

He Shapes all Things

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[0 : 00] Father, who you are is God. You're big. You are a mystery. We don't understand it.

We understand bits and pieces of it, but Father, we love you, and we acknowledge that you are God, that this whole earth is yours, that you are sovereign over all things.

You are the creator of all things, sovereign over all things, present and active, Father, in the world.

And we thank you for Jesus and what he did for us on the cross. We thank you, Father, that you love us and want us to be reconciled to you by accepting Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

We thank you, Father, that you want us to live filled with the Holy Spirit, lives that are free from idolatry and free from addictions, and able, Father, to serve you and please you in freedom and joy, confident that our security in Christ is completely and utterly sure.

Father, may the Holy Spirit move in our lives at this time. Open your word. Open your word to us. Bring it deeply to our lives. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

[1 : 10] So, what's going on with this weird story with Mary? I guess I forgot to put on the mic.

That's fine. We're fine.

But what's going on with this? I mean, that's a weird story, isn't it? Jesus is reclining a table, and Mary comes in and takes some ointment.

And it's not so much weird that she puts it on her feet. Some of you know that I'll be going to Jerusalem to an international conference. I leave on Wednesday. This time next week, I'll be in Jerusalem.

And I've been looking at the weather network for Jerusalem. And no rain forecast while I'm there. Like 30 degrees every day. And the UV index, the UV index is 12 every day, which is the highest the UV index can get.

And so, you can well imagine that Jesus wandering around, that he could probably use some ointment on his feet. But the weird thing is that she wipes it with her hair. Like, that's...

[2 : 13] Like, I just... I was... You know, all week, I've been imagining, what would it be like if I was to share this story with a group of my non-Christian friends that I meet in the different coffee shops? Um...

It really touches on one of the deep fears that a lot of people have about the Christian faith. And one of the fears that people have about the Christian faith is that it makes you weird. That if you become a Christian, you'll end up doing weird things.

So, to see a text like this, I can just well imagine them thinking, that's weird. Like, they'd probably be hoping that I say it's weird. And probably at the same time, my non-Christian friends would wonder if George does weird things in private that he's hiding from them.

Because it's odd. So, what's up with this? What's up with this odd act? So, let's take our Bibles.

Let's get it sort of fresh in our mind, what happened and didn't happen. What was said and was not said.

In this very unusual story. Set of stories. So, it's John chapter 12. John chapter 12. And it begins like this. Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

[3 : 25] And just sort of pause there before I read any further. So, Bethany is just less than two miles outside of Jerusalem back in the day. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Mary and Martha are sisters, and Lazarus is the brother.

So, there's three siblings. Adult siblings. Don't know how old they are other than the fact that they're adults. It's Lazarus' house, probably. And six days before the Passover, it means it's probably, this is actually probably happening on the Sabbath.

It's probably happening on a Saturday. The events in this particular thing. And the Passover, those of you who are familiar with the Bible, know that the triumphal entry that happens just after this, that happens just the week before Jesus dies.

So, this is the end of Jesus' ministry. Okay? So, just read that verse 1 again. Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

So, they gave a dinner for him there. That's Jesus. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with Jesus at table. Mary therefore, and I can tell you the commentators puzzle over why the word therefore is there.

[4 : 35] Lots of ink has been spilled on why the word therefore is there. But Mary therefore took a pound, about 350 grams, of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.

The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume, but Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, he who was about to betray Jesus, said, why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?

And just sort of pause there. 300 denarii would be approximately 13 to 14 months of the average wage. So, whatever the average wage in Canada is, average monthly wage, multiply that by 13 or 14 or 13 and a half, and that's how much money this is worth.

Okay? Basically, in terms of every time you see the word denarii, think of the fact that five denarii in our labor market would be what you need to live on. That would be in terms of both buying your RSPs or whatever it is for your retirement, paying your rent.

So, five denarii is the equivalent of a week's wages, and you can figure those things out for yourself. Verse six, Judas said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

[5 : 54] Jesus said, leave her alone so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me. So, you might say, okay, George, you've read it again a second time, I was paying more attention, what's up?

It's still really odd. Like, what's up? It's still pretty odd. And it does sort of touch on my sort of fear, my perception that Christians have to do weird things and odd things if they become Christians, so why on earth would I want to do it?

So, here's a couple of things about it. First of all, let's just acknowledge that there's a range of human beings on the planet who like doing odd things. I'm on Amazon Prime, there's a series on, which a documentary series on the New Zealand rugby, team, the All Blacks.

And in the first two episodes, it highlights a game of the New Zealand All Blacks versus the English Lions in a three-game rugby tournament.

And the English Lions, it only happens every 12 years, and it's the elite players from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England all come together to make one team, and they go and they play New Zealand.

[7 : 07] So, let me tell you, if you want to see odd behavior, watch the fans. Like, I mean odd behavior. Just watch the fans. Just watch a football game. You know, guys who take their shirts off, paint themselves funny colors, put funny hats on, make funny noise.

So, it's not just that Christianity encourages you to do odd things. There's lots of things in life that encourage us to be odd. And there's a lot of people who like being odd. Some of you know who you are.

And the rest of you, we've been dying to tell you that you like doing things that are odd, and we just haven't worked up the courage. But it's a bit of a human issue that some people like to do odd things.

And the second thing then, just sort of taking that into account, the second thing is, if you notice in the story, that Jesus does not tell her off for what she did. He doesn't say, come on, Mary, this is kooky.

Don't do it. He doesn't say that to her, does he? He also doesn't say, all you dudes around here, you should be doing this. Like, this is what I want real Christians to do.

[8 : 10] He doesn't say that either, does he? He doesn't say, this is what a real Christian does, and he doesn't tell her off. He defends her and accepts her. He defends her and accepts her.

So if you could put up the first point, here's the first point, and you're going to see it's the first point. Three of my points are framed the same way, and you'll see the significance of it.

Hopefully, if I haven't put you all to sleep, you'll see it as I go forward. The gospel shapes your singularity. Your singularity does not shape the gospel.

In other words, I'm using here the gospel in the biblical sense. It's a bit of a short way. It's gospel means good news. It's the good news as to who Jesus is, and what he accomplished for us on the cross.

And it's the good news as to who Jesus is, God, the Son of God, man who came and died on the cross, so that human beings like you and me can be reconciled to God and become part of his kingdom, come under the rule of Jesus.

[9 : 14] And this is not only something about Jesus and what he's done. It's good news for you because it's told in the hope that you will accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord. It's the good news of what God has done.

And so what we see here is that who Jesus is and what he does, that as that works in our lives, it makes us more unique or more singular. singularity just sort of worked it a little bit better in the sentence when I was playing around with the different synonyms.

And so that's actually what the gospel does to us. It makes us more unique. The more we know Jesus, the more we will become ourselves. It doesn't sort of flatten us and make us like clones, like the Stepford Wives.

It makes us unique. But here's the thing. Our uniqueness, and I'll try to bring this in a little bit at the end, our uniqueness does not shape the gospel. The gospel is the gospel.

Jesus is God, the Son of God. He is the Savior. He is the long-promised Messiah to the Jewish people who dies for the Jewish people and for all who put their faith and trust in them. Jesus is Jesus.

[10 : 19] The gospel is the gospel. And our uniqueness does not shape the gospel, but the gospel shakes our uniqueness. So some of you might say, well, George, okay, that's sort of interesting. So what you're saying then is that the gospel doesn't make you weird and the gospel won't make you eccentric and odd.

Well, actually, I'm not saying that. If I was to say to you, yes, actually, that's true. The gospel will never make you weird or odd or eccentric.

Some of you, and you know who you are, would be disappointed. You like being odd. You like coming into a room, sort of dancing and making a scene and wild gestures and funny hats and, I don't know, odd eccentric clothing.

And it would be really disappointing to you, wouldn't it be, if I just said, no, actually, the gospel is all about when the gospel hits our lives, we're all bland, all vanilla, all beige, all the time.

Well, that's not what the gospel is. That's not our singularity. So on one hand, I'm not going to say that the gospel won't make you, the gospel is going to make you more yourself. And so for some very, very quiet people who all their lives have been imprisoned by vanilla, by the way, vanilla is my favorite flavor of ice cream, so I'm not picking on vanilla.

[11 : 44] But vanilla, you know, all vanilla, all beige, all bland, all the time. For some people, their inner self has always desired that they could be the one who would dance into a room or would feel uninhibited enough to take their shirt off and paint themselves blue or green or gold and wear funny hats and cheer on their team.

And the gospel will free you up to start to do that. And for others who sort of do that because they got drunk, the gospel will give you the self-control to no longer do those things that you wouldn't normally do if you weren't drunk out of your skull.

So it's not really a matter that the promise is that the gospel won't make you odd. The gospel will make you more yourself. And if you are in simple... In other words, the gospel isn't just making us all into marbles or clones.

It makes us more ourselves. But here's the other way. On one level, though, the gospel will inevitably make everyone weird. If you could put up the next point, please, that would be helpful. The gospel creates a counterculture. And this counterculture will sometimes seem weird to the dominant culture.

[12 : 55] The gospel creates a counterculture, and this counterculture will sometimes seem weird to the dominant culture. So two things about this.

First of all, the Bible doesn't create one culture. I mean, one of the reasons why people... It's so important that churches like ours help somebody like me or Gary to go to GAFCON is that it's... The gospel will make the Christians into a counterculture within their dominant culture. But cultures are different. When I was in Kenya for the first time in 2003, one of the very, very funny things that they did in one of our worship sessions is they had the many different tribes in Kenya show how they dance.

Sort of like a little bit of a dance-off. And it was one of those things that brought lots of laughter, how the Maasai danced. I can't remember the different tribes. But they all danced a bit different. It was very funny just to watch the different ways that they would dance.

Everybody laughed. It was a good time. It was why we were singing some silly little praise song as well. But the fact is that, you know, if you're from India, part of your culture is going to be a certain type of food, a certain type of cooking, a certain taste in music.

[14:13] And there'll be things that the gospel does to make you a counterculture within India, but you're still in India. And in Canada, you'll still be in Canada. It's just... But in every culture, there'll be something that is...

makes you a bit of a counterculture. It's going to become more clear as we go forward, but I just want to give you one other example. I think that if my barista friends in Starbucks, if they were to find out...

And I'm not tooting my own horn here. It just was the example I could think of easily. If they found out how much money I give away, they'd think I was weird. If I was to tell them how much money I gave away in 2018, they'd say, that's weird.

Like, that's really odd that somebody would give away so much money. And, you know, if you're in a very, very culture which emphasizes revenge, the gospel message of forgiveness will seem very, very weird.

If you're in a culture which emphasizes subservience, then the gospel message of the dignity of the human being will seem very, very weird and very, very threatening.

[15:25] If you're in a culture that doesn't sing, which is increasingly what Canada is like, they'd say, you guys sing songs? Like, that's weird.

Canadians virtually don't sing anymore. I actually had a person in a coffee shop. The reason she was really curious about me being a minister, she's doing a master's in music ethnology and she wanted to come visit the church sometime because she said to me, churches are the only place left in Canadian culture virtually where people sing.

And that's what she's just curious about. So, it's a bit complicated with this. Now, but some of you might say, okay, George, well, that's all sort of interesting.

But, oh, by the way, back to the Gafcon thing, the fact that the gospel creates many, many different cultures and different countercultures in different countries. One of the things which is important, then, is for Christians across from different cultures to get together to help to be clearer about what's key and what's just different.

Anyway, so, some would say, George, well, what's up? That's, like, that's all very interesting. And so, what you're just saying is that maybe that's why it says Mary, therefore, took a pound of ointment because if you knew Mary, you'd say, well, that's the type of thing that Mary does.

[16:52] You know? You could almost have said, well, Martha, therefore, served, and Lazarus, therefore, the lazy bum, just sat and ate. I mean, I don't know what you mean, but it's just different. But what's up with this odd comment of Jesus?

Like, I mean, surely, separate from the fact as to whether or not Judas is a thief, surely Judas had a point. Don't you think? Like, do you actually think, George? Like, what's up with that? What's up with it?

Like, why didn't Jesus just say to Mary, Mary, before you do that, because he's all-knowing, before you do that, like, why don't you go sell that ointment, buy some other ointment that you could buy for, like, a day's wage, and then use that on my feet.

And then you can take the other 299 denarii and you can give it to the poor. Like, George, even though Judas was a thief, surely he had a good point and didn't, isn't it a bit hard-hearted of Jesus to say something like that?

And don't you think it's almost sort of cynical to just sort of pass it off because you're always going to have the poor with you? Well, let's just look again at what Jesus said.

[17:53] Look, his response in verse 7. How does Jesus respond to Judas? He says, Leave her alone so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.

So, you know, what's up with this? Well, the first thing is, like, there's several things. The first thing is, well, isn't Jesus actually just being realistic?

Like, I know a couple of years ago in the election there was a whole big thing about we needed evidence-based policy. Well, if there's one thing which is scientifically and anthropologically true is that there's always been poor people in every culture.

Like, isn't that just empirically true? Like, why would we be upset with Jesus just saying what's true? But there's several other things going here in Jesus' response.

And if you could just put up the next point, that'll help us to understand. The gospel shapes your heart to care about the poor. Caring about the poor does not shape the gospel.

[19:03] The gospel shapes your heart to care about the poor. But caring about the poor does not shape the gospel. In other words, the gospel doesn't only have value because it helps us deal with the poor.

So here's the thing about Jesus' statement which is going to be very, very counter-cultural. On Friday, I was talking to one of my friends in a coffee shop and he's very, very progressive. He's progressive on everything. I mean, he's progressive on immigration. He's progressive in terms of relations with Muslims. He's progressive in terms of sexuality, same-sex marriage, gender, income redistribution.

You pick the topic. He is Mr. Progressive. So I asked him on Friday, who did you vote for? And he said, I didn't vote. And I said, well, why didn't you vote?

He said, there was nobody for me to vote for so I didn't vote. And, you know, it's as if he's so completely and utterly progressive he can't deal with the real world.

[20:06] So here's the thing about this comment of Jesus' which is so significant. If a Christian goes into the sociology faculty of Carleton or Ottawa U, if a Christian goes to many of the social justice faculties or gatherings, if he goes to a group of anti-poverty advocates, that Christian has to say to them something that's going to offend them, the poor you will always have with you.

It is not a criticism of a church or a government that there are still poor people in the city or the country. Because it is not the case, as you hear Christians, many Christians say that if the church was really the church there would be no poor.

Really? That's not what Jesus said. Jesus didn't say if the church was the church there would be no poor. He said the poor you will always have with you. But Jesus isn't making a very cynical comment.

What Jesus is doing here is he's quoting from the book of Deuteronomy. So if you just turn in your Bibles with me for a moment to Deuteronomy chapter 15 verse 11. Deuteronomy 15 verse 11. You'll see that what Jesus does is he actually quotes a passage of the Bible which is in the context of being generous to the poor. And none of the Jewish hearers who were hearing Jesus would have understood him to be cynical about the poor.

[21:28] He would have been understood as being part of the teaching to be perpetually generous towards the poor. Listen to what it says in Deuteronomy and if you go back and read the rest of Deuteronomy 15 it becomes even stronger.

But 15:11 For there will never cease to be poor in the land therefore I command you you shall open wide your hand to your brother to the needy and to the poor in your land.

So the Jewish hearers who are hearing Jesus would not have understood Jesus as saying something cynical. He would have been saying something about lay off Mary here for a second but let me understand you know you're always going to have the poor and they would have been able to fill in the rest of the sentence.

We understand that you always have to be generous and not countermanding that. The other thing is the very nature of the gospel itself. You know on the point up here I say how the gospel earlier I said the gospel treats a counterculture and the gospel shapes your heart to care about the poor but caring about the poor does not shape the gospel.

Just turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 9 it's a great verse to memorize. In fact it's a very powerful verse to memorize 2 Corinthians 8:9 I sort of have it half memorized because my brain doesn't work as well as it used to.

[22 : 41] So I'm going to read it just so I don't sort of mess up the quote a little bit. But here's one of the most powerful ways to understand what the gospel is. Like what is it when we say that Jesus is God the son of God as the creed tells us that leaves beside his glory and splendor and prerogatives that he dies on the cross and when he dies as I've said to you before it's a line from Flannery O'Connor you can't be any poorer than dead.

This week I was talking to somebody in a coffee shop and we got talking about life being meaning. I think we were talking about that spade who committed suicide and I just said to them I said you know I don't know how people who don't have a sense that life has a final ultimate meaning and it's not just an abstract meaning but that there's a real ultimate meaning to life that we can receive through Jesus and that we can pray to Jesus.

I don't understand how people can live like that without that. I said if your whole life is centered around one dang thing after another and then you die. One dang thing after another and then you die.

Like it's hard to know how like I like as a Christian it's increasingly hard for me to understand how you're able to just to live like that without that sort of deeper meaning.

And I shared with one of them I said you know the second after you die and let's say you and Bill Gates die in the exact same second and I said the second after you both die you both have the exact same amount of assets under your control which is zero.

[24 : 18] All of Bill Gates assets are completely and utterly worthless the second after he dies. So look at that mindful of that look at this text 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 9 for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich.

We'll read it again. It's a very powerful verse well worth remembering memorizing for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. What's the good news? The good news is all about grace.

It's all about the fact that God the son of God came and died on a cross for you out of grace that his death upon the cross does all that has to be done to make you right with God out of grace out of unmerited mercy and favor for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich.

You see as when we give our lives to Jesus when we accept the gospel it will in other words when we accept the passage like this and it becomes part of our just how we understand what the world is like what God is like like how we stand where we stand that Jesus who had he was I mean he had everything and he's God he's in heaven I mean even the richest person on earth can't even like even it's not even they can't even buy a blade of grass in heaven the blade of grass in heaven is more precious he had all of that he sets it all aside to come and walk amongst us and to die on the cross for us and and he does that so that I can know God's unmerited favor and that I can be clothed in the righteousness of Jesus and I can be reconciled to God and I can begin to know him as my heavenly father and I can begin to pour up my heart to him and that relationship will go on into all eternity and into a new heaven and a new earth and he did all of that he became so completely and utterly poor that

I can have this wealth and as that story grips us it will change how we view money and it will change how we view the poor it will it will turn our hearts to the poor it will mean that when you look when you walk along Bank Street you won't think to yourself I wish that smelly stupid street person would get out of the way I mean it doesn't necessarily mean you're going to give them money but it means you should love them it means that you look at them and say Jesus gave his life for that person Jesus died that that person might be free you see so the statement of Jesus on one hand it would cause us lots of trouble in social justice circles on the other hand though if we go into many of the MBA faculties and business clubs it would cause trouble there because it would mean to be gripped by the gospel you have to care about the poor and the meaning of life is not to accumulate as much money as you possibly can it's counter cultural in terms of how we view money and how we view the poor and the gospel shapes us inevitably as the gospel grips us it will shape us this same friend of mine who's a big social justice guy he comes out of the orthodox church the capital orthodox church and one of the things he loves to tell me is about the latest excess by the Russian excess by the

[27 : 56] Russian patriarch the latest great expensive gift or privilege he's gotten from Putin he loves telling me about this story because he says it's a great great indictment of religion but I now often after he goes on this little rant or maybe it'll be about something do with Catholicism or some

mega preacher but he loves picking on his own orthodox tradition he's an atheist he loves picking on his own orthodox tradition and one time when he was saying all this I said to him well that might be true of some Christians but I said that's not true of our church I said we walked away from our property we don't own any property we voted unanimously to walk away from it all and I remember one time he paused he said yeah but you folks are different which was the closest we ever got to any type of praise from him but and then normally he'll still condemn me for my views on abortion or some other type of thing like that but that's a that's a whole other sermon topic but one of the things I think that my friend I almost said his name by accident one of the things I think my friend would say he was here with looking at this story but we'll go back to John is he would say

George this just seems like all of a sudden Jesus is playing power politics like doesn't it look like he manipulates events so that he's fulfilling a prophecy and doesn't it look like he's manipulated events so he hits a great crowd and so he's he's he's proclaimed as king what it's really important that we see is that as the sermon sort of wraps up that we look and see what exactly is going on with this this story so we've I've already said in fact it's actually from this story that we get how the gospel shapes our relationship to the poor but our relationship to the poor doesn't shape the gospel and that our gospel shapes our our uniqueness but our uniqueness doesn't shape the gospel because if you could put up the final point not the final next point what what we see in this story is that the gospel shapes what it means to be king being king does not shape the gospel the gospel shapes what it means to be king being king does not shape the gospel let's look at the story we'll just jump down to verse 12 the next day that's what we would now call palm sunday the large crowd the first day of the week the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that jesus was coming to jerusalem so they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him crying out hosanna which means lord save us blessed is he who comes in the name of the lord even the king of israel blessed is he who comes in the name of the lord it's a quote from psalm 118 even the king of israel and they understand king of israel probably by the way that king is understood in sociologically and anthropologically in the in the world that's what they would have understood they would have understood jesus by the category of king they wouldn't have understood king by how jesus redefines what it means to be a king but they call out uh blessed is he who comes in the name of lord even the king of israel verse 14 and jesus found a young donkey and sat on it just as it is written fear not daughter of zion behold your king is coming sitting on a donkey's cold just to give it a bit of a context i i i was on uh parliament hill just the other day when um i about a week or so ago when trudeau came back on the hill lots of big suvs flashing lights big muscle type of things this is describing jesus coming into jerusalem in a hyundai accent they're tiny cars if you don't know cars i think that they're the second or third cheapest car so here you're expecting that you know if trudeau shows up all by himself in a little hyundai not even a not even a green prius or something like that with a green license plate just a little dinky elantra that's what's going on here in the text and i mean he's fulfilling a prophecy but it's even interesting isn't it that in the prophecy which comes from zechariah it's prophesying the day when the king the great king the true king comes but he's going to come on on an elantra he's not going to come on a war horse he's not going to come in an escalade he's not going to come in a rolls royce he's not going to come in something armored verse 16 his disciples not understand these things at first but when jesus was glorified that is after he died and risen from the dead then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him so you see jesus redefine if we understand who jesus is by the worldly category of king it's blasphemy it's blasphemy because how does it work and i'm not picking on people here who maybe have been in politics but we all know how it works i mean i talk about this we all know how it works with the powerful right how does it work with the powerful well the powerful their goal is to maintain power or to increase their power if they possibly can for the powerful it's the little guy or the little gal who dies so that the powerful can stay powerful it's you know i think i shared with you before a famous anti-war activist during the vietnam war dick gregory an african american really really funny i had the great privilege to to see him live once when he came to to canada and he said i wish i could imitate his he had an accent from mississippi and i wish i could imitate his accent he said i'm not opposed to the vietnam war i just want that whenever wherever whatever when my son gets drafted he goes and he gets he gets to serve right beside rockefeller's son and as long as my son can serve in the exact same place as rockefeller's son i'm fine with us sending young men over to vietnam but he knew that how did it work african-american men got sent to poor the poor black and white they get sent and the rich stay home or have far not

always of course not always not always but um we all know how power works and so you see part of the problem with the gospel this is why one of the things i've said not every week but in many weeks so part of the problem we have with is that we have to keep there's there's words that are common in our culture like the word god but the fact of the matter is is that the way god is described in our culture in some ways it it helps us to understand when we say god but otherwise it's always going to keep getting us mixed up we'll have mixtures of like god is like the force and that means he's sort of amoral or where that god gets mixed up with utopian social scheming of some great future that we will accomplish by our politics and our science and our technology and our techniques or we'll have some type of a you know like a vague sense of god and and so and and and so whenever we come across words in our culture what we need to keep doing is we keep needing to be gripped by the gospel and gripped by the word of god because the gospel changes the words these words if they're left to themselves will cause blasphemy so why is it that the gospel shapes our uniqueness but our uniqueness not just does not shape the gospel it's a very very hard word to our lgbtq plus friends that the gospel is not shaped by your your unique experience the gospel will shape you the gospel does not have to correspond to your unique experience it can't it won't he's god he's the lord and to the business person into the social progressive the gospel will shape how you deal with money your understanding for the business person and your understanding the anti-poverty axis activist your understanding is not going to shape the gospel the gospel if it's to be the gospel will shape you and and if you understand king in the earthly way well the gospel is going to shape your understanding of king being king will not shape your understanding of the gospel or should not because you see what happens in the history of the church is when the world shapes these definitions that then it's terrible then you have apartheid then you have racism then you have segregation then you have hard-heartedness towards the poor then you have militarism and and imperialism and when the world shapes how we understand these terms it's terrible the church has to continually be immersed in the scriptures as god's word written so that we redefine what these terms mean and and and and and and the implications for our lives final point just is wrapping it up if you could put it up jesus christ crucified is the true king as we live in the kingdoms of this world he leads his redeemed people to live under his rule in his kingdom to his glory jesus christ crucified is the true king that's that's why zechariah could be promising and predicting the true king who's going to come he's not just to be the king of israel he is to be the king of people from every people group because he is properly the true king he is the proper second adam over all human beings and what distinguishes christians is that we receive mercy from the true king to be made his people not that we are somehow special in and of ourselves but jesus christ crucified is the true king and being a christian means that you receive the gospel you receive who jesus is and what he's done for us on the cross we receive him as our savior and lord and as we receive him as our savior and lord his word and the holy spirit his leading and guiding will will start to make us free from idols free from things in our culture which bind us and wound us and hurt ourselves and hurt other people and it will start to work to free us from anger and and pride and vanity and greed and sloth and and lust and it will begin to free us from these things that we can begin to be free and unique and he will he will lead his redeemed people to be part of a of a communities where we are learning to live under his rule in his kingdom for his glory we're saved in a sense as i used to say they used to have a saying that i i had we enter that we enter the jesus way one by one but we live the jesus way with jesus and others one by faith, but we live the Jesus way with Jesus and others, with him as our king. Please stand.

Just bow our heads in prayer. Father, pour out the Holy Spirit upon us. Father, if there are any here who have not yet given their lives to Jesus, may, Father, may your Holy Spirit just press in deeply on their heart that they might hear Jesus knocking at the door of their heart and they might open that door and say, Jesus, please come in and be my savior and be my Lord. Be my savior and be my Lord. I give myself to you, Jesus, come in and have your way within me. I trust that you will only make me free and unique and fit me for heaven. And Father, for each of us, you know the different ways that the world bends us out of shape. We ask, Father, that you would renew our minds, that you would renew our wills, that you would renew our emotions, that you would renew and redefine our affections, that you would renew and redefine our longings and our will, our values, that you would, Father, that your Holy

[40 : 08] Spirit, through your word, as we're gripped by the gospel, would do this mighty work of ongoing transformation in our lives. Father, and we ask this in the name of Jesus, your son and our savior. Amen.