

The Great Coronation

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Date: 31 May 2026

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[0 : 00] How does a person go about building a life worth living? How do you build a good life? How do you build a life that is a life of meaning, a life of purpose, a life that is reasonably happy, but also a life that can bear the weight of suffering and loss, a life that can hold up in the face of its own finitude, a life that can hold up to the challenges of life in the real world?

How do you build that kind of life? And where do you look to learn how to do this well? Our culture emphasizes that such a life should be authentic, that we should build a life that feels true to us.

But beyond that, there's not a lot of guidance. And if we're honest, no one, at least no one I know, has the time or energy to develop a comprehensive and rigorous worldview.

We just don't have time or energy for that. Where would we start? And so what most people end up doing, if we're honest, is sort of cobbling together a life out of this and that, right?

There might be this that we saw on Instagram, or that that we heard in a particularly compelling podcast, or this snippet that we got from a friend, or this that these friends who seem to be doing a better job in their life than us, and we copy them.

[1 : 27] We sort of cobble together a life. But a life built this way is fragile. It tends to fall apart when things get tough.

A life built this way is also a life that feels meaningless, because we know deep down we're making it up as we go along. Matthew chapter 28, this passage that Hillary just read, speaks directly into this question.

It shows us the kind of life that is on offer through the risen Christ that we cannot find anywhere else. It's a life built around three things.

A life built around a new center. A life built around a new identity. And then a life built around a new purpose. So let's pray, and then we're going to open God's Word together.

If you have a Bible and you want to turn to chapter 28 of Matthew, you can do that. Let's pray together. Lord, we thank You for Your Word, and we thank You that it is not mere ink and paper, that we are here in the presence of the living God.

[2 : 29] We pray that as we open Your Word, Your Word would open us. As we read Your Word, Your Word would read us. Lord, and that as we come to understand Your written Word, we would come face to face with the living Word, Jesus Christ.

And it's in His name that we pray. Amen. So what does it take to build a good life? What is on offer through the risen Christ to the world?

The first thing is that we find in Jesus a new center. After seeing Jesus crucified, this happened previously in Matthew's Gospel. After seeing Jesus crucified, the disciples felt as though their lives were falling apart.

They felt as though their lives were meaningless. They felt as though everything they thought they knew had just come undone. And they were trying to rebuild their lives as best they could.

But suffice it to say, they were profoundly disoriented. But when they encounter the risen Jesus, everything changes. He appears to them. He says, meet me in Galilee.

[3 : 32] Go there, wait, I'm coming. So they go to Galilee. They go to the mountain, and they're waiting for Jesus on the mountain. And when Jesus arrives, it says some of them immediately fall prostrate on the ground, and they worship Him.

And then it says others still doubted. They still had their doubts. Now we're going to come back to that. The first thing Jesus says is this.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Now he's not just saying some authority. He's saying all authority everywhere is now mine.

For those who know their Old Testaments, this is a reference indirectly to Daniel chapter 7. There's a prophecy that Daniel makes in the Old Testament that the Son of Man, a title that Jesus had used for Himself, the Son of Man one day would be enthroned as the ruler of the world.

And Jesus is saying, that has been fulfilled in your hearing. That was fulfilled through the resurrection. I have become the King of the world.

[4 : 41] In other words, at this moment, Jesus is announcing His coronation on this mountain to His disciples as the King of heaven and earth. So for those who say or argue that there's nowhere where Jesus actually announces that He is divine or makes the claim that He is God, you're going to have to figure out how to make sense of this passage because that seems to be exactly what He's saying here.

And here's the thing that we want to wrestle with this morning. If all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus, that means that Jesus is the center of reality itself.

It means that Jesus is the center of everything. And if that's true, then any vision of life that doesn't begin that way, in other words, any vision of life that assumes we are at the center is already doomed to fail because it doesn't line up with reality.

It's already disconnected from what is most true. So there's a lot of wisdom to be found in the world. The ancient Greeks had a lot of wisdom. They talked about, Aristotle talks about the cultivation of virtue.

The Stoics talk about the value of self-mastery. There's a lot of modern wisdom to be gleaned, right? Tim Ferriss can help us optimize our habits, right?

[6 : 09] Andrew Huberman can help us use science to improve our quality of life and our bodies and minds. Or Brene Brown can urge us to embrace vulnerability.

All valuable, all worth considering, all worth maybe incorporating. There's value in these ideas, but listen, they all share the same limit because all of these realities, all of these visions of life assume that I should be at the center of my life.

And that's the problem. And that's the limit. Scripture actually says that this is how things originally went wrong in the world, that human beings became convinced at some point along the way that life would be better if we were at the center instead of God.

And that's when things began to fall apart. All right, so think of the solar system. How do massive planets move with such precision and beauty and order?

Why aren't they constantly crashing into each other or flying out into space? And the answer is because they all share the same center. They're all held in place by the one thing that has the gravity and the power to do it, and that's the sun.

[7 : 24] So our lives are very much like the solar system. There are all kinds of things floating around in my life and in your life, right?

Our loves are floating around out here. Our desires are floating around. Our fears are over here and they're floating around. Our ambitions, our duties, our obligations, our relationships, all of these things are floating around.

That's what makes up the stuff of our lives. when we try to sit at the center of all that and when we try to hold all of it in balance and all of it, get it all moving together and flowing in harmony and peace, we find very quickly it doesn't work.

Nobody I know, despite all of our efforts in all of the podcasts, has that kind of life. the reality is our lives are disordered because we were never really meant to be at the center.

We lack the gravity. We lack the authority to hold it all together the way it should fit. And so what we find is that sometimes things hurl off into space.

[8 : 35] They just get neglected altogether. Much more often, at least if you're anything like me, you find things crashing into one another. And our life is actually made up of a lot of things clashing with other things and bringing disorder.

So our ambitions might crash into our sense of self-worth. And you find that you're a workaholic, that you can't even take a day off, that you work seven days a week because your ambitions have crashed into your sense of self-worth.

Our fears may crash into our relationships. And when that happens, we either become highly self-protective and disconnected. Or we become overly needy because our fears are crashing into our relationships.

Or our need for approval crashes into our values. And we find that we let people walk all over us. And we become people pleasers. Or our desires and urges crash into our ethics. And we become immoral or maybe even hypocritical. So things are crashing into each other all the time. Our lives don't work when we're at the center of them. Jesus is the only one.
[9 : 47] And this is part of what he's claiming here. He's the only one with the gravity. He's the only one with enough authority to bring order to the solar system of your life and your soul.

In order to build the kind of life we were created to live, the first thing we need to realize is that everything in our life all of this stuff belongs to Jesus. It's his. Right? So your family, your kids, your money, your body, your ambitions, your suffering, your politics, your future, your past.

This moment all belongs to him. It's all his to do whatever he wants with it.

The invitation here is to put him at the center, allow him to occupy the place, the throne at the center of our lives. Everything then begins to fall into place.

[10 : 54] This is how life was meant to work. We need a kind of Copernican revolution of the heart. We need Jesus to displace us at the center of our lives. However, right, it's not as simple as saying, okay, from this moment forward I'm going to do that because we can say that but then there's the reality of actually living that out and we find all kinds of resistance in ourselves when we try to actually live that way and if we were to simply resolve to start living that way then this would be no different than any of the other podcasts we listen to throughout the week.

Just another way to optimize and improve. So in order to actually have this Copernican revolution we need a new identity. We need a new identity and this is the second thing we see in this passage. If we follow Jesus' words he says, all authority has been given to me therefore go and make disciples of all nations. Disciples are one way of thinking about a disciple is a disciple of Jesus is someone who lives with King Jesus at the center of their lives.

It's someone who has put Christ at the center of their lives or is seeking to do that. Right? But notice how disciples are made. This is very important. Two things happen in order to make a disciple. Jesus says go and make disciples number one baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and then teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

[12 : 30] Baptism gives us a new identity. Then the teaching gives us a new way to live. But notice before we can be taught a new way of life we have to be baptized into a new identity.

The new identity comes before the new way of life and that is extremely important. It's one of the things that makes Christianity entirely unique when compared to other religions and worldviews. The claim is that before we can change how we live we need to change who we are. That's what baptism does. Right?

For those who were here last week we saw two young women baptized up here. Claire and Sunny. It was so hard not to call them Sunny and Claire. Sunny and Cher.

So I reversed it and on purpose I said Claire and Sunny. Claire and Sunny were up here because I didn't trust myself and they were baptized.

[13 : 31] And if you were here and you saw them baptized you saw them kneel here you saw us pour the water over them. When that happened it wasn't just a ritual. Right? It wasn't just a kind of teaching aid or visual device.

Something happened fundamentally in them. each of those women became in a way someone new. Because if you remember the words we said we baptized each of those women into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Notice by the way it's not names. Three. It's the name. The name of a God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They were baptized into that name. And what that means is that they were joined into and took on the identity of that being.

Their old self died there was a new self that emerged that is joined into the essence of God Himself. Right? So they emerge as someone who has been adopted by God the Father. Who has been united to God the Son. Who has been filled by God the Holy Spirit.

[14 : 41] God the Son Listen, unlike all other forms of identity in our society that we have to construct ourselves this is not an identity that we can construct.

It's an identity that can only be received by grace through faith. It's a gift made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And once we have that new identity once we are then sharing in the life of God. Right? Once we are sharing in the dance of the Trinity. Right?

There's this lovely image of the Trinity the three persons of the Trinity and the word that theologians use is perichoresis and there's this idea of this perichoretic dance that has been happening for all of eternity the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son and the Spirit.

Right? This eternal dance of three persons. And in baptism we see someone who's invited to dance. they join into that dance they join into that life they join into that love and only then can we begin to learn a new way of life and we can begin to learn a new way of living where we join with Christ in the renewal of all things.

[15 : 56] Identity and then behavior. And you know listen there are a lot of people in this city those of you who live here you know there are a lot of people in the city a lot of people in the world trying to bring renewal to our society.

Most everybody agrees that things are not great and most everybody agrees that we need some kind of change and a lot of those efforts are really wonderful don't get me wrong go out there and do some good in the world right?

We're not going to argue with that but most of these approaches are outside in. There are a lot of people here working on getting better policies great some of you are working on that great more education for everybody absolutely some people really care about moral reform let's get back to the way things were the good old days somebody really want better programs and more access right? For more people all of that is good but the truth is we cannot change society unless we can change ourselves unless we can change ourselves it's like that well-known and somewhat apocryphal story about G.K. Chesterton where the newspaper put out the question what's wrong with the world and invited submissions and Chesterton famously responds actually with a longer response if you look at it but the summary of the response is this what's wrong with the world?

I am we cannot change society if we can't change ourselves Christ's renewal has to begin in us before it can flow through us so if you're here and you're not a Christian some of you are here and you're not sure what you believe and you're in the right place but I want to make clear what we're saying what this means is that Jesus is not inviting you to merely clean yourself up and become a church person he's not inviting you merely to clean yourself up and become more moral or more religious he's offering a new identity an identity that you will never be able to achieve that you will never be able to construct that you would never be able to secure for yourself it's on offer for free through faith and once we take hold of that new identity and become a disciple then we gain a new purpose then we gain a new purpose but before we go there I want to pause for a second and I want to tackle or engage a possible objection that people might be thinking okay some people might be hearing all of this and be skeptical because at the very beginning we said that Jesus announced himself as king of heaven and earth he's king of everything and so an objection that we might hear well if Jesus is really in the throne of the world then why are things still so messed up why is the world such a mess why is my life such a mess if Jesus is king it sure doesn't look like Jesus is king you know I read a health report on DC maybe some of you saw this

[18 : 44] I think it just came out where they found that people who live east of the Anacostia river on average have a lifespan that is 30 years shorter than people who live west of the park I'm going to say that again if you live east of the river your lifespan on average is going to be 30 years shorter than people who live west of Rock Creek Park that's crazy I don't know about you but when I read that I had to read it several times to make sure I was reading it correctly that's not okay that's not a world that seems like Jesus is king because there are so many issues related to justice right that are that are contributing to that difference in lifespan so many issues that that need to be tackled right it doesn't seem like Jesus is king here's my response here's the response of N.T. Wright the renowned Bible scholar to this as well so maybe that'll have more credibility you're right it doesn't seem like Jesus is in charge the claim is actually not that everything is already healed the claim is that the risen Jesus is at work now taking the world from where it was which is under the rule under the false king of death and corruption and greed and evil and every kind of wickedness and gradually bringing the world under his rule of life giving love and you say well where and how is Jesus doing this through you through you through us through his followers through people that he has commissioned that my friends is the new purpose that Jesus gives people once they become his disciples to join with him in the renewal of all things this is the new purpose and I know that's a staggering idea it's also a crucial reminder of why we exist as a church a church is not just a social

club not just a service provider we're not just another form of support group with prayer and singing a church is the people sent by the risen king to call others into the life and the way of his kingdom so everything we do everything we do our worship evangelism pastoral care children's ministry youth group adult education small groups hospitality mercy ministry it's all part of this larger purpose all of that serves the purpose of making disciples who live out the ways of the kingdom and help bring renewal to every corner of the world so the purpose of our church the reason that we're even here is not simply to provide religious goods and services for people who already believe that's part of it the purpose of the church is to make disciples of all nations

Jesus says and by the way because he says all nations our purpose our identity as a church can never be allowed to become tribal the gospel is not the possession of one nation or one race or one class or one culture or one political party if Jesus is lord of all nations then the church has to be for all nations moreover the church can never be allowed to become a private religious club for the already convinced we can never allow ourselves to become a chaplaincy for people who already know how to behave because the church fundamentally does not exist with all due respect only to meet our needs our primary purpose I would argue is not to meet your needs my needs it's for the sake of the people outside the walls it's for the sake of the people who are not a part of our church that's our primary orientation so everything we do is not only about us growing in our faith but about seeing others come to faith right folding others in inviting them to the dance of the trinity that's our purpose so if we pull all of this together every Christian

I would say should be asking those of us who are here Christians how am I helping somebody take the next step toward Jesus who am I helping in my life who am I helping to take that next step where Jesus becomes a little more central to their life right where their life comes a little more under his rule where their identity becomes a little more formed and defined by their unity with him right so who are you praying for we should all have people in our lives that we're praying for who are you encouraging who are you welcoming who are you walking alongside who are you inviting you know for Father's Day coming up we're doing a cookout and this is like Mother's Day something that we want to reach out to the community and invite them to come and as long as the meat lasts we're going to be cooking and slinging burgers and dogs and it's going to happen out in the courtyard and so we'll do it until we run out and whoever comes gets food and it's free and so this would be a great opportunity for families particularly men that you know it's not just for people with biological children it's for every form of fatherhood just like mothers and everybody in this room every man in this room can in some way we've all had fathers we all can serve as spiritual fathers right to others in the community and so it's for guys in your life that you think might be encouraged you should invite them that would be a great step we actually have

Sharon has printed beautiful invitations you can take one you can give it to somebody say you should come it'll be fun you'll get a burger come to worship with us and then stay for the cookout so that would be a great thing you could do right now now this doesn't mean that every Christian has to become a missionary or an expert apologist or a Bible scholar but it does mean that every Christian is called to participate in the disciple making life of the church we all have a role to play and this church is full of people who are being disciplined who need others to pour into their lives right so let's bring this back to where we started how should someone go about building a life worth living this feels particularly relevant this time of year when there's a lot of people graduating and thinking about what's next how should someone go about building a life worth living here's what Jesus offers he gives us a new center it's bad news and good news on the one hand we're not the center of the universe

I'm sorry our desires are not sovereign I'm sorry on the other hand guess what your fears are not ultimate your failures are not final because Jesus is king number two he gives us a new identity he doesn't tell us how to shape up and get our act together so that we can fit in he pours his love and grace into our lives now as we are he gives us a new identity as people who share in the life of God who share in the dance of the Trinity and then he sends us out and he gives us a new purpose to make disciples and join with him in the renewal of all things and if this purpose sounds too big for us as we look around it's because it is it's way too big for us it's way too big it's way too much right remember who Jesus is speaking to here it's the last point even after everything these people have been through together

[27 : 09] Matthew tells us that when Jesus arrives some get it and they worship and others still doubt and you'd be so tempted to say are you kidding me you saw this guy die and I was standing

right in front of you and you're like I'm not so sure even the fact that there are only 11 disciples right there's a pang when you read that number 11 there should have been 12 so already before the movement even got off the ground they've had deception and betrayal by one of their own surely these are not the kind of people that Jesus would use to go out and change the world are they right the answer is on their own no no they could never pull this off on their own but Jesus doesn't send them out alone and Jesus doesn't send us out alone he says and surely I am with you always to the end of the age we don't go alone we go with him and we follow him so ultimately friends our confidence does not rest in us it rests in him the one who is here with us right now let's pray

Lord we thank you for your word we thank you for your spirit Lord we thank you father for your love and we thank you Jesus and we pray that as we come together and confess our faith as we pray as we confess our sin and hear your grace spoken into our lives as we come around your table to receive your body and blood we pray Lord that these ideas would not remain merely ideas that your word would become flesh in our hearts that we in your great mercy would be displaced that you would become our center and that we would be redefined by you and inspired by you to live out the purpose you've given us we pray this in Jesus holy name amen