

Are We Talking about the Same God?

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[0 : 00] Father, the scripture text warns us that the God of this age can blind our hearts. And Father, your word tells us that we, by our human efforts, cannot stop this.

Father, we call out to you. We ask for your mercy. Father, you see us as we really are. You see the unseen presences as well. And we ask, Father, that you would gently but deeply and powerfully pour out your Holy Spirit upon us.

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. That you would, Father, shine the light of your gospel in the center of who we are. That Jesus would truly be our Savior and Lord.

That you would make us disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, who are living for your glory. Father, this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. Amen. Amen.

Amen. So, this week, so all week, I'm looking at the scripture text. And on Friday, I have a conversation with somebody at one of my favorite coffee shops.

[1 : 04] I've had several conversations with this person. And they make a point of telling me that they just watched a television show this week. And in the television show, it revolves around a person that is the Antichrist.

And God keeps telling people to try to kill the Antichrist. And the Antichrist is a very sympathetic figure. A bit obviously conflicted. But, you know, we like conflicted figures.

But a sympathetic figure. And God's trying to, is telling people to go and kill this person. And so my friend tells me this. And she says, I hate this.

You know, I hate, I hate the way it seems that God's always telling people to kill other people. And so, you know, for many in our culture, the way they understand and the way we understand who God is, there's something very common in our culture today.

That for many people in our culture, they fear that the God that religious people talk about and that even spiritual people talk about, that his, or I guess in our culture, they'd say her or it or whatever, but that, I'll use Christian language, that the God that religious or Christian people talk about, that if you get close to him, where you listen to him or you read his scriptures, that all he's going to want to do is ultimately have you kill people or do other really, really bad things towards you.

[2 : 38] And it's so interesting that I had this conversation after I'd been thinking about the scripture text all week because it was one of those times where the scripture text that I'd been thinking about all week really helped me to be able to explain to her, talk to her about her particular fears.

So it'd be a great help to me if you would open your Bibles and turn to 2 Corinthians 4, verses 1 to 6. And I don't know if you noticed it, but there's some stuff in this text of the Bible that really addresses our fears and helps us in conversations like this.

And let's be honest as well. This isn't just a fear that goes on outside of the church, but many Christians at different times in our lives, maybe some of you here this morning, you fear that if you get too close to Jesus, if you take the Bible too seriously, that it's going to call you to do things that's going to hurt you, that's going to make you less of a person.

It's going to belittle you. It's not just a fear that there's outside, but many of us at some level have that deep type of a fear as well, that if we trust God's word, if we trust Jesus, it's going to hurt us. And so it's almost as if we want to say, don't be too close to Jesus. Well, we know that you're not allowed to say that. That's not the right thing to say. And so we're conflicted as well, if we're honest.

[3 : 56] So let's look. And actually, it's interesting because the text at first glance, and this often happens with the Bible, at first glance, the text doesn't seem as if it's going to be very helpful. But actually, right off the bat in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, it says something very, very powerful and very, very helpful.

It's one of those things that it doesn't look helpful, but it actually is helpful if we stop and think about it. Because it begins like this. Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. Now, you know, it has that word therefore there. I know I'm going to lose you as soon as I make a grammar geek type of moment, but it just means it's following on what had just been said before in chapter 3.

And if you were here last week or you just happen to know the Bible, it's talking about new covenant ministry. It's talking about a type of ministry, which isn't just something that is all about things you just do to the outside of your body, learn to do this and learn to do this.

And I don't know, learn to sing like this and all. It's not about it. It's that there's a type of that God is doing something through his Holy Spirit, through the death and resurrection of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, that actually touches us at the level of the heart, that changes our hearts, gives us live hearts, that writes on our hearts, that changes our relationship with God.

[5 : 15] And that's the ministry that he's talking about. But notice how it goes. Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. Why is that significant?

It doesn't sound like it's going to help us, but why is it very significant? If you could put the first point up, that would be great. Our culture and our time were very confused about these things.

But there can be justice without mercy. There can be justice without mercy. But there can be no mercy without justice. There can be justice without mercy.

There can be no mercy without justice. One of the things which is so wonderful about the Bible, and is as you read it, and it's not just the Bible, it's the words of Jesus that are recorded in the Bible, that as you read the Bible, justice is always highly valued.

The Bible never, ever, ever tells us to disregard justice. It never tells us that we should do something and choose injustice over justice. It never says that, well, you know, some people think this is justice, and some people think this is injustice, and, you know, we don't really have you.

[6 : 28] Just do whatever is going to work best. Just be practical. No. Justice is a high, high value consistently taught in the Scriptures. It's always taught that you pursue justice and you flee injustice.

It's a very, very high value woven into all of the Scriptures. But in our culture, what we often think of is, what we think of sort of justice is, well, we sort of want justice for other people, but we don't really want mercy for ourselves.

What we want is a pass. What we want is to be, in a sense, almost as if the rigors of justice, that that bright light of justice isn't shone into our heart, that there's just, or into how we live our lives, is that there's just a basic acceptance that in every case, we have a valid excuse and we need to be given a pass.

But the Bible here, it's very, very fascinating. With its emphasis on mercy, unless we understand that in the biblical world, you can have justice without mercy.

Many of us have faced a boss or a teacher or somebody and they've been just to the level of the law, letter of the law, and we wish that they'd show us some mercy and they didn't show us any mercy.

[7 : 44] That happens all of the time. But when the Bible talks about mercy, it's assuming that there's perfect justice. And that mercy is something, in a sense, deeper than justice.

They're both perfectly in God, so you can't really talk about one being deeper. But from a human point of view, you can. That God is completely and utterly just.

And sometimes, in fact, he's always merciful. And mercy, when it's shown in the presence of justice, justice always requires sacrifice by the one who's showing mercy.

If I want to show somebody mercy because they've stolen from me, justice says, you've stolen from me. Justice says, you've stolen \$1,000 from me, or \$5,000, or \$50.

And justice is just very clear and frank about that. And maybe it's something that I could call the police on. But if I was to show them mercy, if I have some sense that this is a particular case where I am to show mercy, then true mercy in that case will maybe mean that I have to swallow the loss of a lot of that money, maybe all of that money.

[8 : 59] And I think that's one of the reasons why in our culture we have a great problem with this whole idea of mercy. Because we, on one hand, always want there to be justice, but when it comes to us, we don't like this idea that we've actually done something terribly, deeply wrong, that a debt of some type has to be paid and satisfied, that we might be in such a weak position.

So we want a pass. But the Bible doesn't say, therefore having this ministry because we've been given a pass. It says, therefore having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. If you could put the next point up, that would be great. If the first point was that there can be justice without mercy, there can be no mercy without justice. The second point is that we think that justice is our greatest need.

But God in his mercy knows that mercy is our greatest need. God in his mercy knows that mercy is our greatest need.

We want rights. God offers justice and mercy. And in fact, it's beyond that. We're going to be talking about this quite a bit in a couple of weeks.

[10:17] But one of the things which is so wonderful about the cross of Jesus is that in the cross of Jesus, God is constantly perfectly just. But mercy triumphs in a sense over judgment and God's justice.

And God shows mercy to us in the person of his Son at great cost to himself. He shows us mercy. He sees you and me perfectly.

He sees us with perfect justice. And with his perfect justice in his eyes of love, he sees that by justice alone, we are in deep trouble. And because he loves us, he offers mercy.

Now, some of you might say, George, I don't know what to think about that. You know, here's the thing I wonder about with that, George. I mean, that sounds, I mean, I have to think about it, you know, justice and mercy.

And I have to think about it. But, you know, George, you know, sometimes, you know, you're saying that the cross, there's perfect justice and perfect mercy. You know, George, one of the things I notice about spiritual people is they often just say contradictory things and then they just say it, you know, as if somehow contradictory things can just both be true at the same time.

[11:36] And, you know, they sort of smile and it's just spiritual. You know, like, George, I've read Kahil Gibran and it's just a whole pile of contradictory things written in a certain flowery type of tone that looks spiritual.

But if you actually look at it, it's just nonsense. I didn't really mean to insult people who like Kahil Gibran, but I'm actually going to probably stick by what I said. And then other people say, you know, George, the thing about religious people is they're full of contradictions.

They say one thing for others, but they're really trying to do very, very different types of things. And so, George, like, I can't remember everything about the scripture text and I forgot my Bible and I'm just listening to you, but didn't when you read the Bible just a few minutes ago, 2 Corinthians 4, didn't the Bible contradict itself just within a couple of verses?

Didn't it say we don't preach ourselves, but didn't it also say that we commend ourselves? Like, isn't that just sort of a, you know, George, it's just so full of contradictions it doesn't really make sense.

Well, that, I mean, maybe you did notice that. Is the Bible contradicting itself? Is what many people say about spiritual? I mean, often it's very true that spiritual people will just say completely contradictory things that don't make any sense, but because it's spiritual they can say it.

[12:49] Like, is that, is the Bible like that? Like, look down at verse 5. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ is Lord with ourselves for your servants, as your servants for Jesus' sake.

But look up at verse 2. So it says we have this ministry by the mercy of God, and I'm talking about how mercy implies that there's justice. If there's no justice, there can't really be mercy.

Verse 2, But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word. But by the open statement of the truth, we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

So what's going on here in the text? What's going on in the text? Well, it's very, very interesting.

This text is looking very, very deeply into our human hearts, and it's noticing a profound temptation that we have. And the profound temptation that we have, in fact, is to do things in an underhanded way by cunning and to tamper with God's word.

[14:00] Tamper with God's word, in the original language, the image is that if they were selling you alcohol, they'd put lots of extra water in the alcohol. So they buy, you know, 10 liters of alcohol, and they know they can make more money if they could sell 30 liters, so they put 20 liters of water in with the 10 liters, and then they sell it, and they've only paid for 10 liters.

They sell, you know, I mean, that's what tampering means. It means watering down. It means changing. So in fact, actually here, the Bible looks into our human hearts, and it says, listen, whatever this new covenant ministry is going to be, before you, you have to know that there's something you have to renounce, and there's something you have to pursue.

And what you have to renounce all of the time, because it's going to be a bit of a tendency within us, you have to renounce disgraceful, underhanded ways. And by the way, it doesn't mean that there's non-disgraceful, disgraceful, underhanded ways.

It's looking at these two words that describe one reality, that anything you do that's underhanded is also disgraceful, it's shameful. It's something you should be embarrassed about. It's something that you should want to publicly apologize for.

It's something you should want to amend your life. And it's saying, human beings can be very underhanded, and they can practice cunning. Cunning is using all of your abilities in such a way that you come up on top, and the other person's definitely in a lower position.

[15:30] And so it's, in fact, specifically warning us. It's warning me. It's warning you. George, there's ways for you to live, and ways for you to talk, that are underhanded, and that are cunning, and that just tamper with God's word.

And George, you need to renounce those. But here's just a bit of a gut check for us, a bit of a time out. For those of us here who are followers of Jesus, one of the things that we need to do is to pray that we recognize when we start to go down that path.

Because nobody ever wakes up, you know, probably nobody wakes up in the morning and says, I'm going to be really underhanded and cunning today. I think I'm going to be really underhanded with my wife.

That's my plan. Or with my boss, I'm just going to be as underhanded and cunning. Most of us don't think that way when we wake up. But we do things that might sort of involve, we just, it starts to, we drift to it, right?

And so there's a profound gut check here for all of us that that can be something that goes on in our lives and in a sense as an invitation for you and me to pray, Father in heaven, help me to recognize when underhanded, cunning, and tampering seems like the way to go and I start to walk down that path.

[16:45] Help me to recognize it and help me to run from it, to renounce it. And the text is saying that whatever this new ministry is, this new covenant ministry, there's not only something we renounce, but there's something that we pursue.

And that's the second part there. So read it again, but we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but, now here's the thing that we're to pursue, but by the open statement of the truth, we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

What that's saying is that our goal is the open statement of the truth. Open statement of the truth.

And the truth here is the gospel. The truth here is who Jesus is and what he's done through his son. The truth here is not just who Jesus is and what he's done for us in the work of his son, but how that fits into the whole counsel of God and how the person and death of Jesus and his resurrection helps us to understand the whole counsel of God.

But the thing that you and I are to pursue is that we are to be as open as possible and as clear as possible that clarity and openness is our friend. It's to characterize people who follow Jesus.

[18:04] not mystical gobbledygook, not contradictions and you just sort of smile and say, well, it's just spiritual. No, that there's this task set before us that we are to try to be as open as possible and as clear as possible about what the truth is.

And when it says commend ourselves, what it's meaning is that that's our goal. What we should pray is that when people talk about our church or when they talk about you, they might say, well, you know what?

I think often some of his ideas are kooky. But you know what? He's open about them. He's clear. Like, he's not hiding things or she's not hiding anything.

I don't always agree with them, but you know what? It's open. It's clear. And that's the reputation that we're to try to have in the community. The goal isn't commending ourselves.

The goal is open statement of the truth. And it's an open statement of the truth which respects people's consciences. This is a very, very important part of it that there's this sense that there's to never be any type of coercion, any type of manipulation.

[19:16] Just, I was only ordained about three and a half, four years, and one of the senior priests in the Diocese of Ottawa, and I was in the Diocese of Ottawa at the time, he gave me advice about how to do a funeral.

I'm not making this up. And his advice was, so you have to do a funeral. Before the funeral service, talk to family members and try to find a touching story because the point of your funeral sermon is to tell several touching stories to get people to cry.

And when you've brought tears to their eyes, your sermon's been a success. I'm to be underhanded, cunning, and manipulative.

And when I succeed at being emotionally manipulative, I have become a success. Isn't that ridiculous?

It's not respecting the conscience and the integrity of people. And, you know, some universities now, when they talk to, to like chaplains, I have to be careful, but I'm, I, I, this is, I don't want to name the specific university, but a university that I know, they just asked the chaplains to come in.

[20:34] And they had, the university wanted the chaplains to sign a thing saying that they would do no proselytizing and no coercion. And the chaplain that I know, he was offended.

He said, what, do you tell all of your professors and all of the faculty that they're not supposed to use coercion? Like, why are you singling me out? Why is it that you think that I'm going to do coercion?

So he said, I'll sign the thing about coercion. Like, that's like a no-brainer, but it's offensive. And you have to take out the proselytizing part. Because surely a university is a place where you talk about ideas with the, with the desire to convince and persuade.

And they, after some pushback, they, they relented. But it shows how the, how the world views us. But, you see, here the text is that we are to, by the freedom of conscience, means that we respect the integrity of people and their own pace.

So it's a very, very powerful teaching for us as Christians. But some of you might say, well, George, that's very, very interesting.

[21:41] And I, I'm glad that the text is wanting, encouraging you to respect the freedom and conscience of people. And, and for those of us who are here, there's, you know, not only is the text telling us that we're to pray that we walk away from any type of emotional manipulation, any type of coercion, anything like that, that we're to flee it.

But it's also that we should pray that we can be open and be clear. And that's a, we should pray for that, that we can be open and we can be clear when we speak. But, but some will say, George, I don't know, you know, maybe you just really have to do a lot more praying.

But whenever you speak about the gospel and what Jesus did for us on the cross, it's not really clear to me. So I guess, George, you just really need to do a lot more praying. Well, I do need to do a lot more praying and you can pray that I can be more, I'm more, more clear.

But, is it just a matter that if we get more and more and more clear then that people will automatically just want to trust Jesus? If we try to share the gospel or talk about Jesus with our friend and we get tongue-tied and we go away should we feel depressed that we've been such a failure at attempting to share Jesus?

Because if we just were clearer they would come and they would give their lives to Jesus. Well, the Bible talks about that. And in fact, it's this very next bit that helped me to also talk to my friend about this idea that God wants people to kill people.

[23:13] Did you notice it's verses 3 and 4? And even if our gospel is veiled it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

It's sort of a dense text. Look at it again in verse 3. And even if our gospel is veiled it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

And for some of you when you hear this all sorts of things are going through your head. Some might be offended by it. Here's the thing which if you could put up the next point that would be great.

what I said to my friend is I said you know we've had lots of conversations about God and this is a bit of a persistent theme for you.

You tell me you don't believe in God and then you also tell me that the God when you talk about God God's always wanted people to do horrible things and then you say you don't believe such a God exists.

[24 : 28] I want you to know I don't believe that God exists either. Like if that is the God that's the only option on the table I'm an atheist. But here's the thing I said to her.

I actually expressed it a little bit. I said the God that you think exists wants people to die. But the God who is revealed in the Bible dies for people. That's what I said to her.

Because I'd been reflecting on this text all week. the God that you worry exists and you don't believe in is a God who wants people to die who gets people to kill people.

The God who's revealed in the Bible is a God who dies for people. It's a completely different God. Completely and utterly different God.

and I mean we didn't talk for very much longer after that.

[25 : 35] It's just often really a matter of leaving seeds. But you know for many people in our culture they don't make a distinction between Christianity and Islam and Hinduism and stuff.

They just see it as religious people or spiritual people talking about God and the newspapers and everything are filled with atrocious things being done in the name of Jesus or in the name of Muhammad or in the name of some Hindu God or in the name of Buddhism.

It's filled with honor killings and shame killings and for many people in our culture they make no distinction between any of these things. They just see it as religious people. But the Bible here says that there's a God of this age and for many people in our culture what they're afraid of when they think of God is what they're really afraid of is the devil.

For many people in our culture when they talk if you let them talk a little bit about what God is like and what he does what they're really doing is describing the devil.

They're not describing the God who's described in the Bible. And that's why it's so interesting that the Bible says it's the God of this age that he blinds people. And here's the next thing if you could put it up there Andrew that would be great.

[27 : 01] There's a profound and I know it's going to be a bit of a shocking thing to some of us and it sounds like an arrogant thing but let me just put it out there and then I'll tell you why and rather than being arrogant I mean it's always possible for us to take anything and be arrogant about it.

I mean I know people who get arrogant about how good they are at fantasy football like really? Come on. That's just fantasy football you know like that doesn't mean anything you know but oh well you know whatever the ranking is.

Anyway so we can be arrogant about anything but this in fact it's not arrogant it's the complete opposite of arrogance. We share the gospel with people who are veiled and blind.

In other words we share the gospel with people who are wearing blindfolds and underneath the blindfolds the devil has blinded them. And that's the context within which we always share the gospel not just in this culture but in every culture.

And it's a very very powerful image. It's an image that when we hear it we realize that it means that we have to constantly be on our knees in prayer. I mean in a sense in that conversation that I had on Friday what matters on one hand it matters that I tried to be clear about who Jesus is and how he's different and how the Bible is different than what she fears God is like.

[28 : 25] But equally important is that afterwards I pray for her. Because it's not just a matter of my having wonderful examples and being very clear and being good at rhetoric.

although I'm to try to have an open statement of the truth. But God has to do a work in her heart.

But some of you might say George my whoa you know George are you saying that you can see but I can't that that you're I'm blind but you're not well let's just first of all this is not a completely I mean this is actually talking very much about what normal human experience is like.

I mean don't we all have times where we realize in all of our lives you know we can say about somebody you know they're so smart they're so confident how can they be blind to this? Right? You know how is it that we can have people who are just you know they're so good at reading people and they're so good at reading their boss or they're so good at reading their co-workers but they're blind when it comes to their kids.

Like we could go on and on and on it's a very very common thing that people can have great understanding about lots of different things but in certain areas of their lives are completely and utterly incapable of seeing. That's a human phenomenon and the Bible says the same thing's going

on with us and what's going on here if you were to say to Paul who wrote this that you're being very very arrogant in the original language there's all of these all of these hints in the language that goes back in Paul's own biography because Paul if you go back to the book of Acts three times in the book of Acts it's talked about how Paul becomes a Christian.

Paul was a very very bad man. Paul was a man that you would not want to have as your friend. I guess he would be a man that you wouldn't want to get into his bad books because he might contribute with other people to have you killed or beaten or thrown in jail but he was not a good man and he was converted and his whole story of conversion is the revelation of something covering his eyes that he's kicking against.

[30 : 24] It's Paul would say listen I did not become a Christian because I was such a brilliant intellect. I was blind and veiled and God had to shine his light into mine into my heart and this is to be this text is a profoundly humbling text for a Christian.

it's not George because you have a really good IQ AQ EQ or education.

You George were completely and utterly dependent upon God and his mercy doing something in us and all of this language of shining and all of this language of all of this language of seeing it's not it's not talking about mystical experiences it's talking about understanding right that's how we often use it in language if you're trying to help a kid with a math problem and I was really good at math I wasn't very good at helping my kids with math because you know if people who are good at math you just look at the equation and you see it it just makes sense and so for people who are really good at math trying to help somebody who's not good at math you just look it's obvious can't you see it and they just can't see it and the language there means understand and that's what it's talking about here and it's it's all of this text is saying that in a sense what I have to say to my friend or anybody else is listen I definitely am not claiming that I am better at seeing things than other people and I am definitely not telling you that it's a result of my superior intellect or anything like that that led me to become

Christ I am one blind beggar telling another blind beggar where they can go for someone else to make them see that's what evangelism is that's what bearing witness to Jesus is it's one blind beggar telling another blind beggar where you can go for someone to freely make you see and live so it's very very humble before we read verse six Andrew could you put the scripture text up that I have I've forgotten to do this if you get nothing else out of this sermon other than saying this verse several times this is such a beautiful verse it is so worth memorizing could you say it out loud with me please for God who said let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus

Christ want to say that with me again please for God who said let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ so so so beautiful look at look at verses five and six for what we proclaim is not ourselves but Jesus Christ is Lord with ourselves as your servants for Jesus sake and then verse six so what the Bible is telling us if you could put up the point Andrew and then we'll flip back to the verse in a moment but you put up the point we are to share the gospel but only God can illuminate the human heart see one of the temptations we have is we have these temptations to try to think that if we just emotionally manipulate people if we just practice a certain type of technological or aesthetic cunning or maybe that if we just try to water down God's word in some type of way then they can come to faith but no no the Bible tells us that only

[34 : 13] God can shine in our hearts our goal is to be as opened and transparent as possible and to try to be as clear as we possibly can be with whatever the gray matter is that God has given us and God has given some of us very very good gray matter and some of us it's not quite as good and some of us our gray matter used to be sort of so-so but it's getting weaker and weaker all of the time but to the extent that our gray matter works at all we're to try to be as clear as we possibly can always knowing that only God can illuminate and this for those of us who are Christians this one of the things about this verse which is so powerful is it takes a whole burden off of you parents parents I mean there's things that we can do to help our children become Christians there's definitely things that we can do but the end of the day the burden of having them become a Christian is not what you can carry only God can do it

I mean it might mean you have to get down on your knees and pray it might mean your life has to be maybe a little bit more consistent with the gospel but it could be that even after you do all of those things all you can do is pray all you can do is pray God is not asking us to carry the burden of

changing hearts only he carries that burden he can easily carry it and we can pray and we're called to pray and then pray and then pray some more for our children and pray for our neighbors and pray for those that we know in the office trusting that God has maybe put you in your office or your neighborhood or your community your specific job is that you are there to pray for the people who are around you that they will come to a saving faith in Jesus that they will know what it means to be made right with God and God has called you to that vocation and maybe he will give you an opportunity to say a few words all it might just simply be is that I follow Jesus or on Sunday I go to church or I read my Bible or that I pray that might be all that you have to say it's all part of a team project of bearing witness but only God can illuminate hearts we're called to share but only God can illuminate can we say this verse again together for is it up for God who said let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to get the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus

Christ another thing which is so powerful about this particular text is that he quotes the creation story and this is very very very important you know I've mentioned a little bit off and on over the last few weeks but for what the text is saying is that the very very same God who's there and creates all things and begins in Genesis the Genesis account of the creation story God says let there be light and then there's light he separates the light from the darkness and the very same God who creates all things is the same God who shines in our hearts to bring us to Jesus it's not two gods here's the thing I've shared this with you before the University of Ottawa the Globe and Mail the National Post the CBC and Hollywood they're all committed to something which is completely and utterly incoherent they're committed to the the idea that everything that exists exists because of pure chance and then the survival of the fittest therefore love each other that's incoherent everything that exists is a result of blind chance the survival of the fittest therefore we have to have human rights and care for each other it's incoherent in our culture the way things come to exist is through evolution specifically understood in such a way to exclude

God and the way we are to live our lives is to not hurt people and when we die we go to a better place and all three of those things are completely and utterly incoherent to the other one and the only reason that nobody sees it is because everybody says it it's the story of the emperor in the new clothes so there's this deep incoherence at the center of the modern project and the bible here has this deep and powerful coherence the very same God who on the first day of creation said let there be light is the same God who sends his son to die upon the cross who is the God of perfect justice and perfect mercy without violating his justice by being perfectly just he shows an even greater mercy so that

God does what human beings cannot do to make human beings right with himself in the person of his son and his death upon the cross and the same God who creates is the one who sends his son is the one who shines in our hearts and is the one who will make the new heaven and the new earth it's a deeply coherent understanding of what God is doing in the person of his son it's one of the reasons why at truest and deepest level as we draw near to God it will not hurt us but free us because God is the creator of all things and his design and intent was that we would fit in his created order knowing that we are creatures reconciled and at one with our creator that we would live in a way that the creation we experience the created world as a blessing and so as we get closer to God and healed it's only better for us not worse goodness is good for us goodness is good for us just just just one final thing for those who are here who have not yet given their lives to [40 : 48] Jesus actually just say this text one more time and then I'll just say this final thing let's say it together for God who said let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ the word the face of Jesus Christ is very important reminds us that it's always a personal thing that he's there personally it's Jesus looking at us and some of us might say you know God couldn't care about me that might be very very true for all of these other people you might even feel a little bit of a type of pressure coming within your soul I remember when I became a Christian for six months for nine months prior to me becoming a Christian every time I would come to a type of church service where it talked about a thing like this I would feel this pressure to say yes as if God was pushing me and nudging me or calling me and I would shut it down this can't be for me if I get too close to

God I don't want to do it and I would shut it down I would feel this pressure I want to say to you if you're here like this and that's been what's going on with you to not say no it's not that this is just for some other people it's for you quite a few years ago my wife and I were in Halifax on a weekend for

a holiday some of you have heard this story before we went to church that morning we met this fellow who befriended us at coffee we had a brief chat with him later on the afternoon we're walking down by the dock and one of these beautiful tall ships is in the dock everybody's looking at this beautiful gorgeous tall ship and Louise and I are there and we watch as the ship docks and there's a big crowd all looking and ahhh at this beautiful tall ship and out of the crowd there's these people they all have these hugs and everything like that and they go on the ship and I'm not making this up and one of the people who gets the hugs and goes on the ships is the guy who befriends us at coffee time that morning and he sees in the crowd

Louise and me and he beckons for us to come and walk through the crowd and go on the tall ship that's what Jesus is doing for you this morning if you're feeling this pressure to lay down your burdens and to let the light of the glory of the gospel of Jesus to shine in your heart that's Jesus seeing you out of the crowd and his face is smiling at you not frowning because he died for you and he's beckoning you to come to come there's no better time than today to say Jesus I come please shine the light in my heart I want to be yours I don't want to be in darkness I want to be yours thank you just say Jesus I'm thankful that you want to be my savior I want to be yours use your own words there's no better time than today let's stand father if there's any here and they felt this pressure to no longer fear you and to recognize that what they've been afraid of is the devil not you and that you father father aren't aren't a god who takes delight in the death of a sinner your delight is that we turn father and live you died so that we could be your child you paid that great price that mercy requires so that we can be reconciled to you father grip us with the gospel grip us with this sense that at the heart of our whole walk with you father is your great mercy for us in the person of your son and father grip us with how mercy is at the center of our identity in

Jesus grip us with the gospel who Jesus is and what he did so that we could be yours make us disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel who are now being freed up to live for your glory and father if there are any here who have not yet who are just now even now giving their lives to Jesus father pour out your Holy Spirit upon them and seal them seal them as yours lead them and guide them father help us not to be a barrier to their conversion thank you that you shone in my heart and will shine in every heart here blind and veiled no barrier to you shining in our hearts that we might be yours all this we ask and thank in the name of Jesus your son and our savior amen