

JESUS AND HYPOCRISY

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[0 : 00] Father, we confess before you that we notice hypocrisy in other people, but we don't notice it as often in ourselves.

We confess before you, Father, that hypocrisy bothers us in other people and does not bother ourselves as much when we see it in ourselves. We confess before you, Father, that our own hypocrisy we often think of as being very unimportant, just a momentary thing in us.

So, Father, we confess before you that it is hard for us to hear the words of the Bible speaking to us, that it's easy for us to hear it speaking to other people. Father, we confess this before you.

We ask, Father, that you would gently but deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and bring your word home to us. We thank you, Father, that you speak these words so that we will turn to you, that we will be disciples gripped by the gospel, living for your glory.

So, Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Help us to hear your word as a word directly to each one of us and to us as a church. And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior.

[1 : 14] Amen. Please be seated. Some little child is very unhappy. Some of you who heard me read the scripture just a few moments ago might be thinking something like this.

Isn't Jesus being a little bit hypocritical himself by saying that we are of great value to God and that he's going to cast us into hell? Isn't that, in fact, the type of religious hypocrisy that we see all around us?

And doesn't Jesus seem to be guilty of this himself? We're of greater value than sparrows. God will send us to hell. There seems to be a little bit of a disconnect. Does Jesus sort of need to listen to his own words?

Well, let's listen to the words of Jesus ourselves. So if you have a Bible with you, take your Bible and turn in it to Luke chapter 12. And if you've forgotten your Bible or you don't own a Bible, there's always some Bibles up here at the front.

When you come in the side door, there's always Bibles. You're welcome to have a Bible. Use it today. Keep it for yourself or return it afterwards. Luke chapter 12. And let's listen to what Jesus has to say about hypocrisy and whether he himself is being a hypocrite in terms of what he says, whether he's encouraging Christians to be hypocrites.

[2 : 32] Let's listen carefully to his words. Luke chapter 12, verse 1. I didn't organize a crying baby to give us an image of hell or anything like that, by the way.

That's just one of those unplanned things of the Holy Spirit. So the poor little child. Luke 12, 1. In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together and they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Now, if you just bear with me for a second, I'd like to have a little bit of an aside. One of the things which is just sort of interesting to know about these few words before we get to hypocrisy is sort of a very, very interesting thing.

Often when we think of the New Testament or when people around us think of the Bible being written, we sort of have this idea that there's these elusive witnesses, obscure witnesses that have been found that talk about Jesus.

It's a little bit like, not quite, it was the only analogy that I could think of very quickly. But you know, how many of you, I don't know how many of you have seen the movie World War Z or World War Z, depending if you're an American or a Canadian.

[3 : 47] And in that movie, part of what it is, is that they want to find an elusive witness to the outbreak of the zombie apocalypse. So they send a guy with, another guy with a team of like the toughest seals that you can imagine.

Those are the, you know, American ones with guns, not the ones that swim in the water and flap their fins. And they go there to find the one elusive witness to the beginning of the outbreak way off in South Korea.

And sometimes people think that the New Testament, that the Gospels were sort of written like that, that Luke went and found the one elusive witness. And it's just sort of interesting as an aside, because Luke, who wrote this work somewhere between the year 62 and the year 65, and he himself never saw Jesus.

And so as he claims at the beginning of the book, sort of the second part of his work, that he went and carefully examined witnesses. Luke didn't have to go like in World War Z or Zed and find the elusive witness.

There were thousands and thousands and thousands of people who heard Jesus. I mean, it would be a little bit more analogous to somebody saying, wanting to find out what Martin Luther King said in Washington when he gave his famous, I have a dream speech.

[5 : 11] There were thousands and thousands and thousands of people, even though that speech took place over 45 years ago, a far greater distance of time than Luke was writing his Gospel. If you went searching, you could find hundreds, hundreds, maybe thousands of people still who were alive and were right there to hear Martin Luther King speak.

Many of the things in Martin Luther King's life, you would still be able to find thousands and thousands and thousands of witnesses to what he said. And this is sort of what Luke is dealing with. Luke, when he was writing his Gospel, it wasn't that he had to find one elusive witness and then create this huge Gospel. But it would have been more the case that he could find thousands of witnesses, people who had become followers of Jesus and people who had rejected Jesus. And out of all of the evidence that he heard, he winnowed down the true stories and the true sayings of Jesus, which he recounts in this Gospel of Luke. That's just a little bit of an aside. But listen, again, what does Jesus say?

So there's thousands of people. Those of you who have King James Version Bibles or remember the days of the King James Version Bible, they translate it more literally as myriads, which means just thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of people.

[6 : 20] And what does he say? The beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Just this stark, bold statement.

Beware. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Here's the first thing, if you could put it up. Jesus warns me, and you, me that natural human religion and spirituality grow hypocrisy.

That's what Jesus is warning us about. Jesus warns me that natural human religion and spirituality, natural human spirituality grow hypocrisy.

It's well known to all of us that there has been a lamentable history of anti-Semitism. I remember a year or two ago, I watched this really good movie that was about some Jewish people who survived the Holocaust by hiding in the sewer system in the Polish capital.

Yeah, there you go. And it's a very, very interesting side story of the Polish fellow, Polish Christian, who sort of was basically a bit of a crook, helping these Jewish people survive the war.

[7 : 40] And there's a very, very funny time when it dawns on him for the first time that Jesus was Jewish. Jesus was Jewish? Couldn't have been Jewish. Jesus was Jewish. Jewish?

The apostles were Jewish. No, the apostles could. Yeah, they were Jewish. Well, there's been this long history of anti-Semitism, and partly what fuels it is when we take words like the Pharisees, and we think that Jesus is only talking about those human beings and that religious party that happened to exist at the time that he was speaking.

But we have to understand that on one hand, it was a particular group of people, a religious movement, a reform movement within Judaism at the time that Jesus is talking about.

But Jesus is also talking about Pharisees, and Luke records it as a bit of a symbol. He's not saying something to let us off the hook. Okay, we don't have to worry about the leaven of the Pharisees because there are no Pharisees anymore, so whoa, okay, that doesn't apply to us, or that's just a Jewish problem.

If you read through the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you'll see that Pharisees really become a type of symbol for natural human religion or natural human spirituality, and how there's this natural human religion that springs up from within us that means that even though we might read the Bible and we might hear the very words of God, that when we read them through the filter

of natural human religion and natural human spirituality, that we'll misunderstand the word of God in a constant, constantly.

[9 : 09] In fact, it's a danger for Christians. It's a danger for people who come to church. And what Jesus is saying here then, and you sort of have to just trust me that Pharisees, one of the things that they symbolize is natural human religion.

So the whole course of the book of Luke, I can't prove everything. Every single time I talk, you go back and you listen to some other sermons, et cetera. And what Jesus is saying here is that natural human religion and natural human spirituality, we have to beware of it.

It grows hypocrisy. That's what it grows. It grows hypocrisy. And he uses that by the symbol of leaven, which is, we would sort of call it, if you buy sourdough bread now, you're buying bread that's made the old-fashioned way that's made with leaven.

You take a tiny bit of fermented bread, so to speak, or a bread that will rise, and you take a tiny bit of that dough and you add it to a large batch of dough, and that leaven works in the large batch of dough to make the entire batch of dough leavened.

So it's specifically an image of growing, that natural human religion. We need to beware of it. You and I this morning, I need to beware of it, you need to beware of it, because it exists and it grows.

[10 : 28] And it's not good. Jesus warns me that natural human religion and spirituality grow. Hypocrisy. Just a little while after I was ordained, I was going on a trip with some other Anglican clergy, and we stopped for coffee, and one of the Anglican clergy said, listen, George, I'm going to buy you coffee.

And then he said, I'm going to teach you a lesson that I learned from a boss. And it was a great lesson, and the lesson was this. He bought me coffee, and as he was buying me coffee, he says, I won't say the fellow's name, we'll say his name is Joe.

He said to me, Joe, always buy coffee, because it doesn't cost very much money, and it will make you appear generous. Sort of funny, an Anglican minister was telling me this with no sense that this might be an odd thing to teach.

Like, he was thinking I should learn from this. Always, you know, coffee only costs a tiny amount of money. Always buy the coffee, because it makes you appear generous. And then he went on to say, and if you appear generous, people will like you more, you know, your employees will do more for you.

You have to be careful, I buy coffee for my employees. I'm not doing it just to appear generous, if Jeremy and all are listening in. But, you know, listen, if you were to have overheard that conversation, and you were an employee of that fellow, would you trust him as your boss?

[11 : 58] Would you trust what he said? If he, in such a calculating manner, would say, that spending, depending on where you're going for your cup of coffee, \$1.25, \$2, whatever that range is, by spending that \$2, you appear generous, in a sense, it's easier to manipulate you, if I appear generous.

It's hypocritical. And we have a basic innate sense, at least in others, that if there's such clear calculating hypocrisy, that who knows how far that is spread in that person's life, and how much you can trust anything they do.

So, at a very simple level, we see that this is a human problem, which is why I introduced it by saying natural human religion, and natural human spirituality.

It's a human problem, and we recognize on one level that we agree with Jesus, that it's the type of thing that we would worry as a leaven, that would grow and grow, and encompass how a person relates to the truth, to words, to policies, to family, to friends, to a whole range of things.

And so, Jesus warns me, and warns you, that natural human religion, and natural human spirituality, grow hypocrisy. So, now you have to wonder, okay, so what's Jesus going to say about this?

[13 : 27] We're going to get to whether he's being hypocritical, and talking about hell, but we sort of have to get there, because it comes, the statement about hell comes after he's talked about some other things. First of all, we have to understand, in a sense, the problem, which Jesus identifies.

So, what does he do? Does he do, is he now going to give you five easy steps to get rid of hypocrisy in your life? Is he going to tell us about a set of rituals that we have to go through? Is he going to tell us to join a certain club? Is he going to tell us to learn certain yoga poses, or meditation techniques? Is he going to tell us to abandon having any moral standards, and therefore

you do not have to worry about hypocrisy?

Be up front, not a slimy, evil, manipulating person, with no pretension of being anything like that. Is that what he's going to do? No, he goes in a very, very, very curious direction. In fact, part of the proof of natural human religion, is that we quickly, if we're honest, want to go in one of those directions, of the five easy steps to avoid hypocrisy.

Something technique-wise, that we can do, to rid it from our lives. But Jesus goes in a very sort of surprising direction. At first, it doesn't look surprising, but when we realize the consequence of it, because he does an interesting twist to it, to make it concrete.

[14 : 47] And so, let's read along. Verses two and three, is the beginning of the 11 verses, of Jesus talking about the problem of hypocrisy. Verse two, Nothing is covered up, that will not be revealed, or hidden, that will not be known.

Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark, shall be heard in the light. And what you have whispered in private rooms, shall be proclaimed on the housetops.

Jesus gives a very, very concrete teaching, that Jesus, that God, that Jesus knows all things, and that he will reveal all things.

In fact, rather than Jesus going and talking about, what in a sense, me, he talks about God, and he's going to leave, in a sense, open the fact that I'm powerless, on one level, against hypocrisy. And he's inviting me, as he does throughout the book of Luke, to come to him, in a sense, naked, powerless, not bargaining with God, not manipulating God, with my prayer, but he invites us to call out, from our heart, mindful of the fact, that we all have hypocrisy, excuse me, in our lives, that we tend to understand hypocrisy, in other people, is very bad, in ourselves, is excusable.

[16 : 11] Hypocrisy, in another person's life, is a mark of their character. Hypocrisy, in my own life, is just a momentary thing, that I, it just sort of happened to me, but I'm still a good person. That hypocrisy, that hypocrisy, is a huge stain, on a person, that we don't like, but in ourselves, it's sort of fluid, and flexible, and there's always an excuse, and, and Jesus invites us, to not think about that at all, but to think about God, just to think about God, and to think about God, concretely.

In fact, he invites us, if you could put it up, Andrew, to do something like this, in a naked sense, in a non-manipulative sense, in a cry from the heart sense, to say, dear God, please grow in me, a humble, trusting knowledge, that you know all things, and that you will reveal all things.

Dear God, please grow in me, a humble, trusting knowledge, that you know all things, and that you will reveal, all things. Some of you have heard me, maybe say that I, I get a certain, a real kick out of watching, the old TV series, I think it's been cancelled, for a couple of years now, of Dr. House, and, and I would say, largely in jest, but to be honest, I'm getting a little bit red, my own hypocrisy moment, I have to be nice to people, I sort of like, there's a vicarious, this pleasure I get, from watching House, just say whatever pops, into his mind, because a lot of times, those same things, are in my mind, about people, but I have to be nice, I was on a Christian board, of something, and there was this issue, that had to be dealt with, and one of the lay people, said to the clergy, in the room, he said, okay, you clergy, here's the problem, we have with solving this problem, you have to be nice to people,

I'm a businessman, I don't have to be nice to people, this is what, this is what has to be, done, and so, you know, I confess, on one hand, part of my pleasure, of watching House, while on one hand, I think he's a jerk, time after time, after time, but he says what, he says the truth, just bluntly, hurting people, moving, plot along, and, and what the Bible, is saying, is that, if, that one day, that aspect of George, which I know in private, will be known in public, you see, he takes the doctrine, of God's omniscience, which we religious, and spiritual people like, and he takes it, in a direction, that we don't like, because you see, at the heart of natural human religion, is that we desire, God to be something, that we do not like, when we see it in other people, we desire God, to be our enabler, I'm reading a novel right now, and part of the, the plot of the novel, is, that a woman, who's been abused, by her husband, been beat up by her husband, many, many, many times, over a period of five years, she meets this guy, who's a hitchhiker, and part of the, the novel is about, she's trying to talk him, into killing her husband, and, and so part of, what goes on in the novel, are, are repetitive conversations, around the whole issue, of why it is, that she doesn't leave, and why it is, that she's been, to the emergency ward, many, many, many times, in different hospitals, but in every single case, she's provided, a convincing reason, that she hasn't been, beaten up by her husband, in this particular novel, she rides horses, and trains horses, so it's easy for her, to say that it came, as dealing with horses, that she got kicked, by the horse, or knocked off the horse, and it's believable,

and she enables, her husband's violence, against herself, and part of the novel, is working out, because the guy's, not going to kill her husband, and so part of it, is that working out, but you see, here's the thing for us, you see, in hypocrisy, the God who exists, we want a God, who enables us, in our hypocrisy, we either, don't think that God, knows all things, or if we do think, that he knows all things, we don't think, he's going to do anything, about knowing all things,

[20 : 45] I'm keeping it quiet, God will keep it quiet, what's the problem, but Jesus, dealing with the leaven, of hypocrisy, he says, you know what, one of the things, I'm not going to talk to you, about techniques, just think about God, think about God, good thing to do, think about God, and here's the thing, about God, he knows everything, that happens, and he's not, an enabler, he won't enable you, everything, that you think, and say, will one day, be revealed, in such a way, that everybody knows, in a sense, every one of us, is in a reality show, every one of us, is in the amazing race, every one of us, is in Survivor, the cameras are going, you know, if you ever watch, any of those shows, you think to yourself, what are they thinking, don't these people realize, it's going to be on television, and millions of people, are going to see, what they just said, and did, like, we're that person, you and me, that's what Jesus, is saying, and so, as we, the words of Jesus, come home to us, in a way, which is not about, bargaining, or manipulating God, that in a sense,

Jesus is hoping, that from the depths, of who we are, we cry out, dear God, please grow in me, a humble, trusting knowledge, that you know, all things, and that you will, reveal, all things, but now, Jesus goes, in another direction, as he continues, to talk about it, and this is where, that whole concern, that I began, the talk with, about is Jesus, being hypocritical, is he doing, the classic religious move, oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, God values you, but you're going to hell, God values you, you're going to hell, like, you know, that the subtext, and you say one thing, but the other thing is happening, or you say the hell, but then he values you, it just doesn't quite sit right, and is that what Jesus now does, okay, even if I see that there's an issue, of hypocrisy, even if, wow, if there is a God, and maybe you're here, and you're not convinced, that God does exist, but to think, wow, if there is a God, that does exist, that does know all things, and will reveal all things, that does actually change, the game a little bit, but the direction Jesus goes, is still troublesome, let's look at, what he says, it'll take a few minutes, to sort of tease out, the full implication, of what he says, but let's look, it's in verse four,

I tell you, my friends, one of the few places, in the gospel, where he refers to his disciples, and you and I as friends, I tell you, my friends, do not fear, those who kill the body, and after that, have nothing more, that they can do, but I will warn you, whom to fear, fear him, who after he has killed, has authority, to cast into hell, yes, I tell you, fear him, are not five sparrows, sold for two pennies, just as an aside, basically, for an average working person, in Canada, that's a half hour's wage, that's how you can understand, what that means, are not five sparrows, sold for half an hour's wage, of an average working person, working class person, and not one of them, is forgotten before God, while even the hairs, of your head, are all numbered, fear not, you are of more value, than many sparrows, this is a very, very curious text, which actually, it requires some thinking, because there's this, interesting motion, five times,

Jesus uses the word fear, one to identify what we do, three times, to say what we should do, and the fourth time, to tell us the consequence, of going from the first thing, to the second thing, I'm going to put it, in the form of a prayer, which you might not want to pray, but I'm going to explain, in a moment, maybe after it, you'll see the implication of it, if you could put it up, Andrew, here's the point, put in the form of a prayer, dear God, please help me to remember, that hell is real, please grow in me, a humble trusting fear, of you, dear God, please help me, to remember, that hell is real, please grow in me, a humble trusting fear, of you, first of all, what Jesus says to us, is something, which is very, very true, to all of us, to some extent, partly it's just, because as human beings, we're created to be social, but Jesus says something, which is true, and all of us, have it out of whack, some of us have it, massively out of whack, but we all are out of whack, is that we fear people, how much, during the course of the day, if you were honest with yourself, or during the course of the week, do you ask yourself, what will he think, what will she think, what will they say, what will she say, what will they do, if I do this, what are they thinking, what are they saying, what are they doing, how many of us, are bothered, after an encounter, afterwards, wondering, what are they saying about me, now that I've left, and how many of us, are bothered by that, for minutes, hours, even days, or weeks afterwards, how many of us,

I've come across it, in counseling, even a year after, some event, are still puzzled, over what people are saying, and how it is, that they could interpret it, that way, and what they continue, to be saying about them, and Jesus just identifies, the fact that, what one of the things, that contributes to hypocrisy, is the fact, that we fear people, that people are too big, in our lives, you've heard this quote, before maybe, if you're a guest, you haven't, it doesn't come from me, I'm not smart enough, for a quote like this, I think it's a guy, by the name of John Maxwell, who said, you know what the problem is, with us people, we buy things we don't need, with money we don't have, to impress people, we don't like, and then we don't think, we have any problems, and we can't hear the Bible, we can't hear the words, about Jesus, about money, and how it might heal us, but we, you know how many of us, how many of us, spend money we don't have, to buy things, that we don't really need, to impress the people, at work, who afterwards, we're still wondering, why did they say that, what are they saying, what are they thinking, and we just bought, those things, to try to somehow, impress them, we don't even like them, and then we don't think, we have any problems, and maybe we don't think, we have problems, because we don't think, we're as bad as our friend, or our mom, or our dad, or me, after you hear my stories, you go away thinking, well at least,

[27 : 48] I'm not as bad as, George up at the front, you know, and, but so the first thing is, Jesus just identifies, the fact that we fear people, and then three times, he tells us to fear God, and you don't have to be, an expert, you don't have to have a PhD, in New Testament hermeneutics, to understand, that if basically, in the same 15 words, in 15 words, or 12 words, the same command, appears three times, it's probably significant, to say it, and Jesus says, that we are to fear God, and I've talked about this, at different times, in other sermons, it's a constant Old Testament, New Testament theme, and it basically means, that we are, if we're, we should just, we should ask God, to grow within us, a fear of him, and what that means, in the New Testament, is an ever deeper awareness, that God is God, and that I am not, it's an ever deeper awareness, of who God is, and how there is no possible way, that I am God, and to have, a clearer and clearer, and clearer sense, of who God is, a clearer and clearer sense, of who I am, and not mix that up at all, and on one hand, to have a growing sense, of the complete, and utter transcendence, and difference of God, and at the same time, how close he is, yet he's never me, and that is a, a fundamental aspect, of what it means, to fear God, it's why, that the New Testament, and the Old Testament, both say, that that is something, that we are to, to grow within us, and Jesus in a sense, says, the problem you have George, part of the problem you have, is you fear people, what do you need to do, fear God, fear God, fear God, and guess what happens, the more you have this sense, of who God is, in his transcendence, in his immensity, in his reality, that he's not a figment, of my imagination, that he is not the same as me, that he doesn't have, he's completely, and utterly different, than me, yet he's completely, close to me, that I have, an ever increasing, sense of where I begin, and where I end, and where God, is different from me, and I'm not confusing, at all, and the more,

I have a sense of that, what does Jesus say, you don't live a life, characterized by fear, go back and read it, that's the flow of the text, how many of us, live lives, with a significant, significant amount, of anxiety, a significant amount, of hypocrisy, a significant amount, of fear, and Jesus does say, and I'm not going, to go into it, but it's, he does teach, that hell exists, and that it's real, he's the main one, in the Bible, who teaches, on the reality, of hell, and, by him bringing this up, it's, remember I just said to you, that one of the problems, for us religious types, is that we easily, can know different doctrines, but, part of natural human religion, and natural human spirituality, is to turn the doctrine, and twist it, so that God becomes, our enabler, oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, okay, George, God knows everything, going on in George's head, but George, isn't going to say it, God's not going to say it, what's the problem, well the complete opposite, of God being, an enabler, is that, there will be, an accounting, there will be, an accounting, it brings, home that God, is not, an enabler, that God, is not, an enabler, now some of you might say okay george it's a bit of a shock to think that jesus teaches that hell exists it's a bit of a shock to actually come into a church in 2014 in canada and one of the sermon points is that we are to pray to god to remember that hell is real you probably figured out we're not seeker sensitive on one level and just on one level but george don't you think that the belief of hell in hell breeds violence like look at those isis or whatever the the right way to refer to them right now is look at those guys they all believe in hell look at the terrible things they're doing don't you think that this belief in hell almost always breeds violence don't you think that's george it's it's sort of socially and culturally dangerous for you to take the words of jesus and say this is what jesus means he does believe that hell is real he does believe that god is not an

enabler um and and and and don't you think that well before we sort of continue to to unravel that a little bit especially by how it's connected with the final few verses where jesus talks about it here's i think a more general point if you could put it up andrew thinking up thinking on the greatness of god without being gripped by the gospel will encourage hypocrisy and other evils thinking of the great on the greatness of god without being gripped by the gospel will encourage hypocrisy and other evils and um you see it's often as you have this sense of the greatness of god and the greatness of hell that you in fact do see hypocrisy grow and evil grow that um it's as if as as we as we sense the greatness of god and we have this sense of fate that that that you know like in in india and in many uh eastern lands there's this huge sense of fate and that's why lower caste indians or people the low strata of of any type of society that they somehow deserve to be there that karma has put them there that some iron hand of fate has put them at the bottom of the social heap and those of us at the higher part of the social heap that that fate has also put us there and and that you know god uh you know god has sort of foreordained in in islamic teaching that some are going to go to hell and some are going to go to blessedness and and we know that we're the ones going to blessedness and so these people are all going to hell and so if we do these types of things it's all right if we do them and and even for us canadians who who have a very very powerful cultural belief that when you die you go to a better place we think you die and you go to a better place when it's our favorite uncle joe but we don't think those isis fanatics are going to go to a better place when they die and we'd like to have some soldiers go over there and kill them and put them in hell quickly and i'm not arguing against dealing with the uh the horrendous evil that's going on over there i'm not i'm not saying anything about that at all i'm just merely pointing out that beneath our civilized and spiritual and religious facade of going to a better place lurks a sense of us and them that isis reveals our natural human religion and spirituality which we impose on the text of the bible but does not come from the bible itself because jesus is going to do something in fact the very next words of jesus which at first seems so odd because we read the books of the bible expecting it to go in a natural human religion a natural human spirituality direction and jesus once again seems to go in an odd direction but his odd direction is the direction of grace the direction to wake us up the direction of hope not natural human religion listen what he does verse eight and i tell you everyone who acknowledges me before men the son of man also acknowledged before the angels of god see for many of us we think okay just have to acknowledge jesus like for many people in our culture that just seems sort of arbitrary okay christians say acknowledge jesus but you know really why doesn't he just say acknowledge the color blue or think of the number you know if you're don't douglas adams think of the number 42 because that's the meaning of life just think of 42 think of the color blue it just seems to be completely and utterly arbitrary but but listen again verse eight and i tell you everyone who acknowledges me before the son of man sorry acknowledges me before men the son of man also acknowledged before the angels of god but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of god and everyone who speaks a word against the son of man will be forgiven but the one who blasphemes against the holy spirit will not be forgiven and when they bring you before the synagogue and the rulers and the authorities do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say for the holy spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say and how do we put all of that type of stuff together first of all jesus isn't talking just about some mere careless words we see this when we look at the new testament in fact when we even look at luke's gospel itself you contrast peter and judas both peter and judas denied jesus but they have radically different outcomes to their lives so jesus isn't talking just about a random type of comment about himself and some of us might think well we've never actually i've never even heard anybody say anything blasphemous against the holy spirit so what on earth is going on well you see the the lynchpin of everything in this text is the the overarching literary context of the book you've been here other weeks you know what i'm going to say is that jesus from chapter 9 to chapter 19 everything that's being said is within the context that jesus is going to jerusalem to die and he'll continually tell people about it and everything is connected to that journey he's going to jerusalem to die why is jesus not being hypocritical because what jesus knows is that he's going to jerusalem to die for hypocrites to die for pharisees to die for isis to die for soccer moms to die for gay activists to die for cubicle dwellers in ottawa and when he goes to die in our stead he will experience the functional equivalent of hell in exchange for us that from the cross he will cry my god my god why have you forsaken me that hell which is the eternal separation of a human being from god that jesus will

experience that on our behalf that that's what he's going to jerusalem to do that in jerusalem that whole transaction that's going to take place on the cross when he has the functional experience of hell that he experiences not because of anything he's done but he does it out of love for you and me and he does it for you and me this is telling you and me that just what the words here are saying is that on one hand i you and i are of vastly more value than we ever imagined that god the son of god would set aside his glory and splendor and divine prerogatives and that he would willingly do that for you and me that's why jesus says we have more value than we can possibly imagine and hell tells us that we are in vastly greater danger than we usually think but not because of anything that we do that we can have a vastly greater hope because jesus's death upon the cross is a power of god that comes from god for salvation to all who will receive it and we receive it in our heart and confess it with our lips and that what jesus is talking here about the unforgivable sin is that maybe some today the holy spirit is pressing in on your heart and pressing in on your mind of the need to pray and jesus is warning us that god will continue to press in on your heart and press in on your heart and press in on your heart even this text this frightening text today is an opportunity for him to once again through the holy spirit to press on your heart and press on your heart and press on your heart and there is a a warning that there is a time that we say no to that pressing no to that pressing no to that pressing and and as we do it more and more and more and day in and day out it becomes more and more and more of a habit that our heart becomes so completely and utterly hard that it is impossible for us to receive the power of god for salvation which is jesus dying upon the cross for us hypocrites but just like aragon says before the gates of mordor today does not have to be that day for you but to call out to god i have a hard heart i have 20 years 30 years 50 years 70 years of saying no and quenching that holy spirit but i thank you father that your holy spirit that your holy spirit can pierce through those decades of hardness in one flashing brilliant moment as i come to you and confess from my heart that that is describing me and i need a power of god for salvation that can only come from you and that god rushes in and does it turn in your bibles to romans chapter 10 which is the flip side of the same teaching romans chapter 10 verses 9 to 13 romans 10 9 to 13 it's the flip side in a sense jesus shows to use modern language the dark side our hearts getting harder and harder and harder and so we won't confess jesus and he shows the side of the power of god for salvation coming into our heart which bears is it we confess with our lips what does it say because if you confess with your mouth that jesus is lord and believe in your heart [43 : 11] that god raised him from the dead you will be saved for with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved for the scripture says everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame for there is no distinction between jew and pagan between american and muslim and isis and greek orthodox and evangelical protestant and buddhist and hindu there is no distinction between this i'm not saying that the different religions don't matter i'm just saying that no matter what your trajectory your life story is the time comes to call out on jesus to call out on jesus for verse 10 for with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved for the scripture says everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame for there is no distinction between jew and pagan for the same lord is lord of all bestowing his riches on all who call on him for everyone who calls on the name of the lord will be saved if you put up the final point andrew dear god please grow in me a humble trusting habit of confessing with my lips that my heart trusts jesus christ crucified as my savior and my lord that's to be the prayer of our heart it's how we become a christian it's how as a follower of jesus that's how we become a christian it's how we become a christian it's how we become a christian and the gospel and the gospel grows in us please stand if the holy spirit is so prompting you out loud or quiet please join with me in saying if you could put the prayer back up andrew that would be great out loud or silent i invite you to join with me and praying such a prayer um if you haven't had time to write the other prayers down that'll be on the web page you can look it up later on if you want i think it goes up monday afternoon and we'll say this prayer and then i'll just say another prayer in closing dear god please grow in me a humble trusting habit of confessing with my lips that my heart trusts jesus christ crucified as my savior and my lord in jesus name amen father pour out your holy spirit upon us pour out your holy spirit upon us pour out your holy spirit upon us father please grow in me grow in us a humble trusting knowledge that you know all things and that you will reveal all things please grow in me please grow in us a remembrance that hell is real and grow in us a humble trusting fear of you and most of all father make us disciples gripped by the gospel living for your glory all this we ask in the name of jesus your son and our savior amen