

A Vision For The Preeminence Of Christ

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[0 : 0 0] When we were singing, I thought of this, and so this is not really quite on topic, but anybody familiar with the Heidelberg Catechism?! You ever heard that? Raise your hand if you know. Heidelberg Catechism? Okay. There's a statement in the Heidelberg Catechism that's very precious and I want to read it.

Heidelberg Catechism question number one. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

Answer. That I am not my own, but belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood and has delivered me from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven.

In fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I do belong to Him, Christ, by His Holy Spirit, also assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

[1 : 2 7] There's a verse in 2 Corinthians 5 that says, This we judge, that one died for all, that all who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them.

And I thought of this while we were singing and I was just overwhelmed with thankfulness that He bought me and my life is not my own anymore. I did such a horrible job running my life. It's complete.

Me running my life was horrible. You know, just so terrible. And the illusion of freedom and autonomy that I had is just a lie. It's just a lie.

And He bought me from that. He made me His own. And I'm free now not to run my own life. He runs it better. He runs it better than I do.

That's the truth for anyone who's in Christ is you are purchased. You're not your own anymore. He runs your life now. He's the boss. And He does a way better job running your life than you do.

[2 : 4 1] Okay, that's the understatement. That's the most understated understatement possible. He said, Jesus does a better job running your life than you do. He does a better job running my life than I do.

And I'm so thankful. This is my only comfort in life and death. That I was bought. I'm not my own anymore. It's related somewhat to this, but it is related to my topic.

But I just wanted to start off with that. So today, my topic is a vision for the preeminence of Christ. Or in other words, Jesus first.

About the simplest way to say it. Jesus first. Okay. That's what preeminence means in its first place. Okay. And my main texts are going to be in Colossians and in Ephesians.

And kind of a little background, what I've been thinking about. The verse in Proverbs 29 and 18 says, where there is no vision, the people perish. Okay. So, Jesus Christ is the Lord of the microbe.

[3 : 46] He's in the details. He's also Lord of the macro. Big picture. Okay. We need both. All right. And without big picture, we start to lose track of why are we doing what we're doing?

Why? You know? And He wants to communicate to us why. He's a God of vision. And that's really, that's where my mind and heart is not detail stuff.

It's more big picture stuff. It's vision. And there is no greater vision for the church than her savior. And I aim to show that. I think it's self-evident in the scripture.

The difficulty of preparing for this sermon is just weeding it down. You could just say, read the New Testament. And that's what it says, you know, but you can't just read the whole New Testament here. But we need a vision bigger than us.

Okay. We perish without vision. We need the Lord to give us something outside of ourselves that's bigger than ourselves for life to have any meaning and purpose. God made us that way.

[4 : 42] This is, this is, this is in the heart code. If we don't have this, we die on the vine. So, Christ Church, our mission is on our website.

Our mission is the kingdom of God and all of life together. The kingdom of God and all of life together. I'll unpack that a little bit.

Some of you are very familiar with that. Some of you, maybe not so much. A lot of that comes from Matthew 6, 33. Where Jesus says, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

And all of these things, meaning all the necessities, everything you need for life, will be added to you. Make it simple. There's one thing that's needful. Seek first the kingdom of God, his righteousness.

And I got all the rest. I'm God. Okay. I'm making this simple for you. And this is our way of articulating that truth in the context of the church.

[5 : 39] Okay. Kingdom of God and all of life together. And we're going to talk a little bit more about the details of that. What are some of the implications of that mission statement? And ultimately my goal is to answer two questions about this, this mission statement.

One is, how does Jesus fit into this? Okay. Kingdom of God. Mormons talk about kingdom of God. All right. Jehovah's Witnesses talk about kingdom of God.

Muslims. You know, there's a lot of people who claim obedience and worship to the one true God and are comfortable with this kind of language.

What differentiates us from them? You know, I want to talk about that. And what differentiates us is Jesus. By the way, the true, the true Christ. Okay.

We'll talk about why. And then what's the point? What's the goal? Why? You know, is there some ultimate reason that we should seek first the kingdom of God?

[6 : 40] There is. And it's important to know that reason. Otherwise, we make God an instrument for our own selfish interests.

I want to be happy. God's ways are good. I want to be happy. So I'm going to do these things so I have a happier life. You know? Or I don't want to go to hell.

Like, not wanting to go to hell is a very good motivation. The Holy Spirit gives us that motivation. It's great, but it shouldn't stay there. There's a lot more to the motivating work of a regenerated heart in the Holy Spirit.

There's a lot more motives that he puts in there. And they're a lot bigger than just avoiding hell and just having a happy life. Although, there's no life that's happier than being in Christ.

So, anyway, there's the two. That's my aim. To understand, in this mission statement, the kingdom of God and all of life together. How does Jesus fit into that?

- [7 : 38] And for what purpose? You know, what's the goal? So, let's dive into question number one. How does Jesus fit into this? Well, Jesus Christ is the king of the kingdom of God. Okay? Very simple. The kingdom of God has a king. Jesus is it. Okay? Let's read in Colossians chapter one. Let's start in verse 13.
- Okay. Verse 13. Colossians 1.13. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
- All right. I had tons of verses for this. I took them all out. That's good enough. The kingdom of his beloved Son. He took us out of the kingdom of darkness that we were born into.
- We got it natural from Adam. We were all born under sin, under the wrath of God, in the kingdom of darkness ruled by Satan. And he transferred us out of that kingdom into the kingdom of his beloved Son.
- [8 : 53] That's the kingdom of God. And Jesus is king over it. Okay? Okay? It's the... I think... I heard Josh say this one time. I was actually trying to find the quote last minute, but I couldn't. A definition of the kingdom of God that he likes to share a lot.
- It's the realm of his uncontested rule. I think I'm getting that right. But it's where what he says goes.
- When Jesus says the thing, everyone in there does that thing. That's the kingdom of God. So, Jesus. The kingdom of God.
- We're pursuing the kingdom of God. Jesus is that king. And so, you know, the title of this is, A Vision for the Preeminence of Christ. We're thinking through how Christ factors in to what our mission is.
- Well, he is the king. And we have not just a sort of, I don't know, an ungrounded, untethered, unpersoned conception of the kingdom of God.
- [9 : 57] It's a person. We're married and under the reign and the rule of a person. We have a personal relationship to our king, Jesus.
- We're directly ruled now by him. I'm not ruled by myself anymore. I'm ruled by Jesus Christ. So, the kingdom of God. Jesus is king in the kingdom of God. That's how he factors in.
- Number two. In all of life. How does he factor into in all of life? Well, let's just keep reading here. Starting in verse 15. Continuing on this thought here.
- He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him, all things were created. In heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.
- All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things. And in him, all things hold together.
- [10 : 57] I'm going to pause right there. It's hard to get more comprehensive than that. All things. Okay. He was the origin point of all creation.
- God created everything through Jesus as the means. In the beginning was the word. The word was with God and the word was God. You know, God said, let there be light. Light happened.
- Who was speaking there? It was through Christ. We're actually getting to revelation here on some stuff in Genesis. Paul's unpacking some Genesis creation theology here for us. He created everything through Christ.
- For what purpose? For him. They're all made for him, for Jesus, for the son. Which includes us.

And that includes all of our life. Okay. So we have a kingdom. Kingdom of God. Kingdom of God. Ruled by a king, Jesus. In all of life.

[11 : 56] All of which was created by him, through him, and for him. That's the ultimate telos of everything.

It's for him. For Jesus. I'll continue reading there. He's before all things, verse 17. In him all things hold together.

And he's the head of the body, the church. He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. That in everything, he might be preeminent. Or as the NESB says, that he might have first place in everything.

Okay. So. Everything means everything. Okay. Jesus. It's kind of a cliché statement. He's Lord of all. Or he isn't Lord at all.

You know. He's either Lord of all. What am I saying? If he's not Lord of all, he's not Lord at all. That's what it is. If he's not Lord of all, he's not Lord at all. He's over everything.

[12 : 58] Every single piece of all creation. His. Okay. Well, what about the part that's, you know, kingdom of darkness. And I wasn't living like that before.

And I was living for myself. And, you know, I wasn't obeying Jesus then. It didn't seem like the reign and rule of Jesus was over my life. He bought me. And he put me into the kingdom such that that rule would be manifested on earth as it is in heaven.

Yes. He did have an authority over me. I was created for his purpose and I was rebelling against his purpose. So he saved me and put me into his kingdom so that his purposes would be realized in my life.

And not just me all by myself. But in the church. Which we'll talk about that. But first, I think it's important to emphasize all of life. This is this fights against the tendency to compartmentalize our life.

You do your Christian stuff over here and you do your everything else over here and you keep them separate. This is like you keep Jesus on Sunday morning and you're willing to talk about Jesus on Sunday morning.

[14 : 13] But you're not willing to let Jesus be Lord of how you talk to your wife. You know, how you speak to your kids. How you work at your job. How you work at your job. How you work at your job.

So everything means everything. That in all things he might have first place. Me. Marriage. Family. Parenting. Church. Money.

Work. School. Politics. Speech. Sex. Food. Drink. Hobbies. Entertainment. The way we dress. The way we think.

Our emotions. Our affections. Our evangelism. It's like surely that one's Jesus's boss of. Well, there's a lot of bad motives to do a lot of things that look really good.

Okay. Is he Lord of that? Are you doing it for him? You know? Your time. Your ambitions. That in all things he would have first place.

[15 : 12] Okay. The whole thing he purchased, even though he had a right to all that, before we were converted and we were in Christ. Because he's God. And everything was created for him.

He purchased us and redeemed us in order to make it so in our life. And if we hold the name of Jesus, there's not a single square inch of territory in our life that he doesn't say, mine.

And every day I go by holding back that little piece of territory, I'm in rebellion against God. Okay. And we're commanded to fear and tremble and say, hey, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

God's goal is not just our happiness, although that is part of it in his mercy. It says his son would be preeminent in everything. He would have the reward of his suffering.

He would have the reward that God ordained all of creation was made for in the first place. It's all his. Okay. He deserves it.

[16 : 13] He deserved it by birthright because he breathed everything into creation. That's what God made it for. And he deserved it by his substitutionary death on the cross. He purchased us. You know, double worthy.

So, in all of life. In all of life. So, we believe in a whole little Christianity. A Christianity that doesn't get compartmentalized to church and giving money and doing a little ministry there and doing a little ministry there and trying to buy God off to leave you alone for all the rest of your life that you run yourself.

No. He bought the whole thing. Okay. It's an all or nothing deal. He's Lord and Savior. You can't separate them from each other. All of life.

So, do we go just do this Christian, Jesus is my Lord thing all by ourselves somewhere? No. It's together.

Okay. We'll keep going to there. So, this is, you know, again, the kingdom of God and all of life. Jesus is Lord of all of life. And it's together.

[17 : 21] It's together. Continue reading Colossians here. And he's the head. He's for all things. And in him all things hold together. He's the head of the body. His body, the church. He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

He's the head of the body of the church. He's the head of the body of the church. We don't live under the rule of Jesus separate from each other.

And we are Christ's body under one head. Okay. You don't have this. There's not a category for like, we're all just different members.

Okay. We each do a different thing. He made hands. He made noses. He made ears. You know, spiritually speaking, the Bible uses this language to talk about the multivariate body of Christ with the different gifts and the different members.

[18 : 24] We don't each, it's like a thumb. Like I'm a thumb and I'm just connected to the head, you know, like a head with a thumb on it, you know, over here. And then there's another one over here. It's like, I'm the foot with the, you know, head.

No, no, no. We're all together connected to Christ. And he is the head over all of us. And together through the working of the Holy Spirit, we imperfectly, there's sin.

Until Jesus comes back, that's not going to be perfect. But increasingly more perfectly, represent Jesus. You can't represent Jesus all by yourself. I mean, we might want to.

And in certain ways we have that opportunity to represent Jesus, but it's only ever a portion of his character and his grace. And anyway, getting ahead of myself a little bit here.

That's the together part. It's the church. Okay. The kingdom of God and all of life together. He's before all things and in him, all things hold together. Ephesians goes into this a lot.

[19 : 31] So I'm going to, I'm going to flip over to Ephesians and read through a few verses. See here. Okay. Bear with me. I'm just going to read a lot of scripture here. Okay. I'm starting in Ephesians.

If you want to follow along, read an ESV. Starting in Ephesians chapter one, verse 22. Togetherness specifically in the church. Okay. Ephesians 1 22. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body.

Well, Jesus lived on earth with the physical body. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Here we have it again. Jesus, head of the church. It is his body. Okay, well, Jesus lived on earth with a physical body. And he died, he was buried, he was resurrected, and he ascended to heaven.

He still has that physical body. The church is indwelt by the spirit of Christ to communicate the presence of Jesus together.

[20 : 42] And so together we are now imaging Jesus. When Jesus was on earth, you could see him. He was a guy and you saw in him the glory of God. Now all the world has to look at Jesus is in heaven.

They can't see Jesus right now, but they can see us. Okay, so now we are the ones who God in his mercy, is living and dwelling inside of and communicating what Jesus is like to the world.

And actually it's a lot more than the world, as we'll read some passages about that. But we're his body, okay? We're the fullness of him who fills all in all. Moving forward.

Ephesians 2, verse 19 through 22. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being the church, being joined together, not separate, together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In him, Christ, you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Okay, same imagery.

[22 : 03] We're growing into him. The structures join together. This is not a bunch of Christians doing their own thing. You know, I do the, well, I'm like an evangelist kind of Christian, so I go out and do my evangelist ministry.

And I'm like a prayer and intercession kind of Christian, so I'm going to go do that. And we're all just going to have our separate ministries. We all have our own calling from God. We're all unique little flowers. Well, there's a sense in which that's true.

But it doesn't look like Jesus unless it's like this. Okay? The whole structure is joined together. And it grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

A place for God to live through his Spirit. Okay? Moving forward. Ephesians 3. Okay, this is the big one.

Ephesians 3. We'll start in verse 8. To me, this is Paul speaking, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to bring to life for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.

[23 : 18] So that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God, manifold is just like a varied, you know, lots of different. The manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus, our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. There's a lot in there.

I mean, that, like, you could probably spend your whole life just trying to unpack what he's trying to say there. But I'm not even going to try to do all that, but I'm going to pull out a few things. One is that this mystery, something about the unsearchable riches of Christ, God had a plan according to his eternal purpose to reveal this through the church.

So the manifold wisdom of God would through the church, through a very specific means, not through individual Christians doing their own individual thing, through the church, the manifold, many folded, different, lots of different things that are different from each other, wisdom of God would be manifested to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places.

I don't know if he's talking about angels or demons or both, but it's very important to God, okay, because this is part of his eternal purpose for the church. This, his vision is a lot more than just saving a bunch of sinners from hell.

[24 : 52] It has to do with revealing the unsearchable riches of Christ, the manifold wisdom of God, through the church, through each one of us, okay?

We'll talk a little bit more about what that looks like. Get into Ephesians 4. Continue on through Ephesians here. What does, what does this manifold wisdom look like?

Continue on Ephesians 4, starting in verse 11. And he, meaning Jesus, gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.

To mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may be no longer children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

All right? But, so immaturity. So instead of staying in this place of immaturity where you're easily deceived and pulled all over the place, rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way, in every way, into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

[26 : 29] So, what's the goal? Maturity. Personal maturity? Just individual maturity?

Yes. But it's not limited to that. In fact, if you limit it to that and you just have a bunch of Christians off doing their own thing, having their Jesus quiet time and not participating in the church in this way, you don't have mature manhood.

What's God's goal? To grow us up together to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. That we would grow up in every way into him who is the head from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it's equipped, all of us different members, each filled with the Holy Spirit, each uniquely gifted and equipped for this upbuilding work, each of whom is essential.

I had so many verses in Corinthians and stuff that talked about this. I just had to get rid of them because it's for the sake of time. But, every member is essential to this. Jesus has his arm cut off.

Well, it's just, there's something about the glory of Jesus that's diminished. Okay? Well, that's what it is like today. Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever.

[27 : 53] So, his body now is diminished. The glory is diminished. The character and the full, mature representation of Jesus Christ on earth is diminished when one member is neglected or says, no, I'm not into that.

I'm going to go do my own thing. You know? Yeah, you're like a Jesus. You're like a church kind of Christian. I'm a Jesus kind of Christian. You know? Well, you do you, man. No. Like, you're essential.

And God's not into this American, Western, individualistic Christianity. He's not into it at all. Okay? He sees that as an affront to, it robs Jesus of his glory.

He purchased us for a lot more than salvation for hell. It's so that we would be part of his body and the eternal purpose of God in communicating the character and the manifold wisdom of God, which is Christ, by the way.

Christ is the wisdom of God to the world and to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places. So, anyway, to recap a little bit here, you can get off point really easily here.

[29 : 14] Christ's church's mission is the kingdom of God and all of life together. How does Jesus factor into that? He is the king. Okay? He's king over everything.

He bought everything for himself. Everything was created for him and through him. And it's all for himself because he purchased it round two. Okay? It was all made through him and he deserved it anyway.

And then he purchased it with his blood. So, the whole thing is his all of life. And our experience of it is together through his church. And to the extent to which we try to divorce from any one of these things, it's to our detriment.

And it's to the detriment of the glory of God. God is glorified. He's chosen a particular way to glorify himself and it's through the sun and through the church.

Okay? So, to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness is to seek the advance of Christ's lordship and salvation in all of life.

[30 : 28] and as the body of Christ the body of Christ the church is the expression it's the manifestation of his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Now, Jesus taught us to pray that your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It's the already but not yet thing. He's already king over everything but we don't yet see everything manifestly under the rule of Jesus where whatever Jesus says goes.

Okay? But it's because he hasn't come back yet. When he comes back it will be that way. So where do we see the kingdom of God most clearly now?

Through the church. The church is where the kingdom of God is expressly put on display. Okay? That's my point.

The kingdom of God and all of life together through Christ and for him. So, take a little bit of time here. Let me see. 30 minutes. All right. I want to talk a little bit about my second question.

[31 : 32] So I said that my goal here is to answer two questions. One is how does Jesus fit into this mission statement? A little bit of vision of Christ and how he factors into that. And the second is like what's the ultimate goal here? To be happier?

To avoid hell? No. You get those things but that's not the ultimate goal. All right. So, Christ's preeminence and God's eternal purpose. I'm going to share a few passages about that. Going back to Colossians 1.18, this is the opening passage that says that he is the head of the body, the church.

He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. That in everything he might be preeminent. That he might have first place. Remember, everything is created for him. Okay? Getting into the big picture stuff.

The meaning for everything. That the son would receive what God created everything for. It's for him.

Okay? Read a few other verses. Let's just not stick with one verse. There's more verses that communicate this. Ephesians 3, verses 7 through 12. I already read this but this is, actually, I'm not going to read the whole thing.

[32 : 38] We read this. It talks about the unsearchable riches of Christ. It talks about through the church the manifold wisdom of God is being put on display. And then he says that it's according to this eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Ephesians 1, verses 9 and 10, it says, And he has made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment.

Big picture. What's everything feeding up towards? What is it? To bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head even Christ.

Okay. That's pretty big. That's the mystery of his will. That's according to his good pleasure. That he's going to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head Christ.

Last verse, 1 Corinthians 15, verses 24 through 28. Then comes the end when he delivers, he meaning Jesus, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

[34 : 06] The last enemy needed to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection under his feet. But when it says all things are put in subjection, it is plain that he is accepted who put all things in subjection under him.

Basically, he's just saying God the Father is not put in subjection under the Son. Okay. He's the one putting everything under subjection to the Son.

And when all things are subjected to him, the Son, then he, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him, the Father, who put all things in subjection under him that God may be all in all.

So, everything was created for Jesus. That's the end. Us too. We're creations. Okay. So, if you're in the created category, not creator, guess what?

You were made for Jesus. Does it stop there? No. Jesus is doing it for the glory of God. Because when everything is finally subjected to him, when all enemies are put under his feet, he will subject himself to the Father so that God would be all in all.

[35 : 29] It's for the glory of God. And God has chosen this specific way to glorify himself. There are other kinds of ways to glorify God. It's this way, through the Son. He's chosen one man that is authorized to glorify God.

And it's the man, Jesus Christ. How do we glorify God? By being inside of him. And then God works in us to will and to work according to his good pleasure.

Okay? We're trying to glorify God our own way, according to our own thoughts, according to our own wisdom.

It's not acceptable. It's through the Son. That in all things, Jesus would have preeminence first place. And then Jesus glorifies the Father.

That's what he wants to do. That's why he appeared. I came to do the will of my Father and to glorify him. That's what Jesus is oriented towards is the glory of the Father.

[36 : 31] And the Father is pleased to glorify himself through his Son. And the Spirit glorifies and reveals the Son. It's a Trinitarian glory.

It's a Trinitarian truth. This is how they work together for this ultimate goal, which is Christ to have preeminence in all things. And then he hands it to the Father that God would be all in all.

Okay. So, what's the goal? Everything I just said. That Christ would have preeminence in all things, subject himself to the Father, that God would be all in all. You know, the Westminster, I think, shorter catechism says, the chief end of man, what is the chief end of man?

To glorify God and enjoy him forever. It's glorious. It's a very glorious thing. It's a big problem for us, though.

You know why it's a big problem? Because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. No one has sought him, not even one.

- [37 : 40] We have not enjoyed him. That was our ultimate creative purpose for him. And we all fell. God saw that there was no one who did good, no one righteous, not even one.
- And you know what he said? I'll do it. He looked and he found no one. It says, in Hebrews 10, it says, Behold, it is written, in the book concerning me, I have come to do your will.
- Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me. Jesus did God's will when we failed to do God's will, and he fulfilled the chief end of man, which is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.
- And now, he invites us into that. He said, You didn't do it. Like Esau, we sold our birthright. He says, I'm the last Adam. I did do it.
- And now, I poured out my life. I bought you from yourself so that in me, you can have a fulfillment of that. You can glorify God and enjoy him forever.
- [38 : 45] Okay? Okay, so, the church is an embassy, okay? We're an embassy of the kingdom of God, and this is the truth we're putting on display.
- We're not putting on display our good works, our good ideas, our excellent, you know, giftings and all that kind of stuff. We're just putting on display the glory of Jesus Christ because that's the purpose of the church is to glorify Jesus, to be a place where Jesus is accurately represented.
- Okay? And so, our sanctification isn't even about ourselves, it's about Jesus. Okay? So, when he says, be holy as I am holy, it's for his name sent.
- It's not about our personal happiness and our self-betterment, it's because he deserves it. He purchased us for himself that he might be glorified, that he might fulfill the chief end of man in us and through us for his glory.
- So, in a church, our church, a church, the church is an embassy of that. That is going to be the universal experience throughout all of creation when Jesus comes back and he ultimately makes all things new.
- [39 : 54] It's all going to be like that. Okay? But right now, where do you see this? Hopefully in the church. That's the purpose.
- That's why we're here. Okay? Okay? So, some exhortations. Try to finish it up quick here. Number one, does Jesus have first place in your life?
- Okay? Do you have a vision that's bigger than yourself? Are you using Jesus for a get out of hell card? Or a make me happy card? No.
- He bought you for himself for his sake. You don't get to be a Christian and have Jesus not have first place. There's just not a category for that.
- Okay? It's a one or a zero. Okay? Either he's Lord of everything or you are still not in Christ. Okay? Does Jesus have first place in your life?
- [40 : 55] Can you still have areas of rebellion in your life, resisting the Holy Spirit, and be a Christian? 100%. But that's why I'm preaching the sermon right now. Okay? That's the whole point. The Holy Spirit uses the preaching of the Word to put his finger on areas of your life where you're holding back.
- And he says, mine. It's mine. I will have preeminence in all things starting with you. Okay? Second, does Jesus have first place in our church?
- I love the imagery of the church as the bride of Christ. Okay? So, who is the chief in a bride's affection?
- Well, if it's a healthy bride, it's her groom. Okay? It's her husband. But I'm sure you've seen brides who are consumed with themselves. They love how pretty they look.

You know, it's all about them. The wedding's all about them. Everything's all about them. You know, he's just a means to getting her beauty on display for herself and the rest of the world. Okay? Unfortunately, we can be like that.

[42 : 02] Okay? You can be myopically focused with yourself and you're not focused on Jesus. A healthy church, her affection is towards her Savior, her husband.

Okay? Her affection is for her husband. His affection is for us. Okay? And because we love him, we love each other. We love his church. But it's for that reason. It's very important that it be for that reason.

Otherwise, it's just humanistic, self-interested love and as soon as you do me wrong, sorry, get out of here. Leave me alone. You know? Church hurt. You know? I'm not downplaying the fact that there's real wickedness that's hurtful.

But if we want to be in it to win it for the long haul, we have to have a bigger vision than people who make me feel good. Okay? Through Christ, I have a connection to each one of you if you're in Christ.

That's the basis of our fellowship. And my orientations towards Christ and if we're healthy, all of our orientations towards Christ and the church is beautified by his care and his affection towards us.

[43 : 11] Okay? Okay. Kind of more of a general question, but I think it's good in light of some of this big picture stuff. Why are you coming to this church specifically? Why are you coming to Christ's church?

Okay? There's a lot of reasons for coming to a church. I think some of them are bad reasons, at least ultimately. So here's some reasons that I think are bad ultimate reasons for coming to this church.

It's a smaller church. Okay? Probably pretty applicable to us who came out of a large church, Bellicose. So if you've said that to me, I'm not picking on you.

You're not the only one who said that to me. It's not bad to enjoy a smaller church. It's a bad ultimate reason. Okay? The Bible says, Jesus set each member in the body as he sees fit.

He's the boss. You're not the boss. My friends or family are here. Okay? Ironically, that's the reason I started going to church years ago is because my mom got sick.

[44 : 17] Eden got sick. And Bellicose was the church that our family went to. So, and the Lord used that, thankfully, to give me a lot of other reasons for it. It's a bad reason, though.

Okay? That's a bad ultimate reason. More opportunities for leadership. That one kind of seems more obviously bad, you know? That's a big church.

Kind of hard to climb the ladder over there. I'm going to go to a small church and, you know, kind of level up, you know? People can really appreciate me, my gifts, you know, a smaller church, you know? Again, yeah, God does call leaders, you know?

He gives us opportunity to exercise our gifts, but bad reason. Real bad reason to go to church. It's close to my house. I'm not picking on you, Andersons.

I know you actually live close here. We're looking at a church building and it's close to a lot of people's houses, okay? So, I'm not just picking on you. It'll be far away from your house then.

[45 : 14] Okay, it's close to my house. It's convenient, all right? It's not a terrible reason. Sometimes God serves us up some convenience. That's great. Thank you, Lord, for convenience.

I'm happy when I get it. I love when God gives me some convenience. Bad ultimate reason. Inconvenient lifestyle communicated in the pages of the New Testament. Very inconvenient, okay?

Jesus says, it's going to be inconvenient. Think about that ahead of time, okay? Count the cost, all right? What's a good ultimate, but there's a lot of other bad reasons, okay?

So, I'm sure you can think of some. What's a good ultimate reason to come to this church or any church? Jesus is worthy, okay? He died for all that all who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him.

You don't get to decide your life anymore. Jesus decides your life. He sets each member in the body as He sees fit, and He's boss, He's king, He's the Lord over everything, and He saved me, and He's going to keep me all the way to the end, and I'm so happy to not be running my life anymore.

[46 : 25] I'm just going to do whatever He says, okay? And He does say things to us. My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me. It's the inheritance of every Christian as we can actually hear Jesus talk to us, and when He says go, we go.

I might have all these other, you know, I might have some of these other motivations going on there, but you know what? I recognize them, and I subordinate them to the cross, and I say, no matter what, Lord, I'm going to set all that stuff aside.

What do you want me to do? That's a good reason, okay? Last one. Why advance the gospel?

Okay? Got this awesome church, awesome people, friendship. Why not just sit back and enjoy our little holy huddle, comfortable friendships, you know?

That Jesus would have preeminence in all things. That's why. Okay? That He would have preeminence in all things. the existence of every single person has only one ultimate purpose.

[47 : 35] It's Christ. It's for Him. And they're living in rebellion against God. He bought them. He made them for Himself, and then He bought them. Okay?

They have no right to withhold their life from Jesus Christ anymore. He gave Himself for them that they would be His, and I'm excited for them to be His.

And I want Jesus to have preeminence in all things. I'm not satisfied with my little Christian huddle here, however nice it is to be in a small church, enjoyable for a season.

If it's healthy, it won't be like that, and there'll be a lot of inconvenient people that you have to take care of for His sake. Jesus says, if you love me, feed my sheep. That's what He said to Peter.

Peter. So, why advance the gospel? That Jesus would have preeminence in all things. We need a vision bigger than ourselves.

[48 : 36] We need a vision bigger than our own salvation, than our own local church, and this is it. It's Jesus, that He would have preeminence in all things. He's the purpose for which everything was created.

I'm going to finish with Ephesians 3, 20 through 21. More of it as a benediction, okay? Now, to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.

Amen.