey.

Our congregation has supported prayerfully and financially the Bailey family over the years and over the months we have watched them face the fact that it appeared as if Mrs. Bailey would be going home to be with the Lord, and we didn't know when it was going to happen. It's been a slow process and a very painful process, I think, for the entire family and for people who love them. But last night that process ended, and death as Christians know it to be, is not a final curtain, but rather a corridor that takes people from this side of God's preparation for life into something which is far more beautiful and takes people into the fullness of his splendor.

Rick is in the gymnasium this morning, will be returning to his family in the next 24 hours, and I feel that it would be important for us to support him in just a moment and holding him up in the presence of God in prayer. So may I have the privilege of leading all of us in a moment of prayerful ministry for Rick and his father and his brother and his two sisters? Father, there are moments in many of our lives where we are taken to the very bottom of everything to discover where it is that we find support and strength and where we're able to sort out the real issues of life. And Father, it's a day like that for reckon for his family as they come after many, many months to that moment they knew was going to happen and face the death of their mother and wife.

I pray, Father, that Rick today will sense amongst all of us that special love which comes from Christians, that special affection which comes through us from your own heart. And I ask that you would give him strength and comfort as he makes plans and decisions to go back home to rejoin his family. Give him words to comfort his father and the rest of the immediate family. And may they Lord, during these hours experience all that we talk about as we talk about the Grace of God. We thank you for the witness of his mother, for her faithfulness over these years, in serving Jesus Christ, in making often great sacrifices to be the kind of woman that you wanted her to be. And Lord, we're delighted in that Christian perspective that today she's with you and understands things which this side of heaven we could never comprehend. We commend her to you and ask your blessing upon Rick and his family. In Jesus name, Amen.

Father Henry Newman, in one of his books, talks about a little boy who one day visited the studio of a sculptor. As they were together, he watched the sculptor chipping away with a

hammer and chisel on an enormous, crude, rather ugly block of marble. And the little boy watched the chips fly and the various chisels employed and the hammers swing. And then, because he had a short span of attention, he left and did not come back for many weeks. And when it came time and he returned to the sculptor's studio once again, he discovered that there was now, in the place of the large block of marble, a beautifully carved lion prepared to go someplace in a park.

There was silence for many minutes as the boy contemplated the magnificent curves and the details of that line. And then with curiosity, he turned and exclaimed to the sculptor, how did you know that there was a lion in the marble? There is something very special and very mysterious in the hearts of people who can take a block of wood or a large block of marble or a canvas and mix upon the surface of that canvas all sorts of paints and colors and come out with magnificent shapes and beautiful landscapes and still ice. There is something special about the person who can make sense out of something which for the rest of us is nonsense.

And there is something even more beautiful about a God who can take raw human material and make something out of it very useful, something which can reflect his splendor and his glory. The word of God is jammed with stories of people who were like lions in the marble, people of whom it could be said that no one else saw potential or usefulness in them. They were so nondescript, seemingly so useless, and often marked with such failure. And yet, when everyone else abandoned them on the scrap heap of humanity, God reached out and made them into something very special.

Deep in the Old Testament, there is a very dramatic story which has overtones and parallels to a contemporary situation. Without identifying it, let me give you some of the stories or the details that surround this particular incident. You will quickly know exactly what I'm talking about.

There came a morning in the history of a great nation when a King got out of bed exceedingly disturbed, irritated might be a better word. He'd had a series of dreams, and he could not decipher their meaning. In those days, dreams were very important to Kings. And when you had a dream and remembered it and when you couldn't figure out by yourself it's meaning you called in all the experts, all the so called wise people, and you asked them to put the details together and come out with a bottom line because dreams could launch armies.

Dreams could create new economic systems. Dreams could elevate others and put other people down. So what does the dream mean? The experts are called in and they listen to the data and no one can come to a conclusion. After the whole morning, perhaps the entire day has gone by. Someone says, there is one more man whom we've not consulted. Bring him in. And out of jail comes a young man in his early 30s by the name of Joseph. And Joseph listens to the dreams and immediately launches into an interpretation.

Don't turn me off because you know the interpretation. Rather think with me about the implications. Joseph, having heard the dream, says to the Pharaoh of Egypt. King, I have good news for you and I have bad news. First, for the good news. The good news is that you have seven good years coming for you and your Kingdom. Seven years in which everything is going to go right. The Dow Jones averages are going to climb through the ceiling. There's going to be

more food for people than they ever thought they could eat. Every year is going to be a year of perfect climatological conditions.

It's going to be a fabulous period of time. Now for the bad news. There's going to be seven bad years and everything's going to go wrong. There's going to be drought. There's going to be pestilence. Food is not going to be an abundance. There's going to be all sorts of crises, and your country is going to be in trouble. Now, King, the good news and the bad news needs to be treated. And what you really need is a program. You need to marshal together all of your resources, and in particular, you need a person who can help you bring this all into one large package so that you have conserved in your seven good years enough resource to get you through the seven bad ones.

Do you understand what I'm saying in that kind of situation about the contemporary world in which you and I live? Joseph is suggesting that what the King of Egypt needs is a leader who is so powerful, so charismatic, that he can cause an entire nation to discipline itself during its good and prosperous times so that it can survive the bad times. That's going on today, isn't it in our country? Our President gets on national television and tells us that we have a crisis of confidence that people, although they have abundant resources, need to stop using as much electricity and gasoline as we use.

Our government is asking us today to go against the normal stream of human nature which says use, exploit, misuse, waste. And the fact of the matter is that the evidence is in that very few people are listening. Where do you find leadership that gets people to control their human

nature? Where do you produce people who are so believable that the strength of their own word is enough for an entire nation to believe and to follow? Because that's what Joseph is asking the King and the people of Egypt to do.

It's a very difficult moment, and the search committee starts and all of the best people of the nation get together and they begin to look for the man that Joseph says must solve that problem in leadership. And they look and they look and they look and they fail until finally someone says, Joseph is your man. And the Pharaoh of Egypt looks upon Joseph and he says to him, you are the man on whom the spirit of the gods rests.

You have the power. You have the strength to lead our nation through this 14 year very stressful period. My question to you is this, how is a man at the age of 33 with that capability and with that ultimate success, how is he made? How do you carve such a lion in the marble? What did God do? How did he script a situation which in 33 years produced a man who could lead the most powerful nation in the world of his time into such a period like that, which is like unto our age?

I have three answers for you. I would like to look back on the life of Joseph for a few minutes with you and bring to the surface several themes which it seems to me, are like pieces of the chiseling out of which a lion of a human being is carved by the hand of God. And if you have pencil and paper, and if you're one of those, like most college students with high levels of intellectual caliber who take notes on everything, then you may want to write down three

phrases. The first of which is this. Joseph had a sense of destiny which rejection could not disturb.

I'll repeat that phrase for you as you get your steno pads open. Joseph had a sense of destiny which rejection could not disturb. In the book of Genesis, chapter 37, you have a description of Joseph's early years of an interesting relationship to his father and to his brothers and to the land in which they lived. Let me take a couple of quick sketches at that background situation. Joseph is number eleven in a family of twelve brothers. He lives in a land which really doesn't belong to his family. He is among people who ethnically are not his kind.

He lives in a place where they do not have roots or a home, but rather live in tents and are frequently on the move. Do you catch my drift? You don't produce great people out of such a context. You don't produce leaders who gain the respect and the attention of people out of such a circumstance. And yet, in the middle of all that being number eleven on the family totem pole, living in a strange land, doing nomadic types of things, out of that background, this young man has dreams. You know, the dreams. Dreams about various objects in creation bowing down to him, symbolizing his brothers and his father, his family respecting him. Has some kind of special leader.

That's very important. The psychologists tell us that dreams often reveal the deeper most thoughts of our subconscious, our innermost being. Don't let it pass by easily. That Joseph had dreams as a child, which I would suggest to you, are indicators that down deep within him he had a sense of being a very special person, stamped by the creative hand of God. Perhaps these

dreams, when they are revealed on the occasions in which Joseph speaks to them, he does it a bit unwisely. It might have been better on occasion if Joseph didn't say anything about those dreams. He irritated and polarized his brothers against him.

But the fact is that he did talk about those dreams. And the fact is that he did have those dreams. And the fact is that at a very early age, this young boy had a sense of destiny. He had a keen innermost conviction that God was preparing him for something and why he didn't have the slightest idea as to what that was. He fixated on the fact that God had a program for his life, a direction in which to move. Do you have a sense of destiny?

Do you spend much time brooding upon why it is that God has called you into being and motion? Do you spend much time pondering whether or not God has a program for you? My study of various great women and men down through history and the reading of their biographies impresses me with the fact that again and again and again, even in their earliest years, they were marked with a sense of destiny. Don't confuse the word destiny with becoming President of the nation, or the Supreme Court Justice or the President of a Corporation. All of those things might happen.

But destiny is wrapped up in one sense of the fact that God gives to each of us abilities and gifts, responsibilities, opportunities, and a word our culture doesn't always appreciate -- obligations. Why did God make you? Are you and I simply like pinballs and a pinball machine bouncing from post to post with lights going up all the time because we have impacted certain things, rather abandonly with no program or agenda at all, simply making our way from the top to the



bottom and then kicking out of life? Or did God call every one of us here this morning for a purpose?

Did God bring you into this generation for a reason? What is your destiny? You may not know it in its complete black and white description today, but it should be awesome to you and to me that we are on the way every day to a sense of destiny or let me go one step further. Every day is a destiny. When you and I rose out of bed this morning, was there a part of our thinking that asked the question, what is my destiny today? Why did God call me into being for this 24 hours period?

Are there people in life today whom I must impact in some way or not, some grandiose thing? I'm not talking about that all that may happen. But are there responsibilities and obligations for this day? Are there challenges? Are there calls today in the destiny of my life? Or does God have days which are written off as sheer accidents? Joseph had a driving sense of destiny, and when his brothers began to scoff at him and even his fathers showed a little bit of irritation with his sense of destiny and even when his brothers finally abandoned him to a pit out on the countryside, that destiny apparently never wavered.

In spite of all that the majority in his small world said about him, in spite of the ways that they put him down, the ways they ridiculed him, that driving sense of destiny still stayed there and pounded through into his being so that he never gave up in his earliest years. That's very important, and I should think that the man or the woman who chooses to live a life called

Christian would have high on the agenda of every day the question, what does God have to say today about my destiny?

Joseph had a sense of destiny that defied the circumstances around him, of rejection. A second theme which you now will want to write down. Joseph not only had a sense of destiny, but he had a sense of integrity which defied pressure. You see that in Genesis 39, when Joseph, now sold by his brothers as a slave, came to the country of Egypt and ended up in whatever process occurs in those days in the house of Potiphar, apparently a rather wealthy man and up in the establishment or the system of Egypt. As I read Genesis 39, there are interesting little phrases that you pick up like verse two.

The Lord was with Joseph and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his master. The Egyptian and his Masters saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands. Interesting phrases. There was apparently a quality about the way Joseph acted, the way he did things, the way he said things, the way he used his mouth, the way he related to people, the way he made decisions, which impressed people and very quickly caused his reputation to trickle upwards to the ultimate man in charge, Potiphar. And Potiphar saw it verse four. Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house, and put him in charge of all that he had.

From that time he made him Overseer in his house, and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptians' house for Joseph's sake. The blessing was upon all that he had. Did you pick up the repetition of a phrase three times? All that he had. It is reminiscent of something that I read for

some of us in The Elective the other morning in Genesis, chapter one, in which God gives Adam and Eve control over every living thing, every animal, every tree, every seedling, every bird, all that he had.

And that is often one of the ways God carves people. He sets them into a situation, and he blesses them abundantly, and he gives them control over a lot of things. But there is also the test. Joseph is in charge of all that Potiphar has, and it comes to a conclusion in verse six. So he left all that he had is that the fourth time in Joseph's charge, and having him, he had no concern for anything but the food he ate. Do you really pick up what the Bible writer is saying there?

That Joseph had such an incredible trustworthiness, has a quality of character that Potiphar was ready to surrender everything, all that he had into the hands of Joseph, knowing that in Joseph's administrative capacities everything would be kept secure and everything would prosper. Joseph had the right to hire and fire. He had check writing privileges. He was the controller of the corporation. He could invest the assets, and he could sell when he felt that the investment had reached its peak. All that he had. That's why the next verses are so important.

Now, Joseph was handsome and good-looking, and after a time his master's wife cast her eye upon Joseph and said, Lie with me. But he refused and said to his master's wife, Lo, have me. My master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor is he kept back anything from me except his wife. All that he had, with one exception. Here was the test to see whether Joseph had integrity.

Potiphar's wife enters, and her proposition is very very obvious. In the Old Testament there are three English phrases when the writer wants to indicate sexual relationship. The first one is translated to go into, which is almost always used in the act of a man and a woman for the purposes of impregnation.

The second phrase is the verb that we translate to know, and it's almost always used in the context of a beautiful marriage relationship in which there is a sense of a total relationship of health and strength and beauty. Adam knew his wife Eve. Abraham knew his wife Sarah. There is a third verb, and we translate it to lay with. And the Hebrew language there is incredibly descriptive. It's used, for example, when it says And David lay with Bathsheba.

It's always an indication in its very blunt and literal form that the relationship here is simply the proximity of two bodies together for the purposes of illicit pleasure. And it's interesting that when this text is written that the verb that the biblical writer chooses tells us something about the nature of the proposition. It is a proposition for fun. For instant pleasure, with no commitment. Lie with me.

There's a little hidden Stinger in this proposition which you perhaps have never seen before, because down the text verse ten, the indication is that this proposition did not come once, but came every day. Every day. There is no temptation which I cannot withstand once. I can probably withstand it twice. And because I'm a little bit older now in my Christian life and have a little bit more knowledge and wisdom that's come through the years, I may even be able to make it three, four, five, and six times.

But every day is another ballgame for anybody. And the indication, when you read between the letters and between the lines is something like this, that every day this woman walked into Joseph's office and put before him the same opportunity, it was like the rhythmic slapping of a hammer upon his spirit. Every day he had to face this temptation. Every day she would come toward him. Every day she would pound upon his soul with this same proposition.

And you can almost read the mind of Joseph as this proposition comes on a number of occasions. Every day you can read his mind. Perhaps he said, one day I'm a long way from home and mother would never know. On another day he might have said to himself, after all, it was her idea, it wasn't mine, and she gets the credit for the temptation and the responsibility for it. On another occasion he might have said on that proposition, came every day. I'm a young man, and young men have various biological, physical, and psychological needs, of which this is one why not? Every day.

When she came every day there was always the possibility of his reasoning process going this way. Potiphar has given me everything else in his house to control. Why should I stop here? I'm just as good as he is. Does anyone have any idea the kinds of twisted and warped rationale that surges through a person's spirit when you're going through temptation every day. Every day, pounding upon his spirit every day, thinking through these things. Every day, having to say no all over again, and think of what hangs in the balance as the temptation comes every day. You and I know that if he caved in on one of those everydays, that he probably would never have made it into the court of the King.

That he would never have been able to bring that solution that the King so desperately needed. That he would never have been able to provide a program that would have saved literally tens of thousands of lives. Interesting, isn't it, that sometimes great events hang on such little decisions? Every day all of that was hanging on Joseph's decision. Every day. And finally, the temptation comes one day to its ultimate conclusion. And Joseph, having worked through this temptation, says an ultimate and final no and runs from it into false accusation and slander and ultimately into jail.

If you forget everything I said this morning, then remember this one phrase or this one concept that all across this world, there have been potential lions being carved out of the marble of the fingers of God. And one day they made a small, seemingly immeasurable decision. And from that point forward, they were useless, and they could never achieve their destiny because there were cracks in their integrity. And when one is in their early 20s or late teens, it would seem as if a lifetime is before them in which decisions now don't seem to have much control over the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, don't kid yourself. The integrity that you are building in your innermost life when you are faced with pressures and temptation now have a lot to do with what you shall be in the future. I've been privileged to do some writing and some speaking on the subject of marriage and family, and I am very grateful for the opportunities God has given me on many occasions to speak across this country and literally in some other countries about that subject. But you know, one of the interesting things and I'll tell you this for free.

There has not been a few occasions when, out of a crowd in which I was speaking about the subject of integrity in marriage, a woman has not come and introduced herself and gone through that little ritual in which she has said, do you remember me? And I'll sometimes say yes and sometimes embarrassed way say no. And she will remind me that back 25 years ago we dated and my past suddenly catches up with my present. And I am reminded all over again in those moments when childhood sweethearts come out of the blue and say, do you remember me?

That if I had made mistakes in my integrity in those days, it would have done much to deny and defang anything God could use me to do as one of his people today. Integrity is an incredibly important element, and the world is filled with men and women who are very knowledgeable and brilliant, who are very charismatic in their speaking ability. The world is filled with people who can wow people and lead them into great movements. But many of those people have little integrity. And by that word, I mean wholeness, consistency, spiritual resilience, and to know how to say no in the pressurized moment.

If Joseph had said yes to that woman, it would have bruised his spirit. And I have no doubt it would have revealed to us that he would not have been trusted in the greater things that the Pharaoh handed to him. Don't you believe for one moment that there weren't great and immense attempts of people who had money to bribe Joseph when he was in power? Don't believe for one moment that there were men and women who came to him all of his adult life when he was working for the Pharaoh, attempting to seduce him financially, with power, with prestige, with sex, and everything else that gets to the spirit of people.

And what God is doing right here in this smaller situation is saying Joseph. If you have integrity to survive and perform in this moment, I will trust you down the line with bigger ones. And that's a principle we need to ingest into our spirits in days like today when the going is relatively easy. The third theme. Joseph not only had a destiny which defied the rejection of all those around him, and integrity which stood up to pressure, but Joseph thirdly, are you ready? Had a sense of excellence which defied mediocrity.

I have to reach just a little bit to get this one, but I'll take it. Joseph is in jail. And it's interesting. You have to remember that if in Egyptian law, Potiphar had believed his wife, he would have had a right to execute Joseph. And it seems to me reasonable that the fact that Joseph was in jail is an admission, a tacit admission that Potiphar knows his wife was lying. But to save family face, something has to be done, and Joseph ends up mercifully in prison. How would you act in your early 20s if slandered when you were doing your very best, you were put into jail?

Let me nominate a couple of possible responses. Bitterness might be one. One might be tempted in bitterness to check out. Have you ever been wronged by someone, especially when you didn't deserve it? Have you ever had someone totally misunderstand your acts or your motivations, totally misread your words? Have you ever had someone just reach out and slash at you when you really thought that you had performed at your very best? I've had that happen. Once in my earlier years when someone did that to me, I found myself at the first and only time in my life hating a person. And for some period of time I found myself late at night laying in bed thinking in my warped mentality of every way possible, I could humiliate that person because I had been wronged and I was bitter.



And bitterness is an awful thing to get into. And bitterness is something almost every one of us, sooner or later, faces on a great or small occasion. And Joseph had the option to become bitter and to want to wreak programs of vengeance against those in the system that had put him there.

Another possibility is just to just quit. When you've been wrong, you finally conclude, no one in this world really wants me, understands me, finds me valuable. So the heck with it. I throw in the towel, and I see that happening amongst men and women of the younger generation with considerable frequency. They just quit. They let their bodies go, or they inject into their body unnatural substances which begin to take them down and down into alcoholism and drug addiction and 100 other possibilities.

Among the things I count most awful to see as a pastor is the young person who, because of a rough situation, in a family, with a mother, with a father who didn't seem to understand them, with a friend, with a lover, with some other kind of situation, didn't make it. And so they quit. And if anyone had the right to quit, it was Joseph. He had been rejected by his father, by his brothers for all practical purposes. He was jerked hundreds of miles away from his homeland, and when he'd done a decent job in the house of Potiphar, he'd been misunderstood. And now he was in jail.

Why not quit? Genesis, chapter 39 says this verse 20. Joseph's master took him and put him in the prison, the place where the King's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. Watch the next verse. But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And if you have a sense of humor, it's permissible to

laugh at the irony of things. But verse 22 is one of those kinds of places, and the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's care. All the prisoners who were in prison, and whatever was done there, he was the doer of it.

And the keeper of the prison paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because the Lord was with him, and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper. If you don't laugh, it may make you want to cheer. Fascinating Joseph's performance in prison.

Let me tell you what I hear being said there. I hear the story of a young man who is saying, I don't care what the circumstances are, I don't care how people think, I will always achieve my destiny, I will always maintain my integrity, and therefore I will always do things excellently.

There's too much mediocrity among Christians today, and I think this is thoroughly consistent with Dr. Robinson's magnificent concept last night of doing things simply. Things can be done simply as he suggests, but they must also, when the time comes, be done excellently. And if God has given you a brain and a way to use it, use it excellently. If God has given you a talent and a gift, employ it excellently.

There's too much mediocrity in Christianity today and the world in which we live, the people who make things turn and who shape people's minds and give direction in terms of the making of policy are people who do things excellently. And if God is to use your generation and the few last years of my generation for his glory, he will essentially use it, especially among those people who perform excellently.

Are you in jail today? Oh, obviously not. The legal jail that has bars on it, because you wouldn't be here this morning if you were. But there are all sorts of jails for a lot of us that are invisible jails, the jails of pain, the jails of past, of excess baggage, of things which have kept up with us over the years, the jails of habit patterns, the jails of conflicts, the jails of newly understood limitations. How do you perform in your jails? Because every one of us has one or more of them at every phase of our lives.

And I think I heard Joseph saying to us in his performance, when you are in jail, you maintain the routine and you do it excellently. What you do on the hillside with your father and your brothers, what you do in Potiphar's house, you do in jail, and you find that thing that God has laid before you in the way of opportunity, and you do it well. And it was those conditions which sculpted a lion in the marble. And under those conditions, a nomadic life, a slave in an alien home and a jail, God made a man who became a lion in the marble.

And when he stood in the court of Pharaoh one day later on and mounted a program that resulted in the saving of thousands of lives in the marshaling of resources, he was the hero that God had been making for all of those years. It's a magnificent story, and it's going on today in the lives of many who wish to be sculpted in that way.

Someone once wrote, When God wants to drill a man and skill a man and thrill a man, when God wants to make a man, to play the nobler part that he yearns with all his heart to create so great and bold and brave a man that all the world shall be amazed, watch his wonders, watch his ways, how he ruthlessly perfects whom he royally elects, how he hammers him and hurts him and with

mighty blows converts him into trial, shapes of clay which only God understands, while his tortured heart is crying and he lifts beseeching hands, how he bends but never breaks, when his good God undertakes. How he uses whom he chooses and with every Grace infuses him to try his splendor out. God knows what he's about.

Ladies and gentlemen, God knows what he's about in your life today, even though these circumstances in which you are living might reduce you to tears, to pain, to confusion, to hurt. If you are a lion, let God carve you out of the marble and find your sense of destiny and develop your integrity and perform excellently. And the day will come when you shall say, I understand now what God was carving. He has made me into a lion. Thank God for the process.

Pray with me. You, O God, are the heavenly carver. And we confess, Lord, that there are many times when we wish you would stop. The pain is often greater than we wish to bear. And the world in which we live has told us to avoid pain. And sometimes, Father, the challenges which you've confronted us with are not the most attractive in the world. And the world in which we've lived has told us to seek only the beautiful.

And, Father, sometimes we confess that we are those who tend to just want to slip by and do the minimums. And the world has told us that it's good to get away with those things. And yet, Father, there's a part of us that's made by you. That's made a commitment to follow Christ. That says that we need to be shaped and sculpted and made into something like your son Christ. And so I pray this morning, Father, that you would touch the life of every man and woman in this

place. And that you would make us newly aware that today is a day for carving which cannot be avoided.

And I ask, O God that you would anoint those men and women this morning who are in great spiritual and perhaps even physical pain and who are being made into something. I pray for those in grief. I pray for those, Lord, who are tasting failure. And I pray, Lord, for those who are touching the red hot tip of temptation. And ask in every occasion that we might be victorious in the sculpting process. Father, across this crowd of beautiful people, create your lions for the glory of your son Christ. Amen.