

# Introducing Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Father, we give you thanks and praise that we can gather together to be in your presence. Father, your word is said that Jesus is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

And we ask, Father, that the Holy Spirit would fall with might and power and deep conviction upon us who are gathered here. And upon as well those who are joining in with worship through YouTube Live.

Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would fall with might and power and deep conviction so that we might know Jesus. And in knowing Jesus, we might begin to know and understand ourselves truly. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your son and our savior. Amen. Please be seated. So isn't the Bible filled with contradictions?

That's a very common thing, which most Canadians would say, and that a lot of us Christians struggle with. Isn't the Bible full of contradictions? Today, we're going to begin the Gospel of Mark.

[ 1 : 04 ] And in fact, you want to turn in your Bibles to Mark chapter 1, verses 1 to 13. You could do that now. And so we're going to read Mark. And when we come to different parts of Mark, you'll notice some of you who know the Bible really well, or those of you who might sort of flip around later on, you'll see that Mark says some things differently than other people.

For instance, Mark is going to tell us about the baptism of Jesus. Well, all four of the ancient biographies about Jesus, known, we call them Gospels, but they're the ancient biographies based on eyewitness testimony, that the four different Gospel accounts, if you read them, there's some differences in them.

Three of the different accounts record the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. And if you read them, you'll notice some differences. And so how do we think about that?

Is it in fact the case that the Bible is filled with contradictions, contradictions, and therefore you can't really trust any of them as being historical or true? Well, God forbid, imagine for a moment that my wife Louise dies fairly soon, and maybe after COVID restrictions, so there can be a really, really big funeral and all of that type of stuff, because it would probably be very big.

And some of you might not know, but I have nine children. So whether it's during the funeral or afterwards, we have a time when the children and the sons and daughters-in-law and some of the older grandchildren can talk a little bit about what Louise was like.

[ 2 : 39 ] To some of you, most people would find that interesting. But I'm not going to let all nine and the seven sons and daughters-in-law get up and the older grandchildren. So they end up talking about it, they sort of group themselves a bit, and they end up deciding they pick four people who are going to get up and say something, and they sort of represent sort of different sort of interests.

And let's say my son Tosh or Jacob gets up, and they decide that what they'd really like to do is they'd like to share the conversations that Louise has had with them, fundamentally.

Like the private, more in particular the private sort of things, you know, that would take place late at night or talking about some of the deep things that have been going on in their lives. And so the first person gets up, and that's what they focus on.

They don't talk a lot about what Louise has done. They mention very few things, but they really talk about how these particular things and the conversation they had with Louise, how significant it was for them. Well, that person, in a sense, is what happens when you read the Gospel of John.

That's what John's like. Then you get another couple, and they've been really struck with how Louise has a very, very kind heart.

[ 3 : 53 ] She's the type of person who notices the child who's unhappier by itself, that would notice the person standing by themselves during coffee hour, the person who really has a concern for

animals, is concerned for their neighbors, and is just very outgoing, not intimidated by somebody who's maybe like a street person or has severe handicaps, but is really just drawn to them and is very friendly to them.

And so that person gets up and shares about Louise primarily in terms of those types of categories. And that, in a sense, would be as if you read the Gospel of Luke.

And then some of the others just really thought that Louise had a lot of really neat sayings, you know, like, you know, one of her sayings is if a child cries, you know, pick it up.

But she has a lot of different sayings. And so they give a talk. They talk about the different things that Louise maybe did, but they primarily talk about some of these just little sayings that Louise had or that she would be known for.

And that, in a sense, is like reading the Gospel of Matthew. And then maybe it would be my two sons who are engineers, and they like to have things shorter and briefer and maybe focus on what actually happened or what didn't happen.

[ 5 : 10 ] And they get up and they talk about Louise, and they give you really short little brief word pictures about the things that Louise did and how she handled things. And in a sense, that's what happens when you're reading the Gospel of Mark.

Now, all four of the conversations flow out of the nine children and seven sons and daughters-in-law and the older and younger grandchildren.

And none of them contradict each other. They just want to talk about Louise in different ways. And there'd be some overlapping. And if you had gone back afterwards and said, one moment, I thought you said there was two people there, and I thought you said there was one person.

And they said, oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I didn't want to clutter my account up with that because I wanted to try to communicate this about Louise. And if you understand that, then you understand how the four Gospels are written.

And you'll see that, in fact, they're just telling that they have their own different type of way they're trying to communicate who Jesus is, just as in the funeral, there'd be four different ways of trying to communicate who Louise is.

[ 6 : 13 ] And none of them contradict each other. If you ask them, the facts would all be the same, but they just want to emphasize different things. Now, I mention this as well because if some of you have written, I've read, you know, or heard sermons or read Bible studies about different things like the Gospel of Mark.

And some people write Bible studies or do sermons. What they really do is they take the incident, they look in a sense at all four of the things of the baptism or all three of the temptations. In a sense, they give you an overall view of all of them.

Generally speaking, when I go through the Gospel of Mark, I'm not going to do that. I'm just going to read Mark's account. I want us to hear and get the sense of how Mark wants to introduce Jesus to us.

So generally, I won't do any of that. But that's just for those of you wondering about contradictions, that basically handles all of the apparent contradictions, which aren't real, that take place in the four Gospels.

So what we're looking at here, we don't know exactly when it was written, but according to church history, it was probably written in the early 50s, zero 50s, not 1950s.

[ 7 : 13 ] And it's based on eyewitness testimony. And Mark is very self-appreciating, but there's a little thing at the end that shows that he was a direct eyewitness of some of these things, and he was a very close confidant of the apostles and the disciples.

And so this is how he tells the story of Jesus, and he introduces it like this. Verse 1, Now, one of the things about Mark is he's brief.

He's the shortest of all of the biographies by far. He's brief, and he gets to the point. Those of you who like one-page summaries of things will like Mark.

Those of you who like Victorian novels with lots of description will find him frustrating time and time and time again. But if you like brief and to the point, you're going to love the Gospel of Mark.

And here you have, first of all, this one sentence is very packed. First of all, notice that he makes a direct claim that Jesus is God, the Son of God. A direct claim that he is God, the Son of God.

[ 8 : 19 ] But the other thing here, it's a bit more subtle, and those of you who know the Bible very well might have picked it up, and it's actually very obvious in the original language. When Mark says

the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that word beginning, so originally it would have been written in Greek.

When the ancient Jewish people, a couple of centuries before the birth of Jesus, because Greek was the language, sort of the common language of most of that part of the ancient world, they took what we call the Old Testament and our Jewish friends call the Tanakh, they took it and translated it into Greek because there were a lot of Jewish people who could no longer read or speak Hebrew. And they still wanted them to have the Tanakh, the Torah, God's Word. And so they translated it into Greek. This is done before there were Christians. And so if you were to go and read the Greek translation of Genesis, the book of Genesis begins, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

And Mark's Gospel begins the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And the word beginning is the same in both cases. So what Mark is signifying here in a very, very simple way is that God is going to do a new creation.

He made the original creation. The original creation has been marred by sin and death has come, evil has come. And in this now marred and disfigured original creation, God is going to do a new creation.

[ 9 : 48 ] And this is the beginning of this tale of how God brings about the beginning of the new creation in the lives of human beings. And it's this good news that God has created a new beginning, a new creation.

And it's going to be about how Jesus does this, who's the Messiah. And by the way, he's also the Son of God. Now, one of the things which we now need to know is he's now going to quote the Bible.

A couple of years ago, I came across this really neat description. It's called, it's actually a very Canadian thing. I just was thinking about it when I was working on the Gospel this week that maybe I should use it more often because it's something which on one level would resonate, I think, with Canadians.

It's the idea of subversive fulfillment. Subversive fulfillment. What the Gospel does is on one level, it's very subversive.

You're going to see this in the beginning. It subverts pretensions of power. It subverts our pride. It subverts, it's subversive of just the way the dominant stories of Canada and the dominant intellectuals of Canada want to see the world.

[ 11 : 06 ] It subverts that. But at the same time, it actually fulfills our deepest longings and yearnings. That in a sense, what the ideologies, the religions, the spiritualities, the pride and pretension, the stories of our world, what we really hope for, well, the Gospel is going to subvert it.

But it's actually going to fulfill what was really true and the heart of the longing behind it. So Mark gets right to this in how he begins to now tell the story of Jesus.

Look at what he does at verses 2 and 3. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, Behold, I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Now actually, it's sort of a longer thing and I won't go into it.

Actually, you know, what it is, it's a little bit like that. Some of you, I used to have a bulletin. We used to have a bulletin and in the bulletin, I'd always have a little blurb. And I discovered that if I took a legal pad and I wrote with my handwriting and I wrote double-spaced, that three pages of double-spaced writing on a legal pad perfectly fit in our bulletin for my blog.

[ 12 : 34 ] And so that was a very, very, it helped, I was always conscious with every line that the paper's running out. And that's one of the ways you have to understand with Mark, you know, paper's expensive, equivalent of paper's very, very expensive.

He has a very small bundle of papers. He's going to be very conscious of all of the things. But actually what happens is he just mentions that the first part of this quote is from Isaiah, the other two parts are from Exodus and Malachi.

It just doesn't include that. It's sort of irrelevant. It's a bit of a geeky thing to be able to put all of that stuff done. The first part's Isaiah, the other two parts, and sort of the bracketing bit is Exodus and Malachi.

But the significance is this. This new creation that God is going to do through the person of Jesus is something that he, through the prophets, have predicted from the first writer of the Bible, which is

Moses, to the last writer of the Bible, which is Malachi, and typified by the greatest of the prophets, which is the book of Isaiah.

And the Jewish people who would have been very familiar with the scripture and picked up the fact that this is a jumble of quotes to create one consistent message of Isaiah, Exodus, and Malachi, they would have got, whoa, he's saying that the entire Old Testament from beginning to end, what our Jewish friends call the Tanakh, this entire bit is being fulfilled.

[ 13 : 59 ] And in here, and this is where the subversive fulfillment comes up, one of the problems that the Jewish people had at the time with understanding that, at first, that Jesus was actually this Messiah, is, well, this text, you mean, it says here, prepare the way of the Lord, in verse 3, make his path straight.

Well, that's, that's, that's God. That's the, that's God. And so, the Jewish people were aware of things like this, and they would have just said, well, listen, the text, what the texts are talking about, this is, this would have been their frame of reference.

The texts are saying that someday God is going to fix our problems and bring in, in a sense, a new world, a new order. God himself is going to fix things someday.

And they would have just understood that, that, I don't know, that he would do miracles, like the way he did, made the waters part of the Red Sea, or some of the other miracles that he did in the Old Testament, that he, he, he would do it that way, and he would do it for the Jewish people.

But what they didn't understand is that Jesus is subversively, sub, not sub, yeah, subvert, he's being subversive of their expectations, but he still fulfills it. He's being subversive, first of all, because it's not that God is going to remain completely and utterly distant while he does that, he's actually going to come and walk amongst us.

[ 15 : 21 ] And the second thing is that he's going to make things right, not just for the Jewish people, but for all human beings who put their faith and trust in him, for every people group. You see, they have their, their, their mindset, their way of thinking through things, and on one level, Jesus is going to subvert it.

And we don't like having our way of thinking subverted. But on the other hand, if you get over it, if you get over yourself, what's really going on is a profound fulfillment, a fulfillment in a way which is far more deep and amazing and beautiful and wonderful than you would have even dreamed was possible.

And so how does he fulfill it? Well, look, verse 4, and you can see this right off the bat because it's going to say this thing that the Lord is going to do these things, but the Lord has sandals.

What? How can the Lord wear Birkenstocks? Yeah, I know. Ha ha. Socks as well as with my sandals.

What can you say? I am a walking fashion disaster. That's all I can say. One of the reasons I wear a clergy shirt every week is so, you know, sometimes I wear a collar, sometimes I don't, is I say to my Baptist friends and Pentecostal friends, I say, gosh, you know, I don't have enough clothes to wear new things.

[ 16 : 42 ] If I had to be like you, everybody in the congregation would say, didn't he wear that shirt two weeks ago? And that shirt, doesn't he know that you're supposed to match this with that and this with that and you'd get lost in it?

So I just, I basically wear the same thing every week. It just gets around it. It's like uniform. That's, I don't have, because I'm not a clothes horse. Anyway, I really got way off the track. Look, look what happens in verse four.

John appeared and those of you who are a bit puzzled, a bit new to the Christian faith or just trying to figure it out, there's two important Johns in the New Testament.

There's John the Apostle or the disciple and there's John the Baptist and this is John the Baptist, not John the disciple. So John appeared baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. Now just sort of pause there for a second. What's going on with his dress?

[ 17 : 55 ] So first of all, what's going on here is that, well actually, we'll back up a sec. One of the things which would be obvious in our culture, it wouldn't raise any eyebrows, it would just, people would just nod with it, is that it's a common place in our culture and in our culture we think it's just reason has taught us this, that philosophers have reasoned and come to an enlightened position

and in that enlightened position something like the following is just obvious.

And the obvious thing is that often the powerful and the rich are blind. They're blinded by their privilege, they're blinded by their position in society, they're blinded from being protected from what ordinary people have to go through and because they're blind and blinded by their power and position, the people who can really understand what's going on are often the people who are outside of the power.

They are the people who, and in fact, we'd also just take it for granted that in our culture if you find out that a politician is saying something or a media person is saying something but you also find out that they're dependent upon financial donations of somebody that you can't really trust their word, that the people you can trust the most are the people who aren't financially beholden to powerful people and that it's often the people who are in the weaker positions, the outsider positions that can more fully see and understand what's going on.

And in Canada, we would just take this as a common place and in fact, for most Canadians, if you were to ask the editorial board of Globe and Mail or the National Post or if you were to go to university faculty, they would just say, well, that's just something that enlightened, reasonable people have understood.

But here's the thing, it's not an enlightened, and reasonable idea. Well, I mean, it is enlightened and reasonable, but it's not something that just came by natural human reason. It's a Christian idea. It's a Christian idea to completely and utterly separate.

[ 19 : 55 ] Our culture has forgotten that they got it from the Bible. You see, that's what's being signified right here. That John is out in the wilderness and people are coming and the language of the fact that how he's dressed, that's signifying that he's in a sense modeling himself in his dress over Elijah, one of the greatest of the prophets, and the fact that he's eating locusts and wild honey, what that shows is that he's foraging off the land.

He's not a beggar and he's not rich. And here we have this picture of the person who's preparing the way for God is somebody not in a palace, not in a position at the top of the academy, not at the top of the media, not at the top of the arts, not at the top of business, not at the part of the civil service or the bureaucracy, but someone in the wilderness.

And someone in the wilderness who's not dependent upon begging and isn't rich but is just living off the land and is foraging, he is able to speak truth into the culture and truth to power.

It's a Christian idea. That's where it comes from. In fact, if you just think about it for a second, if somebody had gone to the emperor Nero who would have been or one of the Roman emperors, I can't remember who the emperor would have been at this, would have been, I think, Caesar Augustus or was the guy after Caesar Augustus.

Doesn't matter. If somebody had gone up to him, they'd go back in a time capsule and say, oh, by the way, Caesar Augustus or by the way, Nero, did you know that your position of privilege has blinded you so that you can't actually understand what's really going on and what the meaning of life is and that the people who really have the understanding about the way life is going are the people who don't have any particular power.

[ 21 : 41 ] Now, if you said that to a Roman emperor, you'd have to hope that he'd just laugh, that he'd be shocked for a moment and then say, oh, you know, because he's used to having mad men and mad women around and he's used to having fools and gestures and he'd just laugh.

But if he actually thought you were serious, he would just kill you. he would just kill you. He'd probably do both, laugh about how stupid you are and then kill you. You see, the idea that you have to be separate from power to speak truth to power isn't a reasonable idea that comes from just pure reason.

It comes from the Bible. It's a biblical idea. And that's what's going on here. So we have John described as a prophet foraging off the land in the wilderness.

And what is it that he says? And here's now where we go back to this subversive fulfillment of these prophecies about what God is going to do to rescue and deliver his people.

Verse 7, And he preached, saying, After me, after me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

[ 22 : 57 ] I'm going to say that again. After me comes he who is mightier than I. And this word mightier doesn't just imply that he's stronger, like he's won the world's strongest man competition.

It's a bigger word of might and it's connected to words like glory and majesty and worth and rank. After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

And then he says this, I have baptized you with water but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. In other words, who is this person? Who is this God that I'm introducing God?

I'm saying prepare the way of the Lord. But one moment the Lord wears sandals. And how do you know that it's the Lord, that it's actually God? Because only God can actually tell the Holy Spirit, ask the Holy Spirit to do something and that the Holy Spirit can actually come upon you and come upon you and immerse you in God's saving work.

Immerse you completely and utterly. Only God can do that. And John the Baptist says this person is coming and he's going to wear sandals and I am not worthy to stoop down and take a position lower than the lowest slave and actually deal with his sandals.

[ 24 : 31 ] Now let's just be frank. This is a very, very unattractive idea to Canadians. To the average Canadian, this, to the average Canadian, the idea that there is one that you are not worthy to stoop down and untie their sandals, that doesn't resonate with anybody at all, with most Canadians.

What does resonate with Canadians? When they meet someone greater or someone who's exalted? I'm just as good as them.

In fact, I'm probably better. Sorry to point in that direction just to make it all evil. I'm just, I'm just as good as them. In fact, probably even better.

Isn't that what resonates with Canadians? Like if you were together having coffee at your favorite coffee place and you're talking about somebody at work who's just gotten a promotion and who seems to now be strutting around as if they're a big important person and if you said, you know, I'm just as good as them, I'm probably better.

All of the other people would go like this and they'd all be thinking the same thing. I'm just as good as that person. In fact, I'm probably better. That's what resonates with Canadians.

[ 25 : 56 ] You see, in our heart of hearts for most Canadians, so everybody you meet, they have real intellectual objections to why Christianity can't be true, but in our heart of hearts as Canadians, we don't want the gospel to be true.

We don't want it to be true because what does not resonate with me is that he is so, of such great worth, of such great worth that apart from grace, I am not worthy to even touch his sandals.

That doesn't resonate with me. What resonates with me is I'm just as good as you and probably better. So in our heart of hearts, we don't want the gospel to be true. We don't want the gospel to be true.

Now, our Muslim friends, and that would include our Muslim friends who are Canadians, they would be the exception to this.

Our Muslim friends would say, stupid Canadians, I mean, not obviously, maybe in public, what they'd think. Of course, the messenger of Allah is of such great worth.

[ 27 : 20 ] Of course, it's a foolishness of Canadians to not acknowledge the greatness of Allah and the greatness of the messenger of Allah. What John says here, that is reasonable.

But then, the Bible throws a monkey wrench of subversive fulfillment to the average Canadian and a monkey wrench in the way our Muslim friends would understand the text with what happens in the very next few verses.

Look at what it says in verses 9 and following. In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was, just by the way, that would be like saying, I'm George from Brudenell.

And none of you have heard of Brudenell. Well, some of you have because I've used that as an example in other sermons. But like, Brudenell is like nowhere. It's not like saying, hi, I'm George from Manhattan.

You know? I'm George from Brudenell. Actually, I'm not from Brudenell. I'm from Montreal. But you get the point. Anyway, in those days, verse 9, in those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was, what?

[ 28 : 42 ] He was baptized by John in the Jordan. What? I thought John just said that he wasn't worthy to untie the sandals of Jesus. What? Jesus is getting baptized by John?

That's all wrong. That's what our Muslim friends would say. That's all wrong. He shouldn't lower himself and humble himself before John. John should be baptized by Jesus.

Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. The only people who are getting baptized are ordinary people confessing their sins. What is Jesus doing getting baptized by John in the Jordan? And then it continues to mess up our minds.

Look at verse 10. And when he, that is Jesus, came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the spirit descending on him like a dove and a voice came from heaven.

You are my beloved son. With you, I am well pleased. By the way, remember I said one of the things which Mark excels at, he's like a very, very excellent artist who can just use with a few lines draw these wonderful word pictures.

[ 30 : 01 ] And for many people it's hard for them to understand the Trinity but you begin to enter into the understanding of the Trinity by just looking at this very simple word picture of Jesus who's been identified as the Lord in the earlier texts and as the Son of God and that as he comes out of heaven, as he comes out of the water that the heavens, the presence of God are parted and that the voice of God the Father speaks while the Holy Spirit descends on him.

You have this wonderful little word picture in just a few words of the doctrine of the Trinity. But then after this thing, it continues to mess up our minds.

Verse 12, the Spirit immediately what? Took him to the editorial office to the Globe and Mail, took him to Oxford or Stanford or Harvard, took him to Washington to become the new president or the UK to become the new prime minister of England or to Ottawa to become the new prime minister of Canada or the United Nations to become the head of the United Nations.

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness and he was in the wilderness 40 days.

What? Being tempted by Satan. How could God, the Son of God, allow himself to spend 40 days being beaten around by Satan?

And he was with the wild animals and don't think of cute deer. I was just in Vancouver. I didn't realize this but you know that they had to close Stanley Park for a while because the coyotes were running wild and they were a danger to the public.

[ 31 : 38 ] It was only when the coyotes started actually biting people and especially a child that they finally realized they had to cull it. So don't think deer. Think coyotes. Think mountain lions.

Think things that would like to eat you as a snack. Not things that you could feed with grass. And he was in the wilderness 40 days being tempted by Satan and he was with the wild animals and the angels were ministering to him.

Here's what's going on in this text. You see on one hand we Canadians what we don't like is the idea we're conflicted.

We're conflicted because on one hand it resonates deep within us as Canadians that I'm just as good as you and maybe probably better.

but at the same time what are the commercials all appeal to? The commercials appeal to the fact that you should have this luxurious holiday.

[ 32 : 48 ] You should have this luxurious car. Why? Because you deserve it. You deserve it. And that speaks deep to our hearts as well.

And what speaks deep to our hearts is that if we could just have if we could just win the lottery if we could just buy the apple shares go back in time and buy the apple shares when they were first available and hence make lots and lots and lots and lots of money that if we could do that gosh we would eat in better places and gosh we would have a servant to take out the garbage and gosh we wouldn't sully our hands with this and gosh we wouldn't do that and that appeals to us as well.

See all these things appeal to us at different times in the same human being without realizing on one level we would like to be that person who everybody else is pointing to and actually in our hearts of hearts we would say to ourselves everybody else is pointing at me and saying I'm just as good as them and maybe I'm just as good as you and maybe even better and they're all saying that but they're wrong.

Wouldn't we doesn't that also resonate? They're wrong. I am better. I am smarter. I have worked harder and I haven't just worked harder I've worked smarter because I am smarter and that resonates with you as well.

How is it that both resonate with you? Eh? Like what type of a person are you and am I that on one level I'd say no you're not better than me I am better than you and then the very next moment I'd look at somebody else and say I'm better than you're not better than me I'm better than you and why is it that it resonates with us that if we just had the money we wouldn't do this we wouldn't do

that we wouldn't do that we wouldn't stoop to this why is it that that resonates with us as well and yet and yet and yet and yet isn't it true that at the same time mixed with all these things and it's those those first types of things that we all say and all express because in our heart of hearts we don't want Christianity to be true in my heart of hearts before I became a Christian I did not want God I did not want the gospel to be true why?

[ 35 : 01 ] well because in a sense I was terrified with texts like this that to become a Christian I would have to become weird like John the Baptist and wear weird clothes and act weird and I didn't want to be weird excuse me but at the same time at the same time when we look at this here's here's here's the other thing that we all sense at the same time and this is why at our hearts of hearts we really even though you don't we think we don't want the gospel to be true if you really look at your heart you do want the gospel to be true one of the things that it gets mentioned by occasionally by the same reporters who cheer on the closures and other things as at different times throughout the whole COVID thing over the last two years or whatever it feels like forever occasionally there have been people who've commented on the fact that the government will make an announcement on Tuesday or Wednesday and then businesses have to close like three days later like okay like they don't it's as if they don't identify with and they don't identify with or care for small business owners or the people who have to work at the Tim Hortons or who you know who work in the gas stations the people pushing the carts at Walmart and filling the shelves at the Metro and the Loblaws and it's as if what we say part of us is that these people they just sit there on their keyboards in their really nice house in a nice part of Ottawa and they make these decisions and they just make these decisions and then they say

I think I'm going to have myself a nice glass of wine and some expensive cheese and meanwhile a whole pile of people that are lower working class or just working class people are out of jobs and small business owners are out of jobs and what do we on one hand really deeply also identify with is that we think that if powerful people actually identified with ordinary people and weak people and broken people that they would they would rule in a wiser way that that is the direction of wisdom is to not just is to identify with the weak and the powerless and because we excuse me we understand that it's connected to love you know when I was telling those stories about my you know how they talk about my wife I mean one of the things about my wife is she loves children I was staying with somebody you know you think with nine kids I'd be better I have four of my grandchildren around the table I'm not quite sure what to say to them you know one of them is I think nine and then one seven like ten eight six and four and I'm not you know we have a few little things

I don't know what to say and we're all you know and then my wife sits down she sits down and says to the kids if you had a parrot what would you teach it to say what a brilliant thing to ask four kids she understands and identifies with what it's like to be a kid and all of a sudden all four of them are chatting away that if they had a parrot what they teach it to say that's a free gift if you have to spend some time with kids just ask them if you had a parrot what would you teach it to say and we all understand that that being able to identify with the small the weak the lowly that that's a mark of love that that's a mark of wisdom when we see that we say gosh I wish I could have thought of something like that and when we we see government or other people just turn off for a second I just need to call okay I think I'm fine and you see that's exactly what's going on here in the text see how the the Bible what happens is we look at the we look at the Bible we look at the gospel we think that we know and we think we can stand in judgment and we don't want it to be true but we don't understand what the Bible does is it starts to begin to reveal our hearts and the contradictory nature of our hearts and it subverts the things within us that aren't good but actually starts to fulfill the things because for most of us what matters the most is things like love what matters the most is things like truth what matters the most is to be a person who lives out of love and lives out of truth none of us want to be a person who lives according to the lie none of us want to be a person who lives out of hatred out of envy envy is a sin that gives us no pleasure that just feels us we feel sorrow at another person's success it doesn't and we would rather not live out of that but be free and what we see here is this what does Jesus do

Jesus identifies with ordinary people that's why he's baptized and what's in fact is even more profound is that Jesus identifies with ordinary people at the very very very depth of who they are and that's the significance of the fact that for 40 days for 40 days he's alone with Jesus Jesus puts himself in a sense allows Satan to hammer him for 40 days to be tempted and here's why it is that Jesus this story is telling us that Jesus identifies with human beings at the very very very very

deepest level there's a person who's just got a promotion he thinks he's better than everybody else and I happen to have just come across a piece of news that if I told it it would really puncture him would make him look foolish and everybody would laugh and especially if I exaggerate aspects of it and if I exaggerate aspects of it

I can really put that person in their place and everybody will laugh and chuckle and I'll feel pretty good now it's wrong to do that isn't it how long can I stop from telling a group of people and with a group of people they all don't like this person they would really laugh we would really have a good time I hold off for 10 seconds and the pressure is too much I just got to say it or maybe I'm feeling really strong and I wait a minute I wait a minute and a half I wait five minutes but finally I give in the pressure to do it builds and builds and builds and builds until I give it in and if I'm a very very shallow person I give in after one second in fact I don't even give in I just jump right at it I start to become convicted of the Christian faith and I realize I shouldn't do something like that so I wait five seconds as I mature as a Christian I can wait a minute I can wait two minutes but eventually I give in to the temptation to sin who is the only person who understands human behavior and human motivation the most is the one who could have that temptation and endure the temptation and endure the temptation until the temptation has lost its power that is the only person who actually understands the depth of human experience and is identified with the depth of human experience and that is

[ 42 : 22 ] Jesus who set aside his glory and divine splendor and gets taken remaining fully God takes into himself our human nature and lives and walks amongst us and identifies with you and me here's the here's the point the son of God Jesus stooped lower than low for you so that you stooped and broken by your sin might stand whole and free as his new creation before other people and the triune God the son of God Jesus stooped lower than low for you so that you stooped and broken by your sin might stand whole and free as his new creation before other people and the triune God he identifies with us only without sin he identifies with you to the depth of who you are and he dies for you it's not going to be on the screen

I forgot to ask Claire to do it those of you have Bibles if those of you aren't you can just listen can you just flip over to Mark chapter 15 I apologize that it's not on the screen but Mark 15 and if you look at Mark 15 it's the text it's at the end of Mark towards the end of Mark 15 where Jesus is killed dies on the cross and if you just look at verse 37 it goes like this and Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last and the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom the same word the only other time in the word the gospels that the word torn appears is at the baptism of Jesus and when the curtain of the temple is torn after the death of Jesus and the beginning of the gospel begins with this is the gospel of Jesus the son of God he's identified as the Lord and what happens right after that and when the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he breathed his last said truly this man was the son of God Mark ties the beginning of who Jesus is and his identification with sinners with his death upon the cross and what it accomplishes the way to God is open he has identified with you and not despised you but loved you he stoops because he sees your sin he sees that your sin has stooped you and broken you and he stoops even lower for you that when you put your faith and trust in him that process of not being like this but begin to be able to stand and to be whole that that process can begin today for those in Jesus and will continue on until it's perfectly finished in the new heaven and the new earth where we will sing together free at last free at last praise God almighty I am free at last in worship and adoration of the father the son and the holy spirit please stand for each of us here who are in Christ it's just a time to say Jesus thank you so much that you stooped thank you that your word as I believe and trust your word as I am gripped again by what you did for me and how much you love me and how you see the contradictory things going on in my heart but that you subvert those things but you fulfill the even deeper longing for love and truth and freedom and wholeness which I have and so we can thank God again for Jesus and if you are here or if you are watching and you do not know Jesus there is no better time than now to say Jesus I want to be free at last I want to be free at last and so I bow before you and ask to be ask you to be my savior and my lord and thank you Jesus for what you did for me identifying for me and dying on the cross for me be my savior and be my lord let's bow our heads in prayer father pour out the holy spirit upon us and upon all who are watching pour out the holy spirit upon us father we give you thanks and praise that Jesus is your beloved son that you sent him on this mission to redeem us who are broken stooped by sin that we might be free in him and free in you and free before other people father we ask that

you continue to have your holy spirit move in our lives your word to move in our lives the chain by chain within us wound by wound within us sin by sin within us is slowly dealt with and that under his loving care and your loving supervision and the power of the holy spirit we know more and more the freedom and the wholeness and the love and the truth which you desire for us as your children and we ask this in the name of Jesus your son and our savior and all God's people said amen