

# Acting Like A god or goddess

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[ 0 : 00 ] Father, we ask that you would pour the Holy Spirit out upon us at this time as we think upon your Word. I ask that you would pour the Holy Spirit upon me, that I not only be a hearer of the Word, but a doer of your Word.

And Father, for myself and for all who are listening and entering into worship, I ask, Father, I give, we give an unconditional permission and invitation for your Word to speak into our hearts and rule into our hearts.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. I'm so programmed, I want to say please be seated as if we're all together in the same place and you've all been standing because of the creed.

The Bible text that Matt read today, it's too bad that it's just a really obscure, irrelevant topic. I mean, all it does is talk about the problem of being judgmental, the problem of arrogance, the problem of arrogant planning, injustice and oppression by the rich.

So it has actually nothing to say about anything that's going on in the world today or your life.

Obviously, I'm joking. But some of you, if you listened to the text at all when Matt was reading it, if you were paying any attention to it, you might come back and say, George, first of all, it's a little bit interesting to us, especially if you're entering into this today as a bit of a seeker, or maybe you've been burned out by religion, by some type of form of the Christian faith or some other religion.

[ 1 : 37 ] And so you watch this. There we go. You watch this and you think, well, George, it's sort of interesting to discover that the Bible condemns people for being judgmental.

But, George, don't you agree that most Christians are very, very judgmental? In fact, that that's a common experience that I've had and many people have had when they meet Christians, that they're very, very judgmental.

So I guess all I can say now, George, is not only are they judgmental, they're hypocritical because they go against what their own book tells them to do. But I don't know, like, George, you know, so it's good to know that the Bible text is against being judgmental and all that.

But you know what it talked about in terms of planning and all? Like, that just sounds completely absurd, as if you should just, you know, not make any plans about the future. It just sort of says, I don't know, do nothing.

That doesn't seem to be very helpful. And then I guess for some of you, if you were listening to it, for those of you who are more left-wing and vote NDP, you're going, yay, about what the Bible says about judgment, about the rich and all of that.

[ 2 : 43 ] But for those who are more conservative, you're going, boo, it sounds like it's a sort of a socialist text and anti-capitalist. So sort of what's going on? So here's a little bit of a thing to try to sort of figure out what's going on with the text.

I'm going to say you're not going to be surprised by this because I'm a Christian. And I think the Bible here gives very profound advice worth meditating upon in all of these different areas that it talks about.

And in fact has, well, here's the thing about your comment. I'm not going to deny that many Christians are judgmental. I'm not going to deny that. And if some of you who are watching this have had experience of me being judgmental, that might very well be the case.

I'm not going to say I'm perfect in these areas. And I just would like to say I'd like to apologize to you. But there's a bit of a riddle here about how Canadians think about being judgmental.

Like before, in some ways, it's actually a bit judgmental to say that Christians are judgmental, if you think about it for a second. Like in a bit of a paradoxical or ironic thing, if you're saying Christians are judgmental, that sounds a bit judgmental.

[ 3 : 51 ] But I'm not going to complain about that. I'm not going to take the victim role. I'm actually going to say that we Canadians are actually very confused about the issue and don't realize it. And I'll just give you two sort of things.

On one hand, we say you should never be judgmental. That's true. But on the other hand, what it doesn't actually address is how do you have moral confrontation, a moral confrontation which is valid.

So in other words, if you were to hear that a teenager, for instance, his parents catch him lying and the parents confront him about lying.

And then you hear the teenager respond, you guys are so judgmental. Well, I mean, depending on the nature of the lie, you might say, well, one moment here, like did you lie?

And did you lie about things who are really important? Like, so is that actually being judgmental to capture somebody who's lying about something which is very important? Or maybe a better example, if, you know, over coffee, you find out that a woman has found out that her husband has had an affair and she confronts him about it and he said, you're so judgmental.

[ 5 : 09 ] Well, how many of you would back the husband in that particular thing? So if you think about it for a second, there's a bit of an issue about how do we actually figure out both how, I mean, we all sort of have a sense that there's two things that both have to be true, but in fact, we Canadians don't really know how to figure it out other than just I decide this, I decide this is judgmental and I decide this is valid.

But one moment, I mean, in the case, the husband and the wife are both making decisions and they're obviously disagreeing. Like, how do you figure out how to have a valid moral confrontation and at the same time, accept that there is, in fact, something called judgmentalism, which Christians are going to say with everybody else in Canada, probably just about everybody else, that it's wrong to be judgmental.

So how do you actually have to, how can you deal with that? Well, believe it or not, I think that what at first we might dismiss about the text is actually uniquely wise in the world of conversation about this particular issue.

So let's get our Bibles. We're going to walk towards it. We're going to meditate upon the text. If you're watching this for the first time, one of the things that we do at Church of the Messiah, which is a bit unique in the Canadian context today, is that we preach through books of the Bible.

And that means that we get to, you know, it's not like I felt like talking about judgmentalism or anything like that. We preach through the books of the Bible. We just look at what is there. They're written as books. It's like the smart way to actually, if you think about it, it's the smart way to study it.

[ 6 : 39 ] Because it was written as a book and we preach through the whole bit. So let's look at it. James chapter 4, verses 11 to 12. Now, just one other little bit of encouragement. And we're going to show the Bible verse on the screen as I read.

But it's really helpful if you have your own Bible with you for these sections, especially a paper version of the Bible. And you can look at the text yourself and think about it. The text isn't always going to be on the screen, or I might go from 11 to 12.

And it's just very helpful. Because, you see, we want to help you read the Bible for yourself. That's what we want you to do. Like, at the end of the day, what matters is what the Bible teaches for me. I'm just sharing with you. For me, what matters is what the Bible teaches, not what I say. I'm under the Bible, and I'm just trying to help us to understand and appreciate the Bible. But at the end of the day, remembering the Bible is far more important than remembering anything I say.

Anyway, so just James 4, verses 11 to 12. And just a bit of a context. Last week, we talked about how, in some ways, the very heart of the whole book of James is captured in verses 6 and 10, which is that God always gives more grace.

[ 7 : 48 ] God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. That's verse 6. And then verse 10, that's unpacked in verses 7, 8, and 9. And then verse 10, it has this wonderful, wonderful text that says, just make sure you read, humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

And immediately from that, it goes into this topic. And here's what it says. Verses 11 and 12. Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law.

But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

Now, this is a text designed to be meditated upon. And some of you might say, okay, George, I mean, now, you know, Matt read the text, and I was listening, but I didn't really catch it. I mean, you didn't make me sort of look at the text as closely as I did when you just read it. But now that you read it, actually, George, don't you think it comes across as very unhelpful?

[ 9 : 04 ] Like, doesn't it sound very judgmental? In fact, like, George, I actually think that Christianity is inherently judgmental, and that you have, like, a problem.

That's one of the reasons I'm not a Christian, some people would say. Like, this whole idea about God being a lawgiver and God being a judge, able to save and destroy, like, George, that sounds like, I mean, I'll just be honest, that sounds very judgmental.

Like, George, don't you think, like, the average Canadian would say, I think, that they could not worship or believe in a God like this, a judge who judges. The average Canadian would say that they can only believe in a God of love.

And this text doesn't seem to talk about a God of love. It seems to talk about a God who judges, who is the judge, and who judges, and they can't believe in it. But here's the problem.

To those of you who, and I can understand it, by the way, the Bible is often very shocking and surprising when you look at it very closely. But the question is, is the problem in the text, and I'm saying, you know, hopefully you can see a little bit of my body language, I'm not against you, I'm for you, but is the problem, I'm trying to say this very gently, is the problem in the text or in you?

[ 10 : 21 ] And you'd say, George, the text, the problem is in me. Well, just think about it for a second. Two things that the average Canadian would say. The average Canadian would say they cannot believe in a God like this, a judge who judges.

I believe in a God of love. But then it's not unusual when I've had conversations with people that one minute later they say something like this, I cannot believe in the God of the Bible because he does not judge evil.

Whoa, one second. You can't believe in a God who judges and you can't believe in a God who doesn't judge evil. Like, those two thoughts don't fit together.

I hate saying this, I have a big smile, maybe a little bit because I'm nervous. Like, that's actually incoherent. It's like asking God to make you full and hungry at the same time.

It's like God asking you to make you so, fill you so much up with fluid that you have to go pee but at the same time that he makes you thirsty. Like, it just doesn't fit together.

[ 11 : 29 ] And in fact, actually, the problem is not only is it that most Canadians don't realize that they have, that this is a problem, they don't even aware of the fact that there's a type of incoherence in them.

And by the way, a lot of Canadian Christians are the same way. Many Canadian Christians are very bothered with texts like this and very, very bothered with this whole idea of God judging and they're bothered by the problem of evil. And for many of us, we don't realize that there's a type of incoherence within us when we look at these things.

So, how does Christianity solve this? Well, actually, there's many ways that Christianity solves this particular problem and in fact maintains that God is a God of love and that he's worthy of worship and that he judges evil.

But it's, and it also actually, this text is actually extremely wise about the problem of judgmentalism. So, let's look at, let's look at the verse again.

It says in verse 11, do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law.

[ 12 : 42 ] But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. And here, this is in a sense talking about the fact that there is a real moral order that really does exist because there really is a God who does exist who's not an amoral or an immoral God but in fact, all right and wrong is fundamentally based on who God is and God is fundamentally good.

But it says here, do you notice it? It's actually here, the ESV, last week, the last two weeks if you watch these, I changed one of the verses that I read to get around a problem.

It's not a bad problem. I just, to try to help to make sure you can understand. Here, the text is actually very literal in terms of what the Greek says. Speak against speak evil against one another. Speak evil against or speak against a brother. Speak evil against the law. It's actually being very, very literal. So here's the question. Is God for you or against you?

Is the triune God for you or against you? So, what a Christian would say is that I have very good news and it's not news that I invented, it's news that I was told and the very good news is this.  
[ 13 : 55 ] Is that God is the triune God is for you. In fact, the triune God is for you vastly more than you can possibly ever imagine or retain.

That's, in fact, one of the reasons why Christians are to gather on a weekly basis and we're to open the word and the hope for every good congregation should be that the pastor always reminds them of the gospel is because this good news is so good, it's so beyond our ability to imagine and retain and go so against how we are ingrained to think of the world that we need to be reminded of it time and time and time and time again for it to begin to sink in.

But the good news of the Bible is that God is not against you, God is for you in a way vastly beyond anything you could ever possibly imagine. Remember how I began by that?

The context was is that God gives greater grace. No matter how messed up or whatever your situation in life is, no matter what your history is, God's grace is greater.

His unmerited kindness, his unmerited compassion, his unmerited love, his unmerited power to deal with that in a very powerful way, it is greater.

[ 15 : 09 ] And God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. And so humble yourself before the Lord and he will exalt you. And the great, great, great, great news is that the Bible, the God of the Bible is not an impartial God or a mild, like your Uncle Bob or your Aunt Sue who just wants to encourage you.

But meanwhile, they're just waiting to see if you can finally get your alcohol under control or get good enough or be nice enough or smart enough or young enough or good looking enough or rich enough or popular enough that he'll finally say, okay, you've passed.

No. No. Not at all. He's not a God who is on the sidelines waiting for you to sort your life out. He is for you.

And so even when you could not deal with anything yourself, God, the Son of God, sets aside his glory, sets aside his prerogatives, sets aside his being worshipped and all of that, sets aside the angels.

He empties himself of all of that, meaning fully God. He humbles himself to the point of even taking into himself our human nature, being a zygote in the womb of Mary, of living a fully human life as part of an oppressed people group and dying on a cross and on the cross bearing all of the shame that you might have, all of the accusations against you.

[ 16 : 39 ] Everything like that is completely and utterly laid on him and he does it knowing that you can't meet the moral standards, that you can't get your life in perfect order, that you can't defeat death.

He does that knowing you can't do all of those things and long before you even begin to desire to turn to him, Jesus did that for you because God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is for you, not against you.

that's the good news of the gospel, that he is for you. But then some of you might say, okay, well, George, but like, I don't know, George, is that what the text is saying?

I mean, I remember a little bit about what Matt was saying and it seems as if God's, you know, like against luxury. Like, why is he against me just having a comfortable bed or like a really nice TV or something?

And it does sound a little bit like he's against you, like God opposes the proud. I thought you said that's what it said in verse 6. You know, he opposes the proud. And don't you say, George, that all of us are proud?

[ 17 : 41 ] So if all of us are proud and he opposes the proud, how is he for us? Well, first of all, the Bible does teach that all are proud. And that includes me. I have a pride problem.

And I will have a pride problem until I die and see Jesus face to face. And I have a final healing. And I can tell you that if you're in Jesus, if you've given your life to Jesus and you've received him as your Savior and Lord, that the moment of your death, you will, your pride problem will be lifted finally, completely and utterly separate from who you are.

And you will cry in the words of that great African-American spiritual, free at last, free at last. Praise God Almighty. I'm free at last. That's what you'll say.

You see, the problem about this, the text is very, very profound. That's why if you think about God opposes the proud, if you think about the fact that this text in verses 11 and 12 is about the problem

of speaking against, and you understand that at the heart of the gospel is that God is not against you but for you.

And so why is it that he's against proud? The problem is, when it says that God opposes the proud, the problem is that every single one of us, me included, base our identity on sin and idols.

[ 19 : 01 ] Every single one of us base our identity, our worth, our value on different sins and different idols.

Every single one of us. And the fact of the matter is, is that these different things are so fundamental to our identity that it feels as if God, like if God was to come against that and tell us that that has to be removed from us, it would feel as if God's completely and utterly opposed to it. So, in other words, like we say things like, how can I exist without my looks? How can I exist without my money? How can I exist without my alcohol? How can I exist without my drugs? How can I exist without that person?

How can I exist without being in a romantic relationship? How can I exist without sex? How can I exist without control? How can I exist without power? How can I exist if I don't have these particular positions?

How can I exist if I don't have my health? How can I exist if I don't... And that's what we say. We find it completely and utterly impossible to imagine. And the funny thing is that we all notice that primarily about other people.

[ 20 : 14 ] We'll notice that we have a friend who's consumed with money and that they don't seem as if they can exist without money or they don't think they can exist if they don't have these particular possessions. But because the things that we don't think we can exist with are different than them, we make fun of them or we feel pity for them.

We think to ourselves, how ridiculous to think you can't exist without a Rolex. Like, that's just so shallow. But the other time we have somebody else saying, well, how on earth can you think you can't exist without having that particular relationship or without maintaining your looks or without having that type of physique or whatever it is.

And this is a fundamentally human problem. You know, we see it very clearly when we confront somebody who has a problem with racism. You know, how can I exist if I'm equal to blacks or something like that or if they're, like, you see what I mean?

And so here's this wonderful thing about the Bible is that in the gospel, God is for you to redeem you despite this. despite the fact that human beings base their identity, I base my identity on different sins and different idols.

Despite that, God loved me. Despite that, God loved me. And he deals with my idols. He deals with my sin. He deals with the shame I get from not being able to live up to my idols and live up to my sin.

[ 21 : 41 ] And he deals with that. And his great act of love is to begin to separate me as the gospel grips me, as I become more and more aware of the fact that God sees the real me, the real me in both those things in me that are glorious but also the things in me that are quite bad.

And he sees the real me and he loves the real me. And he knows the real me from the moment of my conception to the moment of my death. He knows beneath all of my fronts, everything. He knows the real me and he loves me even though I am pathetic.

I am pathetic. But part of the gospel is to begin to separate me from my idols, to separate me from my sin, to separate me from having an idol-based identity and sin-based identity and to begin to give me an identity based on grace and love, his grace and his love, an identity which is everlasting and truly fulfills the longing of my heart.

And that is what the gospel wants to give you. So God condemns the sin you do and he dies for the sin you do out of love for you.

I'll say it again. God condemns the sin you do and the idol worship you do and he dies for it because he loves you.

[ 23 : 17 ] See, this begins to give us a little bit of an insight about how this is a bit of an answer to the riddle that we began with about how is it that you can both have a problem with judgmentalism in relationships but at the same time in a normal human relationship you have to be able to have moral conversation, a moral confrontation about things that really are wrong that in fact a husband is not right to say that his wife is judgmental if she challenges him on an affair and a boss is not being judgmental if he or she challenges you about a lie that you've done or embezzlement yet there still is reality of judgmentalism.

You see, the key is that God opposes the proud and we regularly are proud. It is not judgmental to humbly but clearly point out a real moral law and how you have broken it.

Now there's a whole other range of biblical teaching about we flatter ourselves too much to detect or hate our own sin and we see the speck in another person's eye and not in the log in another eye and there's a whole other realm of conversations that we can have about this but just to sort of stick to this particular area it is not judgmental to humbly but clearly point out a real moral law and how you have broken it.

To do it in a way that shows that both the person who says this and the person who is the person who confronts and the person under it that we who's broken it are both equally under it and we're called to try to live up to it.

But the problem is the problem is and this is where judgmentalism comes in is that each of us and this is part of our pride is that each of us in significant ways thinks that we are the moral center.

[ 25 : 07 ] There are significant ways that I will fall into thinking that I am the moral center not God. You have different ways that you fall into believing that you are the moral center but not God.

And you might say George that sounds awfully judgmental really I don't think you can possibly prove that I can prove that very very effortlessly and easily. There are many many many people who say I cannot follow a God who does not accept my sexuality.

I cannot follow a God who will not encourage me in my desire to be the real me who is really me. I cannot worship or accept or live under any type of censor from that.

I cannot accept or follow any God who makes any claim on what I do with my money. I cannot follow or acknowledge any God who makes any claim upon how I spend my time.

And you see the thing is is that most of you are saying oh George this is getting a little bit hot like what's wrong with saying that about sexuality? What's wrong with saying that about money? What's wrong with saying that about time? But I'll tell you exactly what's wrong with it because it's when we put different things which aren't culturally accepted that we see that there's a problem.

[ 26 : 22 ] I cannot accept that there's going to be any type of God who's going to make any claim on me owning slaves. I cannot accept any type of God who's going to make any type of claim on me thinking that women are just playthings for me or that they're dumb or that black people are just less than me.

I can't accept a God that's going to challenge that. I can't accept a God that doesn't have my view on the Israeli Palestinian conflict. We go on and on and on.

Every time we say I cannot accept I am saying I am the moral arbiter. I am the person who clarifies and makes clear what's right and what's wrong.

And here's the problem. You're in a couple and both of you have that view. You're in a family and you have three kids. All five of you have that view. You're in a workplace.

Everybody in that workplace has that view. And maybe it's all right if every one of you happened to be centered around the same type of idol or politics but then all that does is just encourage you to look at the outside world and see all those other people that you look down on and so all you've done is you've saved the conflict in your family or your marriage or your workplace but all you've done is made the conflict in the world more.

[ 27 : 44 ] Because when you say that I cannot then you're saying you're the moral center of the universe and when you're the moral center of the universe and you confront another person that is judgmentalism and that is what the Bible here is pointing out is the fundamental problem.

It is saying there is only one law giver and there's only one judge and guess what? He didn't die and give you the job. He didn't die and give me the job.

Don't we often say that people? Who died and made you the judge? That's even a very Canadian thing to say and that's what the text is confronting us about.

That's what the text is confronting us about. You see you are not the moral center. There is a moral order that's over you and me and all we can do is humbly acknowledge that we're under it and that moral order is not by a God made by some God arbitrarily a God whose whole goal is to he will be exalted while people die for him.

No, the complete opposite. It's a God who humbles himself to die so that you will live. He is for you. You are not God and when you come to the true God, the living God, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, when you come to Jesus and accept what he has done for you on the cross, he says to you, my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

[ 29 : 15 ] Lay down your burdens. Lay down the profound anxious causing weight of believing that you are the moral center because a lot of the anxiety that you feel in your life is because you think you are God or a goddess.

In fact, that's going to come up in the very next story that in fact not only do you think that you're the moral center but you think you're the Lord of time and you can control things and if you think you're the moral center that causes anxiety because you know what?

You're not. And if you think you have control of the future, you're the Lord of the future, you're the... You're not. And these false beliefs, they just pile anxiety upon anxiety upon anxiety upon you.

That is why Jesus says you will know the truth. When you give yourself to him, you will know the truth and the truth will make you free. I have to be very brief over these last three.

I sort of jumped ahead a little bit, but let's look at what it says in verses 13 to 16. What the text is not saying is the text is not saying that you should try to give up any type of an attempt to control the future and God's goal for you is to be...

[ 30 : 27 ] You know those old-fashioned pinball machines? You know where you bang off a ball and it goes around and then all the bumpers move it around? The Bible is not saying that the goal of the Christian life is to be like a ball knocked around by all the bumpers where somebody else controls the flippers.

That's not what it's saying at all. But let's listen to what it says. Verse 13. Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

Oh, sorry. I'm reading the wrong verse 13. It would be helpful if I wrote the right... Sorry. Those were good verses as well in chapter 3. Chapter 4, verse 13. Come now, you who say today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit. Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist or a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say if the Lord wills we will live and do this or that.

As it is you boast in your arrogance all such boasting is evil. Now, very briefly, since we last met I've had two friends die.

[ 31 : 43 ] A week ago, tonight, my friend Ron Bales died suddenly and unexpectedly. And then this just passed this Monday another friend of mine, Randy Jost, the long-time minister at the Met, he died.

And even though we knew he was sick it was still a bit of a shock. Why is it that Canadians are bothered if I remind them that they will die? You're going to die.

So will I. Why is it that Canadians are bothered if I say to you, you know, you have no guarantee that you'll live to be 80 or 85 or 90.

You have zero guarantee about that. Why is it that Canadians are bothered if we say to them you might die this afternoon, it might be an aneurysm, it might be a blood clot, it might be a car accident, it might be some horrific act of murder by some crazed, deranged person with a gun.

Why is it that we are bothered by that? The fact of the matter is, is that Canadians have a very, very hard time imagining how to answer this text because Canadians are addicted to the type of arrogant belief they control the future that this text is talking about.

[ 32 : 55 ] You want to know a perfect example about that is you just look at the opinion polls and you look at politics in Canada. What has COVID taught us? COVID taught us that on January 1st, 2020, nobody knew, nobody knew that the entire economy and world was going to be completely and utterly transformed in people's lives.

Their religious freedoms were going to be suppressed. Their abilities to gather were going to be taken away. That thousands of people would die. Nobody knew that on January 1st, 2020, right? I mean, that's a common place. But how have we responded to the fact that it has been revealed to us, one, that people will die? I'm not being callous, I'm just trying to get us to think, why is it that we Canadians, after it's been unbelievably powerfully revealed to us that we do not know what's going to happen in the future and that people die, and what's the response of Canadians?

A greater control of the future. Whoa, whoa, whoa, one second. COVID-19 just showed that we have no control of the future and know about it. And yet, how's our response?

Well, I'm not being political here. You take the liberal budget and I know the NDP, they'd add a couple of dozen billion dollars to it. And I know the conservatives, they'd say, well, be conservatives

and we're going to just knock it down 10 billion, but all of the parties all double down on a belief that they know the future and they can control the future and they can control interest rates and they can control all these other things that happen.

[ 34 : 34 ] We double down on it. It bothers us that the government cannot control the vaccines. It cannot. So rather than just saying, you know, we need to be a little bit more humble and loose about the fact that our control of the future, we double down on it.

It's like an alcoholic who thinks the solution to the fact that they only have a bit of a buzz after four drinks is to have eight drinks. Or the person who says, well, I don't know, just smoke and marijuana hasn't dealt with my problems.

I guess I need to add some other drugs to it. Like, rather than saying, maybe there's a problem here, we double down on it because we don't want to acknowledge that people die.

We don't want to acknowledge, I don't want to acknowledge, you don't want to acknowledge it, you die. And Canadians, you know, four years ago this summer, I got the great privilege to be invited to go to Angola and to be part of SIM for a short while and do some teaching.

And so, there's a local church that wanted me to do a morning of teaching, like about three or four hours. And so, they wanted me to speak for three to four hours and lead some discussions, right, for three to four hours, okay?

[ 35 : 45 ] And so, you know, I try to find out before I go what they'd like me to do, no answer. I get there and I'm still two more weeks before I ask what I want to do and there's still no answer.

Monday before, no answer. Wednesday before, no answer. Thursday before, why don't you come meet me in my office tomorrow morning about what you're going to do on Saturday? And I sent a blog back to the church and said, Angolan Christians are very Angolan.

But then again, Canadian Christians are very Canadian. I mean, I guess in one level, in Angola, there's all these things that kill you and people have a lower life expectancy and you don't know when all of a sudden there's going to be a gas ration and it doesn't mean that they'd like to have some type of control but there's just so many things in that world that just go wrong.

And maybe there's some other, just some very, very good virtues as well in their temperament and they could maybe look at us and laugh at our, maybe both laugh and feel pity at North America.

It's hard for us to imagine how this is not the way to live. Just a couple of things. What the text is saying is that we Christians, and this is the way of wisdom, it is not a bad thing to remember that you are mortal because you are mortal.

[ 37 : 03 ] and it's not a bad thing to remind you that you literally do not know what's going to happen tomorrow. You literally do not. You literally do not.

But at the same time as being a human being there needs to be some planting, there needs to be some planting. If I want to enjoy tomatoes from my garden in August, you've got to plant the seeds. You can't just do nothing and expect there to be garden. So what the Bible is saying is something like this, that we need to, in a sense, meditate upon these truths to get a type of healthy balance, a wise balance to having a beautiful life.

That only the triune God is sovereign and omniscient. Only he is. You are vapor. You had a beginning. You'll have an end.

You have not lived forever. You aren't eternal. You aren't everlasting. And life is always too short. That only the triune God is sovereign and omniscient.

[ 38 : 06 ] You are vapor. You do not know or control the future. And for a Christian, and this is the profound comfort of this text, you are in the palm of his hand.

You are in the palm of his hand. You are in the palm of the hand of the one who does know the future.

You are in the palm of the hand of the one who is for you, not against you. You are in the palm of the hand of the one who, as the Bible says, if you humble yourself, he will exalt you.

That God gives more grace. He opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. And in the context of remembering regularly that only the triune God is sovereign and omniscient, that you are vapor, that you do not know or control the future, that you are in his hand with love, it is in that context that you build and plan and grow.

Because God wants us to grow. He wants us to plan. He wants us to think about our retirement. He wants us to do these things.

[ 39 : 21 ] But to do it humbly under the power of God. Just want to, you know, so much anxiety in life comes from thinking that you control the future.

that you have to know everything. That so much of your anxiety comes because you constantly seek to be a god or a goddess.

And your anxiety is only doubled because you're with others seeking to be gods and goddesses and you don't all agree because you can only be one god, only be one goddess. And so this biblical text is a profound invitation for you to understand that there is a moral order, that there really is right and wrong, that God is for you, that he loves you, that he really loves you vastly beyond what you can imagine, that he reaches his hand of love out for you, that you would take his hand and you can't reach his hand but his hand can reach you and he will reach you and hold you and he will make you his child by adoption and grace and then you can live into eternity, into the everlasting life knowing that he loves you, that you're in the palm of his hand.

And it is from that posture being in the palm of his hand that we are to look at the world to see how we can bless it, to see how we can share the gospel, to see how we can plan the tomatoes, plan our families, plan our finances, plan our generosity.

There is no wiser place to live than in the palm of his hand. Let's pray. Father, we ask that you would pour the Holy Spirit upon us with might and power and deep conviction that for any who have not yet had that move to give themselves to Jesus, that even now you would help them, Father, to humble themselves, to give themselves to Jesus, that he might be their Savior and Lord.

[ 41 : 15 ] And Father, for those of us who call Jesus as Savior and Lord, we recommit to you, we remember once again why it is that you are so beautiful, that you are so good. It is so good, Father, to be reminded that you are for us, that you love us, that Jesus died for us, that we are in the hollow of your hand, that we are safe there, that we can deal with the valley of the shadow of death when we are in the palm of your hand, that we can plan for the future, we can fight against injustice, we can be generous, we can start to set aside our sin and idol-based identities to get that identity that you desire to give us, that is the longing of our hearts that goes into all of eternity.

Child, your child, your child, your friend, Father, we give you thanks so much for Jesus, and we ask that you would grip us again with the truth of the gospel, and all God's people said, Amen.