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## JESUS THE PEACEABLE KING

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### Part 22 of The Gospel of John

Pastor Mark Driscoll | John 12:13-50 | May 06, 2001

Passover was in commemoration and remembrance of God's deliverance of his people from slavery and bondage and death in Egypt. We looked at that last year in the Book of Exodus. And if you'll recall that story, what happened was that God sent a succession of plagues upon the Egyptians, punishing them and bringing judgment upon them for the way that they treated God's people and ultimately the way they treated God.

And in so doing, the final and the most deadly and devastating plague of the nation of Egypt was the killing of each firstborn male child, that God put to death every firstborn male child that was not part of a covenant relationship with him. The way that was shown was that there were sacrifices made of lambs and that their blood was painted over the doorpost of the entryway to each of the homes. If your home had that over it, it demonstrated that you had faith in God and thereby, because of God's relationship with you, your child's life would be spared, but if you did not, the life of your firstborn son would be taken. And so the feast of Passover was a celebration of that event. It was a memorial that God literally passed over his children and spared them death and delivered them from slavery and bondage in Egypt.

And customarily, it was on Monday that the lambs were chosen for sacrifice. We find, in 1 Corinthians 5:7, the Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus was our Passover lamb sacrificed for our sin. And it's interesting to note that Jesus in all likelihood enters into Jerusalem – the story that we're studying tonight – on that Monday previous to the Passover. At this point he is being set aside and selected, as John has said that he would, as the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. All of this symbolism leading up to Passover is ultimately showing us that Jesus dies at just the right time, showing the fulfillment of the Passover feast. And so we're in the last week of Jesus' life, the days leading up to his false trials and ultimately to his murder.

Passover was an enormous celebration. The ancient historian Josephus tells us, for example, that it was customary to have upwards of a quarter million animals sacrificed at the Passover. If you can even imagine the magnitude of that kind of slaughter, it's unbelievable the amount of blood that was flowing out of the temple, all of that obviously foreshadowing and pointing to Christ.

two and three million people would crowd into Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. You're looking at a large national festival, a large national gathering of people. Any time that you have two to three million people traveling into a city for a celebration, that's an enormous, enormous event.

performed other than his own resurrection, and that was taking his friend Lazarus, who was very much dead, and calling him forward out of his grave and giving him life.

The result was that people were hostile and opposed to him. The religious leaders were angry because of his growing popularity and his prominence and his prestige, and so they sought very earnestly to kill him and to take his life. And so they have basically put a bounty on Jesus' head, and he is a wanted man. What you'll see is that he comes with tremendous courage, and he rides into Jerusalem in the face of tremendous opposition but in the midst of a few thousand eyewitnesses, knowing that this in all likelihood will be sort of the clinching moment leading up to his death.

And so that's where we pick up the story in John 12. We start in the 12th chapter of John's Gospel: "The next day the great crowd that had come for the feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem." What you see is in their day, like our own, the best way that news gets out is through good gossip, people talking about "I heard this, I saw this; I met Jesus; you have to come and check him out; you gotta see what he does; the guy's unbelievable."

And you and I live in this world unlike theirs that is inundated with advertising gimmicks. I don't know about you; I am so tired of junk e-mail and junk mail. I don't know who put me on the list. When I get to heaven, if they're there, we're gonna have words. It just angers me. You get so much junk. You can't watch TV without 50 million commercials. You can't listen to the radio without commercials. You can't log on to your e-mail account without commercials. You cannot open your mailbox without being inundated. And so what happens in our world, you just ignore it all and drown it out.

But if a friend comes along and tells you something, then you pay attention, because good news passed from friend to friend, word-of-mouth, is always, as it was in the day of Jesus, the best way that information goes forward. So if you get an e-mail that says, "I saw a man raise somebody from the dead," one of those goofy e-mail chains, you don't quit your job, jump in a car, and go to a foreign nation to see it. But if your friend says, "I was dead, and I stinketh, and now I'm alive. I mean, I still stinketh, but not like I did," you're likely to go check that out. You say, "Well, that's a credible source."

Same thing's happening at this point. Through the relational social networks, people are hearing about Jesus, and they're all packing and saying, "We gotta see him. We wanna hear him." And so they come to meet him. In verse 13, we're told they took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting "hosanna," which means "save now." And then they quote Psalm 118:25-26, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; blessed is the king of Israel." And at first glance, this sounds wonderful, but basically what they're doing is they're telling Jesus what to do. "Save us now." That's exactly what "hosanna" means: "Save us now."

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, and blessed be the king of Israel." That's the key. What they want is a king, and they want him right now, and they want him to declare war on Rome, and they want him to give them deliverance and freedom. That's what they want. What they want is a fight.

And so they come out bearing palm branches, which was customary for the receiving of a military victor or a king or a hero. In our day, if there was a great battle that had been won, we would have a parade. It's still customary – Memorial Day, Veterans Day – to have a parade and to celebrate those men that have brought peace. And we do that with banners. We do that with flags. We wave the American flag.

In this context, it's palm branches. Readily available. Everyone can grab one. Big crowd here. As Jesus is on his way, they all grab palm branches to celebrate his coming, but they tell him what to do: "Save us now. You be our king." And it's not unlike our present day where there are lots of people with lots of agendas, and they are happy to welcome Jesus, providing he does as he is told and he furthers their agenda – political, social, financial, sexual, moral. Whatever agenda it might be, they are anticipating Christ's coming, and then they're going to hand him their agenda and anticipate that he will do as he is told.

It sounds very optimistic. They're shouting. They're celebrating. They're welcoming in the same way that they had welcomed this great military hero, Judas Maccabeus, a couple hundred years prior. He had won this tremendous victory, and they take palm branches and celebrate.

It looks like that, but what you'll find is that people's hearts are very fickle. They turn very quick, because it's the same crowd in just a few days who will be shouting out again, but what will they be shouting? "Crucify him." They will not be shouting "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; blessed be the king of Israel." They'll be shouting, "Crucify him. We had an agenda. We told him what to do. He didn't do it. Put him to death." And that's how it is when we come to Christ with our agenda. We find that he has his own, and so then we have to decide, well, do we worship our agenda or his? If we worship our own agenda, then we end up hating him.

So Jesus, then, responding to this, found a young donkey and sat upon it as it is written. Goes back and quotes – this is a fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 written hundreds of years prior: "Do not be afraid, O daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."

Jesus, to fulfill the words promised in Zechariah, enters into Jerusalem, leading up to this holy feast, and he does so riding on a donkey, and it's very culturally important to understand what is going on. When a king or a warrior was riding into town to amass an army and declare war and go out and fight, he'd ride in on a horse. But when he was coming for the purpose of peace, when he was coming for the purpose of humility, he would come riding on a donkey, and so that's exactly what happens. He doesn't come in on a horse to amass an army and declare war on Rome and liberate the nation of Israel from this other ruler. Instead, he comes in humility, and he comes for the purpose of peace.

"At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified after his resurrection did they realize that these things had been written about him" – in Zechariah – "and that they had done these things to him." It says, you know, the disciples, in the midst of all this, didn't understand exactly what was happening, but in retrospect, as the Holy Spirit sort of instructed them and taught them, they looked back and they said, "Ah, that's how this all fits together. This was all leading up and promised in the Old Testament. We didn't see it at the time. We didn't know it."

And that's how it is with our life. I'll tell you this. I have come to the conclusion that I believe that God's will is something that we only know in hindsight. A lot of you are saying, "Well, I don't know what God's will is." Don't let that bother you. We don't know what God's will is. Anyone who tells you what God's will is is usually a freaky nut-job, okay? All we know is that God wants us to love him and, day by day, walk in the things that he has given us.

Ultimately, what is the next 50 years gonna look like? I have no idea. I plan to love Jesus, my wife, and my kids. Beyond that, anything goes. I don't know what God has for me. You and I don't know what tomorrow is going to hold. But we know God's will in retrospect. You walk with God for a few years. You look back; you say, "That's what he was doing. I had no idea what he was up to. In the middle of it, it was just faith. I was just loving him and taking each step as he provided it, and then as I looked back, I find out that God is wise and God is gracious and God is kind and God was putting a lot of things together that in the moment I did not see. I did not know."

~~That's exactly how it happens with the disciples~~ They see his life and they know the Scriptures very well, it isn't until in retrospect that the Holy Spirit informs them of exactly how it all fits together. So it shouldn't bother us as we're walking with God, living our life, if we don't know exactly what God is up to. If we love him and we're following him, then he will make it known by his spirit. He'll bring it all together and let us see it when we need to.

"And now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead; they continued to spread the word. And many people, because they heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him." So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him."

The good gossip goes out. Everybody hears "This guy raises dead people; he feeds people; he heals people. You gotta come check him out." Crowds come. Multitudes come. I don't know how many; maybe thousands of people come out to see the Lord Jesus. The religious leaders look upon it as a

problem: "He's getting popular. He's getting a crowd. He's gaining in prominence. This is a real problem. Next thing you know, we're gonna be unemployed." And so it becomes a dilemma: Do we worship Jesus and love him and follow him, or do we oppose him to preserve our self-interest?

And John goes on to tell us, "Now there were some Greeks among them who went up to worship at the feast." I'll say something interesting here. As a new Christian, when I first picked up the Bible – I actually read the New Testament before I was a Christian. I actually read this Bible. It was one that my wife gave me before we were married. The moral of the story is, if a beautiful woman gives you a Bible, marry her. That's the moral of the story.

She gave me the Bible, and I was reading it, and I remember starting in the New Testament, reading through, going Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Well, it's like, they keep saying the same dang thing. I don't know why they have to say this so many times. It's like a rerun.

And then as you study it over time, what you find is, is that each of the Gospels was written to a different group of people, and so the story of Jesus is being told in a particular way so that those people can best understand it. Same story: Jesus is God, born of a woman, lived a sinless life, died for our sins, rose from the dead, is the one true God, conquers our enemies of sin and death, is coming again to judge the world. Same story, but Jesus' ministry was filled with so much that they can only synthesize particular things, and so they each select sort of vignettes from his ministry and highlight those, depending upon what audience they were seeking to speak to.

And so Matthew is writing to a predominantly Jewish audience, and as such, they wanna know, well, does this correspond with all of the Old Testament and all of the promises of the prophets and all the things that God has promised us about the Messiah? And so Matthew begins his Gospel right at the beginning and traces Jesus' lineage back to whom? Abraham and David.

Mark comes along, writes his Gospel to a predominantly Roman audience. Romans don't really care about your national ancestry and heritage. They are a multiracial nation, much like our own. They don't care what your family history is. All they care is, did you get the job done? Did you do what you needed to do? So there is not a genealogy in Mark. Mark is a short Gospel. It's filled with active present-tense verbs: Jesus did this, Jesus did this, Jesus – it's about a lot of Jesus' actions and miracles and his work. And the point is, yeah, Jesus got the job done. He died for our sins, rose from the dead. It's all done.

Luke, on the other hand, is written to Gentiles, people that are not necessarily Jewish in background, and so they're not as interested with all of the pedigree of Jesus and his Jewish heritage. So Luke, the beloved physician, takes Jesus' genealogy, his family history, back to whom? Takes it back to Adam, showing that Jesus is a man. He is God, but he's perfect man.

And then John comes along, writes his Gospel, the final Gospel. He's writing it primarily to a Greek audience, which is steeped in philosophy, and he is making this very clear argument to the Greeks that Jesus is the one true God, and eternal life is to be found solely by faith in him, and that's the theme of John's Gospel.

And so the first three Gospels have a lot in common. The fourth Gospel has a lot of unique material in it. Ninety percent of John is unique and particular to John. As you read the three Gospels, you'll see a lot of parallels. In the fourth Gospel you'll find that most of John is information that the other three do not include, because he's writing to this Greek audience. And I believe also, because he's writing last, he's sort of adding a little fuller scope in addition to the other accounts so we have a broader portrait of Jesus.

All of that to say that when you tell the story of Christ, it is important to know whom you are speaking to so that you can tell it in such a way that they understand. To the Jews, here's Matthew; to the Romans, here's Mark; to the Gentiles, here's Luke; to the Greeks, here's John.

The one thing, though – one of the things that they include in all four Gospels is this account that we're reading tonight, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Important enough that it's in all four Gospels. But the one thing that John includes that the others do not is this appearance of the Greeks. He's writing to Greeks, and he wants the Greeks to know that there were Greeks that did love Jesus and were curious about him and did come to learn about him and meet him.

And it's an encouraging word to us, because in that day, to be at the Passover, you were supposed to be Jewish. Some people would convert to Judaism if they believed that Judaism was the correct way and did worship the one true God, but you had to be pretty committed if you wanted to become a Jew. If you were a Greek, for example, you'd have to, if you were a male, circumcise yourself, which if we made that a requirement for church membership, there'd be like two members. Nobody would be – like, "Really? Circumcise myself? Well, I don't know if I'm that committed." In addition, you'd have to take on all the customs and the feasts and the dietary laws and the festivals. There was a lot with it to commit yourself to the Jewish faith, to worship that God. What we see is that this great festival – word has gotten out beyond the Jews, all the way out to the Greeks and some other people that are scattered, and they hear that Jesus is coming, and they wanna meet him, and they wanna listen to him, and they wanna see him. It's great to see that God loves all nations of the earth and that as the good news of Jesus Christ goes out, people are attracted to him that you wouldn't anticipate would be attracted to him, and that's exactly what John tells us.

Now, there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the feast. "And they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. 'Sir,' they said, 'we would like to see Jesus.'" Don't you just love that? Just a couple Greek guys. "We heard Jesus is here, and we would like to see him." It's like walking into a Billy Graham crusade and a few guys knocking on the door. "We'd like to see Jesus."

And Philip and Andrew, apparently the first deacons at a church, and they have to call a committee meeting to figure out the appointment. Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. I don't know why one guy can't go tell Jesus, but apparently it takes a committee. From that point forward, you know how church works through the rest of human history: "You wanna get something done, that's fine. The 57 of us, we'll get together and convene, take a vote. We'll see how it goes."

Jesus then replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth" – Jesus says this statement over and over and over – "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."

Jesus here is predicting his death, saying, "This is how it's gonna work. We're gonna bless lots of people by me dying." And the issue is, that's paradoxical. No, the best thing would be for you to continue your ministry. It's just finally working. You started out with a few guys. Now you've got a multitude. Everybody's on board. The momentum is in our favor. The ministry is growing. Things are swelling. Everything is turning. Why die now? And if you really wanna change the world, live for a long time. Travel. Preach. Heal. Feed. Raise some more people from the dead. That always gets a good crowd. Jesus says, "No, this is how it's going to work. I will die, and that's how we'll get this done. The hour has come for me to be glorified. How will I be glorified? By dying."

Jesus goes on then to make a number of paradoxical statements for us who are called to follow him: "The man who loves his life will lose it." What kind of craziness is that? You know, the problem is you love your life too much, is what Jesus is saying. You haven't given it up. If you hold on to it too tightly, you'll kill it. Let go.

Listen to these other statements: "While the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." You know, the key to really getting by is hating your life, and then you'll get an eternal life, and whoever serves me must follow me. "I wanna be great. I wanna have a reputation. I wanna have fame. I wanna make a difference." Good. Humble yourself and serve.

"And where I am, my servant will also be. And my father will honor the one who serves me." What Jesus has just done – he does this all the time. Jesus completely inverts exactly what we would understand to be common sense and the way the world works. In our world, you have heard me bang on a guy more than one occasion. He is one of my favorite people to bang on. It's a psychologist named Maslow. Any of you study psychology in college or high school and study Maslow?

I hate Maslow. I hate Maslow for this reason: Maslow has so overcome Western thinking, particularly American thinking, that we can no longer see the difference between Jesus and Maslow. And Maslow's got this concept of this hierarchy of needs, and I just want you guys to consider how insane this is. Maslow says that you have base needs like food and shelter and that you work all the way up, and the highest, greatest need is that you what? Actualize your potential.

That you become great, that you take all of your ability and all of your skill and you maximize all of your potential, and you become someone victorious and glorious. You become someone smart and wealthy and healthy and capable and competent and strong and secure and independent. It's self-worship. It's idolatry. The whole goal of your life is to be someone, get your own glory, set up your own fame, and chase your own reputation, and our whole world is based on that.

And some Christian theology just goes right along with it and says, "Yeah, love Jesus; he'll make you rich. Love Jesus; he'll make you happy. Love Jesus; he'll give you a better sex life. Love Jesus; he'll make you brilliant. He'll make you powerful. He'll make you victorious. He'll make you a king." Yeah, just like he was, hanging on a cross. That theology looks nothing like Jesus, and it looks nothing like Jesus taught. Jesus says, "Lose your life. Hate your life. Serve. Die."

Well, what? What then? He says, "And then the Father will bestow upon you glory." See, all the glory belongs to the Father, and as we love and serve the Father, what the Father does is he doesn't leave us without dignity, but he gives us his dignity as a gift. It's grace. That's exactly what happened to Jesus. Jesus did not strive for his fame, did not strive for his reputation. All he sought to do was love the Father and obey him.

Jesus is troubled. He says as much. He knows he's going to die. He knows he'll be that seed that is thrown in the ground and dies and bears much fruit. "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No. It was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name."

The Lord Jesus comes to this place where he says, "You know, I have thousands of people. I'm finally winning the war. Everyone wants me to lead them. I could be the king. I could be rich. I could be famous. I could have convenience and security and power. I could climb Maslow's needs, and I could be somebody. But the Father has sent me to die, to die as a young man at the peak of my potential. So what do I do?"

Jesus says, "Here's why I'm sent, and here's why I've been brought to this hour. Father, glorify your name." And you have to love Jesus' summation of his whole work and ministry. It's that the Father would get his glory. That's all Jesus cared about. Not that his reputation or his name or his agenda or his fame was an issue; it was the Father. It was all about the Father, that people would love the Father, that people would respect the Father, that people would submit to the Father, that people would honor the reputation of the Father. Believe, obey, trust, love, adore, serve, care for, and exalt the father. That's what it was about for Jesus.

~~Jesus is not self-actualized, and Jesus is not self-esteeming.~~ Jesus is not self-actualized, and Jesus is not self-esteeming. Jesus is going to die a brutal, humiliating, painful, and excruciating death.

The question then becomes: Well, poor Jesus, what's in it for him? Poor Jesus, that's just not fair. And I love this next section. "Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'" God the Father speaks. He spoke at Jesus' baptism. He spoke at the Mount of Transfiguration. Now he speaks again, and he says, "Glory will be given from the Father to the Son."

And I love the fact that Jesus ignores all of the praise of men, and he just does that which is right, and he waits for the voice of his Father. For some of us, we will need to be patient and wait our entire life. We will need to wait until we walk into the kingdom of God and we hear the Father say, "Well

done, good and faithful servant.” We may have to wait our whole lives, but we’re supposed to wait to hear his commendation.

It’s amazing, though. Even when God the Father speaks, some people don’t understand, or they make some sort of conjecture. “The crowd that was there and heard it said it thundered. Others thought it was an angel that had spoken to him. Jesus said, ‘This voice was for your benefit, not for mine.’” He says, “You know, God the Father just spoke not because I was insecure and faltering. I know exactly where I’m at with the Father. I know the Father loves me. I love the Father back. We’re fine. The Father spoke so that those of you whom are present would know it’s about him and it’s about me.”

“Now is the time for judgment on this world, and now the prince of this world will be driven out.” Jesus talks about what his death will accomplish: judgment on the world. I would say in the world you see lies and sin and death. You also see the prince of this world, he says, Satan. So Jesus’ death will overcome those things: Satan, sin, death, the lies, and the condition of this present world.

And he tells us how he will accomplish this: “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” And John then comments, “He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.” How is all this going to happen? How is the Father gonna get his glory? How is the Son going to come to the place of accomplishing exactly what he was sent for? How will Satan be defeated? How will the world be conquered? How will sin be overcome? How will death be judged?

Well, that will be when Jesus is lifted up and highly exalted, at his crucifixion. That is the quintessential focus point of all of Scripture, of all of Christian history, of all of Jesus’ life and ministry. That’s exactly what the Apostle Paul says: “I seek to know nothing but Christ and him crucified.” That’s all Paul cared about.

Everything goes through the cross. The cross is the issue. That is where God demonstrates his love. That is where God overcomes our sin. That is where God conquers our enemies of sin and death and Satan. That is where Jesus glorifies the Father and shows us exactly why he has come. It is all about the cross of Christ, and as Christ is lifted up, he will draw others to him. It’s about Christ.

It’s very interesting. In the history of this church, I have very rarely received criticism for my preaching. Usually people just leave; they don’t criticize. But lately I’ve had some people say – it’s very interesting to me. They say – some in criticism, some not. But I had a few people say recently, “You know, we really like Mars Hill, but every week you talk a lot about Jesus, but you don’t really say that much about us. And we don’t mind hearing about Jesus, but you don’t really talk much about us.” I said, “Well, you think that’s an insult. That’s a compliment.”

This whole world is filled with conversation, suggestions, and philosophies about you and me: how we can be better people, how we can actualize our potential, 10 steps to get rich, 15 steps to be happy, how to be successful, how to conquer our Goliaths, and how to be really significant. There is very little conversation about Jesus dying on the cross and what that accomplished and why he did that. Not a lot is said about that. It’s very sad.

~~But in this is revealed Christ and this is the life that he has for us~~ seen to that. We are here

as witnesses to that. A few thousand years later, many miles removed, we have been drawn tonight to the cross of Christ, because that is the place where God has fully revealed himself to us. He has exposed our sin, our darkness, our death, and our enemy, and he has come to forgive us and give us life, as his gift of love. It’s all about Christ.

I had another conversation recently with a young man. He came to me and he said, “I’ve been going to another church, a wacky church. There are good churches, but this was not one of them.” And he said, “You know, I’ve been going there for a long time, and I never heard about Jesus. All I heard about was all the things I’m supposed to do to make God happy.”

And he said, “I always felt like I was never good enough, I was never smart enough, I never gave enough, I never worked hard enough, I never did enough.” I said, “That’s because you didn’t. God demands perfection.” He’s like, “Well, I’ll never get there.” I said, “Well, at least you’re honest. That’s good.”

He said, “But you talk a lot about Jesus.” And he said, “You know, that seems to be the answer to all that: that Jesus did that, that Jesus was good enough and Jesus worked hard enough and Jesus was perfect and Jesus never sinned and Jesus obeyed the Father.” He says, “Jesus did what I never could.” I said, “That’s right. That’s why you need Jesus: that Jesus would love you and trade your death for his life.” This great paradox. Your sin for his perfection. Your falling short for his living up. That’s what you need is Christ.

And if there’s anything that we all should strive to be known for is this: This is the place where God the Father gets his glory and Jesus gets exalted and people are drawn to him. It’s always been that way.

You see this continually throughout the Book of Acts. As the early church worked, the majority of the time that the story of Christ is preached, the good news of the Gospel, it’s because people are asking for it. People’s lives are changed. Marriages are mended. Sick people are healed. People that are in tremendous sin change. Their lives just change.

And other people sort of gather round because, like in Jesus’ day, the good news of this power goes out, and people are like, “What is going on? Who healed you? Who changed you? How did your life change course of direction? What in the world happened?” And the answer is always, “Well, let me tell you about Jesus and his death for my sin, his conquering of my enemies of sin and death and lies and Satan, and him giving me freedom to be a child of God and live in love and light and glorious faith. Let me tell you what Jesus has done.”

It’s the same thing that Peter tell us. He says we should always be ready to give a reason for the hope that lies within us, with gentleness and respect, to everyone who asks. The issue is, if Christ is lifted up, people are drawn to him, and they wanna know, “Well, explain that. Explain Christ. Explain the

crucifixion. Tell me about Jesus.” “Okay, let me answer your questions.” Because his work has drawn you. Jesus brings it all back to that issue of Christ and his crucifixion. Jesus knows how this works.

“And the crowd spoke up, ‘We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is the Son of Man?’” They’re quoting from Daniel 7. One of the titles for the Messiah, the King that would come, conquer all of the enemies of God and usher in a kingdom of peace – one of the great titles was the Son of Man.

They say, “Well, we have a dilemma here because we read in Old Testament that you would set up an everlasting and eternal kingdom that has no end. So if you were the Messiah, King come, how in the world could you set up an internal kingdom if you’re going to die? Your death seems to conflict with everything else that the Scriptures teach.”

And they have a question about Jesus. They wanna have a theological discussion with him, and I will tell you this. It should be a word of caution and warning. How many of you love to study the doctrine of eschatology or the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ when he’s coming back? It’s fun, okay? It’s fun. I enjoy it. It’s in the Bible. It should be studied.

But I will tell you, be cautious. I will tell you, as a general rule, just for all of your life, do not be dogmatic about things that have not happened. Just as a general rule. It’s not good to be dogmatic about things that are yet to occur, you know what I’m saying? The problem in Jesus’ day, they had a codified system laid out – a few different systems – and they thought that it would work X, Y, and Z, and when Jesus comes, it didn’t work exactly like they were anticipating. Part of it was they’d confused his first and second coming. Jesus could’ve explained, “Well, I’m gonna rise from the dead, and I’ll set up my eternal kingdom, and all the Scriptures will be fulfilled, every jot and tittle, just like I promised.”

But on the Second Coming of Christ, I would tell you this: that the Scriptures do speak about that, it is to be studied, and we should come to convictions. But there are some things that should be held with a closed hand, and there are some things that should be held with an open hand. In the closed hand should go “Jesus is God. The Bible is the Word of God. Jesus is coming back, and we’ll all be happy.” In the open hand should go rock music, the King James Bible, and exactly the day and the hour that he is coming. If anyone pulls out a chart and says, “Here is how it’s gonna work,” and they put it in the closed hand, you say, “No, that’s fine. We’ll just put it in the other hand.” You understand what I’m saying?

The problem with liberal Christianity, it puts everything in the open hand: “Well, you know, maybe Jesus’ll come back in 100 years, maybe in 1,000 years. Maybe he rose from the dead; maybe he didn’t. Maybe that’s the Bible; maybe that’s just a good doorstop. I don’t know. It’s all up for grabs.”

The problem with the closed hand is legion, right? You know that there are a lot of problems with putting everything in the closed hand. “Jesus rose from the dead. Rock music is of the devil. Democrats are going to hell.” You put everything in the closed hand, and you do a lot of damage. What I’m telling you is, the details of Jesus’ Second Coming is in the open hand, and when he comes, you know what we’ll do? We’ll put it in the closed hand, okay? When it’s all done and we look back and we go, “Oh, that’s what he was talking about,” we’ll put it in this hand after he comes. Until then, feel free to hold it, but hold it here. Hold it loosely. You may be wrong. All the Bible scholars with the First Coming, they were all wrong. I’m sure they meant well. I know they weren’t as intelligent as we are, but they meant well.

So they wanna argue with Jesus: “Well, here’s our theological issues.” You know what I love about Jesus? He basically says, “It’s none of your business.” I love that about Jesus. You can ask your questions, but you may not get your answers. If you’ve been a Christian for any length of time, you know that, and you know that the longer you walk with God, the more questions you have.

~~Which was the same as the question, which is the question, and what~~  
does that lead to? Ten more questions, and that leads into ten more questions, and next thing you know, there are a million things that you’re trying to put together. That is not bad; that is good. I am not discouraging study. I would highly encourage it. Ignorant Christianity is of no value.

But there are some things that we do not have answers to. My three-pound fallen brain may not be able to connect all the dots on this side of glory. And I love Jesus’ answer to these guys who wanna talk about “Okay, the kingdom, and you’re not supposed to die. It’s an eternal kingdom. The Son of Man. How does this all work?” Here’s Jesus’ answer in verse 35. ‘Jesus told them, ‘You’re going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.’ And when he finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.”

Jesus basically says, “Here’s how it goes: When it’s daytime, you see where you’re going; you walk around. When it’s nighttime, you’re blinded. You’re lost. You don’t know what you’re doing. As long as I’m here, it’s light. I’m the light of the world. As long as you’re alive, there’s light. So I’ll tell you what, trust me; follow me.” That’s Jesus’ answer.

~~What about the kingdom of God?~~  
What about this stuff in Daniel? What about, what about?” Jesus says, “Trust me. Follow me. I’m here. You’re here. Pretty soon I’m gonna die. Pretty soon you’re gonna die. So as long as you’re here and I’m here, how about this: You trust me; you follow me. I know where I’m going. I know what I’m doing. I know how it all ends. Follow me. That’s what you need to worry about.”

And I will tell you this. For your studies – I know some of you are like me; you like to study. That’s fine. Make sure your studies go to this, though: Do I trust Jesus? Do I love him? Do I follow him? That’s the whole point. It’s all about Christ and coming in line behind him, because he knows where he’s going.

And it says, “And then he left, and he hid.” And for some of you who are very much into theology, that is the only way that you can be dealt with. We have to hide from you, because if you can find us, you will. You’ll say, “What about this? What about this?” No, Jesus hides. Jesus locks the door and turns out the light, and all the young-buck Calvinists come and (Simulates knocking on door). Jesus says, “No. Just leave me alone. That’s enough.

Follow me. Trust me. Go love your wife. Make a ham sandwich. Go do something, but enough for today.”

So Jesus finishes speaking, and he hides. That’s it. The answer is what? Follow Jesus. Trust him; love him; follow him. This concludes Jesus’ public ministry. From this point on, he retreats into private ministry, dealing with his disciples and a few people. John’s Gospel can be divided really into two points: his public ministry and then the transition. At this point we’re leading right up to his death.

~~What John does had the Bible, but he lost to signs in their presence,~~ and ministry.

they still would not believe him.” Some have said, “Well, if I saw Jesus raise somebody up from the dead, if I saw him walk on water, if I saw him feed 25,000 people with a little boy’s lunch, I would be a Christian. I would love Jesus.” No, you wouldn’t. No, you wouldn’t.

John is clear. Jesus has performed all of these miraculous signs. He’s shown his authority. He’s shown his power. He’s shown that he is God. Yet some people do not believe. They do not worship him. They do not love him. They do not follow him. They abide and continue in their darkness.

And John tells us why: “This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet” – he quotes from Isaiah 53:1 – “‘Lord, who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’” The question is, well, to whom has God spoken, and whom has believed the message that God has sent? “For this reason they could not believe because, as Isaiah says elsewhere” – and he quotes from Isaiah 6:9-10 – “‘He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts so they could neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn, and I would heal them.’”

Any of you go to SPU? Any SPUsers? Got a lot of SPUsers at this church. It’s good to have you. I’ve had a lot of SPU students ask me this question, so I’ll just give you an answer. There is a big debate. This is a rabbit trail, but that’s okay. It’s free. The rabbit trail is this: Who wrote Isaiah? I know that sounds like a crazy question. It’s like, who’s in Grant’s Tomb? I mean, it’s just one of those stupid questions. Who wrote Isaiah? Some will say, well, there were two authors. Others will say there were three authors of Isaiah. Deutero-Isaiah, two authors; Trito-Isaiah, three authors. Why we don’t have 27, I don’t know. Apparently three was all they could conjure up.

Some say, well, all the miracles and all the projections and this issue of being born of a virgin, that couldn’t have been predicted, and so that must be later insertion by later authors, so Isaiah is a compendium of works. And they divide Isaiah into two sections: early and late Isaiah.

John has just quoted from Isaiah 6, early Isaiah, and Isaiah 53, late Isaiah, and who does he say wrote that? Isaiah. You know what that means? Who wrote Isaiah? Isaiah. I don’t care what German higher critical people, educated beyond their intelligence, say; Isaiah wrote Isaiah. How do we know that? John says so. John is a very good Bible teacher. In fact, he’s contributed a few books. I would go with John. I would encourage you to go with John. Isaiah wrote Isaiah.

I use this section a lot when people wanna argue with me about Isaiah. I just go, “Look, I’ll tell you something else. Eight times Jesus quotes from Isaiah, half from the first half, half from the second half. Every time he says, ‘Isaiah says.’ You know what? You know who’s even a better Bible teacher than John? Jesus. Jesus is a very good Bible teacher. Very good. He may – I don’t wanna overstate my case. He may be the best ever. Go with Jesus. Go with John. Isaiah wrote Isaiah.”

What he’s stressing here is that certain people will never believe in Jesus. It doesn’t matter what they hear. It doesn’t matter what they see. One of the dumbest things I’ve ever read, and I’ve read a lot of dumb things, was a book written for pastors that says, “Everyone can become a Christian if you share the Gospel with them the right way.” Do you believe that? I don’t. Because were there people that Jesus spoke to that didn’t believe? Yes. Judas Iscariot.

John says, “Here, there’s a huge crowd of people that heard Jesus preach, saw him do miracles, and they didn’t love him.” Why? Well, apparently Jesus wasn’t a good evangelist. Apparently Jesus didn’t read the book and know how to close the deal. Somebody should’ve trained him on how to do this. Poor Jesus. He coulda been so much more successful had he just known how to convince people better.

Like what in the – what kind of nonsense is that? He tells us here: People are blind. People are deaf. People have hard hearts, which means you can tell them awesome things about God, and they’ll go, “I don’t know. Sounds like the teacher from Peanuts. I don’t know what you’re talking about.” You could paint a glorious portrait about Jesus, and they’ll go, “I don’t see a thing.” You could say, “Jesus died for sin. Jesus loves his children. Jesus is God,” and they say, “I don’t feel a thing for him. My heart is hard. My ears are deaf. My eyes are blind. My heart is hard.” Don’t let it surprise you if you love God and encourage others to love him and they don’t love him. Some people never will.

The reason I tell you that is because I was told that as a new Christian, and it made me scared. You think about it. If everyone could become a Christian if you do it right, and you love someone and you tell them about Jesus and they don’t become a Christian, whose fault is it? It’s your fault. You didn’t do it right. Like there’s a magic trick. Like you give them the red pill or the blue pill and then all of a sudden they’re in. It’s like, what in the world?

Isaiah says it well: “Some people do not get it, and they never will.” If Jesus did not convert everyone he spoke to, you and I will not convert everyone that we speak to. Should that cause us to stop speaking? Not at all. That’s exactly what happened to poor Isaiah.

Isaiah is a teenager, I believe, when he starts his ministry. He prophesied for about 40 years. He has got a long reign, through a large number of kings. He’s working 500 years before Jesus, and that’s one of the problems with the prophets in the Old Testament is that they are sent to do the impossible.

Jeremiah is told, “Okay, you can’t get married. You can’t go to parties. You can’t have any fun. You’re gonna be a prophet. Everybody’s gonna hate you.” Awesome, that’s great. And Jeremiah’s whole beef is “But I’m just a teenager. I’m a kid. I’m just a punk. My voice is cracking when I say, ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ You know, nobody is gonna listen to me. I got half a mustache. I don’t have a driver’s license. When I show up and start making demands on behalf of the sovereign God of the universe, they’re gonna laugh at me.” And God’s like, “Yes, they will. They will laugh at you. And

some will want to kill you.” “Oh, great. Great job.”

Isaiah has the same thing. Isaiah’s a young kid. Isaiah says, “What do you want me to do, Lord?” “You’re gonna preach.” “To who?” “Everybody.” “Who’s gonna believe?” “Nobody.” “How long do you want me to preach for?” “Forever.” “Well, that just defies Maslow. I’m not gonna be very successful if nobody ever believes.” “That’s right. But you will give glory to the Father because you’ve done what he sent you to do, and that is to preach.” So poor Isaiah’s life is about preaching to blind, deaf, hardhearted people and saying over and over and over the truth of God, knowing that the vast majority of them think he is a nut-job.

And then he tells us something, though, as well. God did give a glorious gift to Isaiah. John speaks of Isaiah 6 in verse 41: “Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.” Remember Isaiah’s life, Isaiah as a kid? All of a sudden, in Isaiah 6, he sees God. He sees the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted. He says that the whole temple shook, that it was filled with smoke, and that angels were worshipping God, crying out one to another. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.”

The most commonly referred-to attribute of God in the whole Bible is holiness. He sees God. Isaiah says, “I’m undone. I’m a man of unclean lips. I come from a people of unclean lips. I have seen the Lord.” And John says, who did he see? Isaiah saw Jesus and spoke about his glory.

Five hundred years before his birth, Jesus was God, eternal God, always existed, always alive. He just came in flesh at a moment in time, but he existed as alpha and omega, beginning and end, before there was and after there will cease to be, and Isaiah got to see Jesus seated on his throne, exalted as God.

See, that’s the beauty of it. Jesus was sent for a hard task, but he knew that the Father was pleased. Isaiah was sent for a hard task, but he got to see Christ as God seated on a throne. The Father gets his glory. The Son is highly exalted. The rest of us just do as we’re instructed.

“Yet” – this almost sounds good; you almost get hopeful here – “at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him.” Some people believed. Not everybody was blind. Not everybody had a hard heart. Not everybody was deaf to the truth of God. Some people heard Jesus preach. They saw his miracles, and they loved him and they worshipped him and they followed him.

“But” – you know Humpty Dumpty’s gonna come off the wall when you hear that – “But because of the Pharisees” – their religious leaders – “they would not confess their faith for fear they would put out of the synagogue” – and John indicts them – “for they love the praise of men more than the praise of God.” These men are cowards, and they are hypocrites, and they are selfish, and they’re just like the rest of us, so before we point a finger, we have gotta take inventory.

They wanted Jesus to love them and forgive their sin. What they did not want was inconvenience. “Well, if we tell people about Jesus, our family is gonna think we’re religious freaks, and our friends are gonna think we’ve lost our mind, and our co-workers are gonna think that we’re religious zealots, and it could cost us our job. It could cost us our reputation. It could cost us our social network. I don’t know. That seems like a lot to ask. I mean, you know, God wouldn’t want us to be inconvenienced.” Jesus is going to die for their sin, and what they want to have is this quiet Christianity, this pathetic, amputated, quiet Christianity.

How many churches are gonna close today in this country? Do you know? Nine or ten. We close over 3,000 churches a year in this country. They, like Lazarus, go in their grave, but they do not get up.

Church attendance over the last hundred years, as a percentage of population, has decreased by how much? Twenty percent. Average church is how big? Seventy to 80 people. Why? Well, there may be a lot of reasons. A lot of deaf, blind, hardhearted people potentially, but a lot of quiet, silent, passive Christians who refuse to be inconvenienced. I think that’s a real problem. People who say, “Well, I would love Jesus to bless my agenda. I would love Jesus to forgive my sin. I would love Jesus to go to the cross for me, provided it does not in any way inconvenience the comfort and the security of the life that I have built for myself.”

And we’ve even developed a theology that has no biblical foundation, to defend this. We call this the personal relationship with Jesus. Will not find that language in your Bible. We’ve invented it, which means it is not a public matter; religion is a private issue. “It’s about me and Jesus, and so I don’t really talk to people or pray with people or help people or serve people or participate in people’s lives. I just love Jesus way down deep in my heart. I love him right here. You can’t see it. It’s invisible.”

Well, this is the problem. The rest of us live out here. And the problem is most of us who live out here don’t know Christ, and so while you have this really nice, warm, glowing feeling in your heart, the rest of us are without Christ. And the issue is that you are supposed to be a conduit through which God’s truth and God’s love and God’s grace and God’s story goes forth to the earth.

And it is so frustrating. How many of you know Christians that it’s not even that they won’t confess their faith before non-Christians; they won’t even talk to other Christians? They don’t go to church. They don’t go to Bible study. They don’t talk about God. They don’t interact with anyone regarding Christ. How many of you know 5 people like that? How many of you know 20? I know hundreds. “Oh, I don’t need church. I don’t need brothers and sisters. I don’t need to tell the story of Christ. I don’t need to do anything. I just – I really love Jesus. It’s just a personal issue.”

No. No. I tell you what. I do not judge people’s hearts and souls, but I gotta ask myself, do those people even know God? Do they? That would be like saying, “Well, I love my wife. I just never talk to her. I never do anything with her, and I never do anything for her, and you’ll never see me with her. It’s just in my heart.” Oh, we understand. Yeah. Marriage is a private issue.

Well, marriage with Christ is likewise a public issue that is to be demonstrated and borne out and shown to the world. And you all know that there are

people in your life that you are supposed to be talking to. They are screwing up their whole life, and in the process they are screwing up everyone else's life that they touch. They're shipwrecking their marriage. They're destroying their kids. They're ruining their finances. They're sexually deviant. They drink too much. They are in deep trouble.

Some people are doing fine, and they're just arrogant and proud and self-sufficient and glorifying themselves, and you know that you are supposed to say something. You know that you're supposed to speak to them. You know that the issue of Christ and his crucifixion is supposed to be a topic of conversation, but you evade every opportunity that is given to you. Why? Because you love the praise of men. You don't wanna hurt your friendship. You don't wanna isolate a family member. You don't wanna offend a co-worker. I'm not talking about being rude. Corinthians tells us that love is not rude. I'm not talking about being mean and angry. I'm just talking about speaking the truth into the opportunities that God gives with love and grace and compassion. It is so frustrating.

At least you are here tonight. I gotta tell you this as your pastor. I struggle with this all the time. I struggle even coming here. Look around. We have seats for 1,000 more people. Where are they? Just from the relationship network that we know in this room, there are over 1,000 people that could sit in these seats that already claim to know God. We're not even talking about reaching lost people. Where are they? They're at home doing nothing.

The issue is, heaven forbid we should be inconvenienced in any way. Heaven forbid that we should lose a stick of our glory. Heaven forbid that in any way Christ's death would cause us any sort of difficulty. It is so frustrating, and I don't give that to shame you or to say that I'm angry. Our church has doubled in size in the last year. That's great. I'm excited. We're in the least-churched city in the United States of America. This is the least likely place that a man under the age of 35 in our whole nation would go to church.

How many of you know a parade of knuckleheads that claim Christ and need to get it together? It's frustrating, because everyone wants to have their sins forgiven and Jesus love them and to live their life as their own king and their own lord and do their own thing, without ever being inconvenienced. It's idolatry. It is self-worship. It is deplorable, and there are times when I take it personally and I get offended, because I'm in it for my own glory, and I want all the seats full. There are other days when I'm offended because God is being dishonored and his children do not care about his glory; they're in it for their own convenience, and I struggle with both of those.

There should be a burden upon us as a church that, yeah, some people will never understand, but some will. How many of you have come to Christ after the age of 15? Look around. Most of us here. We're not raised in this loving Christian home where people told us about Jesus. Someone was inconvenienced, risked their reputation, took the possibility of losing the praise of men, and told us about God's love in Christ, and so we're here. And so it is our privilege – not just our duty, it is our privilege to tell somebody else about the love and the grace and the kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ and the beauty it is to see the Father glorified.

~~You don't have to tell people about Jesus. You don't have to tell people about Jesus. You don't have to tell people about Jesus.~~ You don't have to tell people about Jesus. Do you understand the difference? I don't have to tell people about my wife. I don't have to tell my friends about my children. I get to. I love them. I enjoy them. I am so grateful for them.

What about the Lord Jesus? I don't have to tell anyone about Jesus; I get to. What a privilege. Christ loves me. He's opened my blind eyes. He has taken my heart of stone and given me a heart of flesh. He has opened my deaf ears. He has spoken love to me. He has shown me his kindness. He has given me the opportunity to respond to him by grace. Why would I not wanna sing his praise and tell others about this God that has overwhelmed me with his grace?

If I don't, there is only one reason, and John nails it: because I love the praise of men. I love what people think of me. I love my glory. I love my reputation. I love myself more than God. And I know some of you, right now in your mind, are saying, "Well, no, I have a reason. I have an excuse. I'm the exception to the rule." We all are. You say, "Well, I don't wanna offend anyone." Well, neither do I. How do you think – I get paid for it, so for me it's a little easier. I get paid to offend you. On my list of duties, it's like No. 4.

"Well, I don't like anyone to think I'm a freak." You are a freak. Just accept it. Embrace it. "Well, I don't want anyone to hate me." They will. People hate me. Some of you hate me. That's fine. Big deal. "Well, I don't wanna lose my glory." Well, you wanna find your life, you gotta lose it. You wanna live, you gotta die. You gotta let go to have your hands filled.

They love the praise of men more than the praise of God. And the issue is, would you rather be Jesus hearing the Father speak from heaven, or would you rather hear men say, "Boy, you're great. You're smart. You're wonderful. You're awesome. We sure wish we were like you."

"And then Jesus cried out, 'When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only but in the one who has sent me, and when he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.'" It's not just about me, Jesus says; it is about the God the Father. He has sent me to bring light into darkness. You love me, you love him. You follow me, you follow him. You hear me, you hear him.

It's beautiful that God has brought everything down to Jesus. You wanna understand the Bible, you gotta understand Jesus. You wanna understand God the Father, you gotta understand God the Son. You wanna understand the Holy Spirit, you gotta understand Jesus. You wanna understand what it means to be a human being, you gotta understand Jesus. You wanna have eternal life, you gotta understand Jesus. You wanna have your sins forgiven, you gotta understand Jesus. You wanna understand human history, you gotta have Jesus. You want wisdom and knowledge, you gotta understand Jesus. God has made it simple. It's all about Christ, and when you get Jesus, you get the Father, you see everything.

"As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a

judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words. That very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.” Jesus says, “The first time I come, I’m coming to save people and forgive them for sin, but I’m coming again not on my donkey, but on my horse, and there will be judgment. Justice is coming, but now is grace.”

~~Jesus’ words are not in my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.”~~

method were all inspired. Some people say, “Well, Jesus’ words are inspired, or maybe they’re not, or maybe his tone is –” Jesus says it’s all inspired. Every word, every form of speech, every tone of voice, all of that was in obedience just as the Father commanded. Just how to say it.

“I know that this commandment leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.” Bottom line is this: It comes down to Christ and him, him alone, God getting his glory through his Son, and you and I experiencing eternal life by loving him, believing in him, and not being ashamed to confess him before men.

And so we respond: giving, praying, singing, celebrating Communion (Jesus’ body and blood), but also going out knowing that. It is very easy to speak of Christ in this room with these people. It is very fashionable, in fact, to do so. But the issue is, when you leave, as the Father has sent the Son, so they have sent us with the Spirit out into this world because there are a multitude who do not know Christ.

Will they all believe? No. But has God appointed some? Yes. How do we know who they are? Tell them about Christ. If they love him, you know that God has changed their heart. If they see him, you know that God has opened their eyes. If they hear him, you know that God has opened their ears, just as he has for all of us who love him.

And so, Lord Jesus, we come to you tonight humble and convicted and broken. Lord Jesus, we all at various times and in various ways, myself included, have failed to speak when something needed to be said because we love the praise of men. We are into our own agenda. We are into our own glory. We are into our own reputation. We are into our own fame. We are into our own needs. We are into our own kingdom.

hear you, that you change our hearts to love you. Lord Jesus, it is my prayer for this city, the city that has been my home for my wife and I and for our families, Lord God, that you would give us wisdom and courage, as Christ rode into Jerusalem in the face of death, that you would send us into the city with that kind of courage. That as he told the truth, that we would tell the truth. That as he came to save the world, that we would come for the sake of seeing you, Lord Jesus, exalted and lifted up.

Lord God, I confess to you, I am a tremendously frustrated man. I am so tired, Lord God, of hearing from pulpits and people who claim Christ, their own political, social, psychological, financial agenda, telling us how we can worship ourselves and glorify our own name. And Lord God, I am so tired of seeing things lifted up other than your Son, and I am weary of seeing empty churches, quiet believers, and just the stench of Lazarus’ s grave.

Lord God, we pray that as you called him out of his grave, that you would call us out of ours, that you would give us life and the power of your spirit, a deep love for your Son, a deep faith in the Gospel, a deep hope for those who seem so far but could be so near just with the touch of the Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus, we pray that we would begin with those who claim to be children of God but live as if they were the Lord of lords and the King of kings, doing as they please, seeking through the duration of their life to have all their sins forgiven but never be inconvenienced on their Savior’s behalf. I ask, Lord God, for the courage and the boldness for each of us to speak to those people with love, but with a stern love that calls them to grow up and to consider others more highly than themselves and to take upon themselves the life and the humility of Jesus.

May it begin with us, Lord God. May it extend to those brothers and sisters who should be demonstrating their love, and may it extend through all of us, Lord God, to the millions who do not know you that are within miles of where we sit tonight. Lord God, that is our prayer, and we give it to you in Christ’s name. Amen.