

JESUS ON BEING LOWLY

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[0 : 00] Father, it is very easy for us, we confess, not to read your word from the perspective of grace, from the viewpoint of the gospel.

It is very easy for us, Father, to read your word from the perspective of natural human religion. Father, we confess before you that our heart has a desperate need to stay in control and enthroned and to keep you distant.

To not acknowledge our need for a savior. So we ask, Father, at this time and for every time as we read your word, that your Holy Spirit would move mightily in our hearts, that you would both humble our hearts so that we know that we need a savior and create within us, Father, a hunger for Jesus, a hunger for your presence.

Father, make us disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, living for your glory. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. I read an internet report of a poll.

I'm qualifying this because I know that just because it's in the internet doesn't mean it's true, right? But I read an internet report of a poll that was recently done in Britain, the UK, on people's religious beliefs.

[1 : 23] And according to this internet report that I read about this recent poll, a majority of people who answered the poll on religions and religious practice in England, in UK, a majority of them said that religion is harmful.

That's what a majority of them said. So wouldn't it be interesting to know what Jesus would say to that? Let's listen because actually he talks about that very topic in the gospel text, which I just read a few moments ago.

So it'd be very, very helpful if you got out your Bibles. Once again, if you've forgotten your Bibles or if you don't own a Bible, we usually have some Bibles up at the front. You're always welcome to take one of those Bibles, use it during the service.

You can keep it as a gift or you could return it afterwards. And Luke 14 was the text that we were looking at in the gospel that I read just a few moments ago. And so given that, if it is in fact true, if that was a good poll, a good survey, and the internet actually got it right, a majority of people in the UK think that religion is harmful.

What would Jesus say to that? What would he have to say about it? Well, let's look at Luke 14, verses 1 to 14. And one of the things about this text is that we often, we don't really hear the full dynamic, all of the things that are going on in it.

[2 : 42] But it's a very curious text. It begins like this. One Sabbath, when Jesus went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. Now, just sort of pause there for a second.

Watching him carefully is a perfectly fine translation. It just doesn't capture a nuance in the Greek, the original language. And the nuance in the original language is that they were watching him.

You know when you watch those National Geographic specials? And they show the lion watching the antelope? That's how they're watching Jesus. That's the, so watching's right.

It's a good word. It just doesn't capture that they're not just sort of, oh, like maybe watching with delight or watching with mere curiosity. They're watching Jesus like a lion watches an antelope in a National Geographic special.

So on one hand, here we have these very religious and spiritual people. The Pharisees were a group movement within the day that were very concerned with holiness and authentic holiness.

[3 : 48] And what they call lawyers here, another way would be that they were specialists in understanding religious texts and how they applied to your lives. And so we have religious people, spiritual people, who've invited Jesus to come and eat with them, which sounds like a good thing,

but they are watching him like a lion watches an antelope.

How does it get even worse? Verse 2. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. Once again, a perfectly good translation.

It just doesn't quite capture something. Now we have to think no longer of the lion. There's a different type of image here. Whether or not they actually place Jesus in a particular seat so that he's right looking at the man, or whether when they get Jesus lying there, reclined there, they bring up a man so that he's right in front of Jesus.

It doesn't matter which way it works. The same thing is, think now for those 19-cent, you know, movies that are portraying, you know, the English or American hunters going to Africa to try to bag a lion.

And one of the things that they would do in movies like that, I'm assuming it's at least vaguely historical, is that there would be this staked goat. You know you get some little goat?

[5 : 08] I don't know what the sound a goat makes. That's a sheep. Bah, bah. It's pegged in a clearing, and you got the guys with their big rifles all sitting there, and the goat's there hoping that a lion will come to eat it.

And they don't really care whether or not the poor little goat or the poor little lamb gets eaten, but they want to shoot the lion. And that's what's happening here in the text.

So first, they're looking at Jesus like a lion looks at an antelope to get it. And they place this poor man, he's the staked goat.

He's the staked lamb. And they've put him in front of Jesus to get Jesus. And they've done it.

There's two things that are going on with the man when they tell you that he has dropsy.

I didn't know this before I did the research for the sermon. In those days, it was a common belief that if you had that illness, it was because you had a sexually transmitted disease.

[6 : 17] The other idea behind it is not only had you a sexually transmitted disease, and these were the symptoms of it, which is, by the way, just medically. We now know medically that's not the case, but that's what they believed back then.

It was also considered to be an illness which showed that you were under the judgment of God. So these religious and spiritual types have their staked goat.

And I don't know what was going on. They're there to get Jesus. Maybe they want to see whether or not Jesus will recognize that this man is under God's judgment and what he'll say.

We don't really know what their motives are. But it's because of these two verses that verse 3 begins in an odd way in English.

Because it says, and Jesus responded. It looks funny if you don't know, if you haven't sort of figured out that other part because you think nobody said anything to Jesus, but Jesus reads the room.

[7 : 15] He knows they're lurking. He knows it's the staked goat. So he responds to them. He responds to them. And always in the Gospels, and actually any biblical narrative, there's always a question, what's going to happen?

Okay, well, I mean, Jesus is earlier on in the Gospel of Luke. He's given a whole series of woes. Is this going to produce a whole pile of woes from him? Like, how is he going to respond to this particular situation, surrounded by his enemies, when they want to get him?

How is he going to respond? And in verse 3, we get this. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and the Pharisees saying, hmm, there's this poor, sick guy here.

One of the things that's really interesting is Jesus doesn't respond to the religious and spiritual dynamics and all of the other things. And now that you actually know the background, you can easily see that, wow, Jesus could talk about this, he could talk about this, he could talk about this, but you know what he remembers?

The poor guy in front of him has this disease, has this problem. He has a whole pile of problems. This poor guy is being used as a stake goat.

[8 : 29] Who wants to be used like that as a tool by powerful people? Like, how many people here in this room would say, yeah, yeah, take me, I like to be used as a tool by a powerful person, like I don't matter whatsoever.

That fits my identity. Please, no, nobody wants that. Here's this poor guy who already is suffering under a particular medical condition, is being treated like just like an animal, just being treated like an animal.

And Jesus doesn't forget the person. He doesn't forget the person in need. So he says, hmm, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?

But they remain silent. Maybe because they're still trying to get him and also because they, at one moment, this isn't exactly going the way we thought it was going to go. I'm not quite sure what to say to this. And then, once again, it's a very, very, it's a completely good translation, but it doesn't capture the nuances in the original language.

It says here, then he took him and healed him and sent him away. You know what Jesus does? Says took him. Jesus gets up. He embraces the man.

[9 : 47] And as he embraces the man, treating him as a person, he embraces him. As he embraces him, the man is healed. And he embraces the man and the man is healed.

And then he, in a sense, I mean, it shortens it. He, I guess, in a sense, takes the man by the shoulders and says, you can go. You can go. You don't have to stay. He treats the man as a person.

He gets the man out of the situation where he's controlled by the powerful people as a staked goat. And he heals him. That's what Jesus does.

Verse 5. And Jesus said to the room, which of you having a son or even an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day will not immediately pull him out?

They could not reply to these things. Now, here's the first thing about this very powerful story once you start to realize the dynamics of the story. If you could put it up, Andrew. The true stories of Jesus are a profound critique of religion.

[10 : 54] The true stories of Jesus are a profound critique of religion. You know what? Hollywood couldn't write a better story than this. Right?

If you wanted to get Hollywood people to really just put religious and spiritual people in their place, you know, they're all there, all looking like they're so holy and so fancy, and then inwardly, though, they're just trying to get this guy and they don't care about the other guy, and it's all about politics and power and prestige and control and getting people all under the guise.

You could not get Hollywood to write a better story than this. And time and time and time and time and time and time again in the Gospels, the true stories of Jesus are a profound critique of religion. Now, somebody might say, okay, George, okay, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.

That's good. I hadn't thought of it. But, you know, George, I just, you know, I was actually listening when you read the Gospel a few minutes earlier at the bit after it.

Jesus is just as religious as all, you know, the rest of the things that Jesus does, I mean, sure, that's a bit of a critique, but, you know, you keep going and Jesus is religious. You know, what does he do?

[12 : 13] He gives you really stupid, foolish advice about taking the lowest place and then he tells you you've got to feel bad about yourself all the time and not take proper steps to get ahead in life.

Like, that just sounds like religion to me. George, I labored under that all the time. Or like, I've watched TV shows or my friend or my cousin five times removed. They labored under some type of crazy church always telling the dude dumb things and just making them feel bad about themselves all the time.

That's what Jesus goes ahead and talks about. Well, let's read and see if he does. Let's read verse 7. Now, Jesus told a parable to those who were invited when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, when you were invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor.

Lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him and he who invited you both will come and say to you, give your place to this person and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.

But when you were invited, go and sit in the lowest place so that when your host comes, he may, may say to you, friend, move up higher and you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.

[13 : 33] And then sort of the basic principle, the big principle that Jesus wants to communicate in the story and then the principle. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Actually, you know what I mean? I'm going to give you the summary point and I'm going to sort of explain sort of it's how the text is actually far more surprising.

No, maybe before we put the point up. Here's the thing. Think about it for a second. No, sorry, put it up. Put it up. Number two.

Jesus is not telling me to think and act like I am nothing. In a world which thinks in terms of tower, tower, or cower, he calls me to consider who the living God is.

And Jesus is not telling me to think and act like I am nothing. In a world which thinks in terms of either I tower over or if I don't tower over people, the only other option is that I tower under people who are towering over me.

[14:42] In a world which thinks in those categories, Jesus calls me to consider who the living God is. How he's been revealing who the living, true, real, actual, existing God actually is.

Think about different religious philosophies and spiritualities and therapies that are common in the world. In much of the world, the basic understanding of the human person is that the human person's destiny is not to exist.

That we are a drop of water that one day will merge into the ocean and lose our identity. That we actually are nothing. We actually are one with the everything in and of ourselves actually are nothing.

And we are to develop religious practices so that we understand that we are nothing and actually experience losing ourselves completely and utterly immersed in the everything, the all.

That's not what humility means to Jesus. There's always a person involved in all of that. And there's a whole range of other types of religions which basically present a real personal God that's different than a human being but that real personal God that is different than the human being, he's basically just over everything and he by fiat just decides heaven, hell, heaven, hell.

[16:15] And it's purely and utterly fate, it's purely and utterly God's will, it has nothing to do with who we are, we are completely and utterly caught in this particular type of fate which God just says, hmm, no, you, hell, hmm, hell, hmm, heaven, hmm, hell, and there's nothing you can do about it.

You have to just learn to live as you are under the fate of God that you can do nothing about. In other words, really, you're nothing and if you're not nothing, somehow or another you're really, really important and there's nothing in between.

And much of therapy is all about us figuring out how to tower over circumstances and situations. I mean, that's in a sense the heart of the, you know that book a few years ago, *The Secret*, was how to, in a sense, manage the forces of the universe so that you will be able to triumph financially, sexually, socially, culturally, politically, career-wise and much philosophy is all about how to tower. And so it is that it's deeply ingrained with us as human beings that it seems as if the only options we have are some option whereby we will either become like nothing, which is a type of cowering or you just have to basically accept that that's your fate or that there's some way by which you tower over everything.

And Jesus in this story is not telling me to think and act like I am nothing. He's not telling me that at all. In a world which thinks in terms of tower or cower, he calls me to consider who the living God is.

[18:07] You see, humility is not thinking if you're smart that you're dumb and it's not thinking that if you're young that you should act like you're old. It's not telling you that if you are blessed with lots of finances that you should act and think as if you have nothing.

Humility in the Bible is not so much thinking about yourself but looking outside of yourself to recognize that the fundamental constant problem that we have is that we're always sort of thinking about ourselves and we're always thinking in terms of power or cower.

And the call to humility, in a sense, even as Jesus calls us to humility, we realize how hard it is to not always think in terms of how things affect ourselves and just see. Some of you have heard me use this example before.

In some ways a perfect illustration of our spiritual problem is seen in science with the idea of the black hole that human beings are like a star which is so dense that light can't escape from it.

It's sucked back in. And there's something inside of us that always wants to suck everything into us as if it's all about us. And in some ways the biblical picture of humility is like if you see a very young child for a moment.

[19:31] Maybe like a year old and if you seem to I know one year old can have the attention span of a hummingbird but you can get these brief instances where they're transfixed with something.

Maybe it's a hummingbird. They're transfixed and you look at the child and you realize that for a second or two seconds or three seconds it's as if that child does not even know that the child exists.

It's not thinking about that at all. It is completely he or she is completely transfixed by what is seen outside. And that's an insight into what the Bible understands humility as and it's an insight about what the Bible understands about our fundamental human problem that we always want to be somehow enthroned or in control and if we're not enthroned or in control then we think the only option is to cower and to be nothing.

Sort of going beyond this we'll talk about it more a little bit later on or if I forget then you get this that the Bible is going to always present that rather than cower or cower the other option is to be the servant for the living God.

And that's actually what this text is pointing to. Jesus isn't talking about some type of biological or cultural or moral or karmic law by which if you seek the low place you'll go to the high place or that if you go to the high place you'll go to the low.

[21 : 07] It's not a law. Every human being has to deal with the living God. You see human religion likes to focus ultimately on the self.

Jesus is constantly having us look at the heart the center of who we are in the context of the living God. that God actually exists with a character and a heart and a plan and a purpose.

The same God that strung the stars in the sky and formed the planets with his hand that his strong hand that same strong hand of love will come and touch every human being.

And that rather than thinking in terms of tower or cower and myself at the center of that dynamic Jesus is saying there is one who exalts and humbles.

There is in fact a living God who is a person. I'm not talking about a law or a principle. There's a person. Jesus is not telling me to think and act like I am nothing in a world which thinks in terms of tower or tower.

[22 : 23] He calls me to consider who the living God is. But some of you might say oh George yeah you know you wax and wane poetic every once in a while.

George it's all still about rules. Yeah it's all about rules. You know go take the low place. You know and what's that next part that you haven't read yet?

You're probably going to say we're going to look at it in a second and that's good. I want you to look at it. Okay. You know what is it all about? You know you have to give your money away and help all those poor people and stuff like that. Yeah yeah yeah.

You know every once in a while I go through Loblaws and they say well you allow me to take two dollars off your bill so we can help this or that. And I say yeah yeah sure you know what two bucks.

You know go ahead. You know and I know you got to help the poor people and all like that.

George come on. But you know that's the thing about religion why it's so harmful. It's always telling you do this don't do that. Feel guilty if you don't do this. You know rather than just sort of going with the flow.

[23 : 25] Well you know that's why I find going to a bar far more pleasant than going to church or going to a Starbucks. You know you just sit there you read the paper you have your ideas you have the odd chat.

You know there's nobody putting all this pressure on you and laws and rules and stuff like that.

Jesus is still religious. Even if you say and that was a good story that it was a profound critique of religion and even if yeah I mean I have to confess it's hard for me to think of options other than tower or cower but it's still just all about rules.

I mean look what he says next. Well let's look. Verse 12 through 14 Jesus also said to the man who had invited him when you give a dinner or a banquet do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.

But when you give a feast invite the poor the crippled the lame the blind and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

Now here's the thing about this text. This is also a profound critique of religion and spirituality and actually much therapy because at the heart of many of much therapy and much spirituality and much religion is the idea of creating indebtedness in others so you will benefit.

[24 : 51] Once again think of how many of the religions in the world work. You're in an endless cycle of death and rebirth and death and rebirth and death and rebirth. If you follow these practices maybe of meditation maybe of yoga maybe of certain acts of charity that if you follow these practices you will earn some type of thing so that in the next cycle of life you will have a better cycle of life and eventually you will come to the goal of it all which is to be nothing.

Or that if you have to understand that actually desire is the fundamental problem and so that if you do these types of things there's this type of benefit that automatically comes from you.

It's as if somehow or another in the forces of how the universe works that if you give this you get that. And how much of even therapy is all about that you know like how do you win friends and influence people or how do you do well at work?

Well if you spend more time listening than speaking if you compliment people in the right way if you are helpful and notice things that need to be done and work then you're going to create this dynamic whereby people like you and they feel maybe even a sense of obligation to you and they notice you and so you get good things coming back and in all of these things the self is still enthroned.

The self is still enthroned. And what does Jesus say? Jesus is not only saying he's saying something about the nature of the universe he goes right to the heart.

[26 : 18] He says oh yeah you have meals and you invite your family and you invite your friends and you hope to get the exact same thing back and you even invite rich people in the hope that they'll come because if a rich person comes they're going to feel obligated to invite you over to their house and you might only have given them falafel but they'll give you chicken shawarmas because you're poor and can only afford chickpeas they can afford chickens or maybe a cow and you can get some beef and this is also talking about how we relate to God because who's richer than God no one's richer than God yeah yeah I'll put yeah I'll put the 20 bucks in the plate God owes me back now you know 20 bucks he owes me how many of us when we're depressed we think you know

God look I was so you know look sexually I was faithful and I gave this and I did this and I taught Sunday school and now why is this happening to me and why do we say why is it happening to me because we think we put God in our debt for some of us who left the building three some odd years ago and God didn't give us a new church building and for some of us whether we recognize it or not we carry around within us the idea that we did a really big thing for God he owes us and if he isn't following through it's because there's some secret person adding extra lack of faith debt that cancels out our sacrifice if we could just figure out what it is that the pastor's done wrong or the wardens have done wrong or the Sunday school or the youth group or the interns have done wrong then the balance would be restored I'm speaking really crass it's how our heart works so here's what Jesus is telling us in this story number three

Andrew no human being ever has or ever can put the living God in their debt no human being ever has or ever can put the living God in their debt this is a profound attack not not an attack it's a profound challenge to our heart the center of who we are the center of where our mind and our will and our emotions all come from the heart in the Bible doesn't just mean our emotions it's the center of who we are it's that united one place that emotions emerge from and thoughts emerge from and memories and plans and the will and it all there's this one central root of I and the Bible uses the word heart to describe that part in the very center of us the deep root of who we are at the deepest level of our identity that has dethroned the living God from his proper place as our creator and our sustainer and the end and has tried to enthrone ourselves and we sit there with our idols and don't want to have that challenged at all and so we think we can put

God in our debt the universe in our debt and Jesus critiques it Jesus or profound critique of religion or profound critique of spirituality they are profound critique of therapies a profound critique and they're a profound critique it worries us that we can't put God in our debt because we desire to tower and our worry is that if we can't put God in our debt then all we will do is cower under him and so let's go have a beer and try to forget about it all let's go for a run and try to forget about it all let's eat poutine and try to forget about it all I want to cover all ranges here runners and poutine people on their couches you know I don't want to just pick on one group or something you know so no human being ever has or ever can put the living God in their death so what's going on here in the story you see it's very easy for us as

Christians to read this and at the end of the thing like the very first story about healing what I could say to you and you see this is what people often see about us as Christians is that it just it tells us all these big aspirations that just crush us read this in a religious way and say okay therefore all of you folks when you're surrounded by your enemies don't think about your enemies you've got to think about the person and you've got to try to be a healer in the midst of your enemies that's what you've got to do and when you go to work always take the worst position and always try to be humble and have a long face okay and always give lots and lots of money to the poor and always

do that and never just have a moment where you just say you know I'm going to have this Haagen-Dazs ice cream because you know what I just I want to have some joy bad feel guilty and it's easy for us to take these texts and just turn them into more religion so what's going on in the text remember we have to remember as we're reading

[32 : 01] Luke's gospel remember and it was reminded those of you here last Sunday Jesus reminded the text itself reminded you but everything in Luke's gospel from Luke 9 on is that Luke Jesus keeps saying I'm going to Jerusalem to die I'm going to Jerusalem to die and last week we talked about how he uses constantly telos words telos end words in other words that his death is what defines it's his purpose it what defines everything that's going on about everything and so everything that we read is always in preparation for us to understand what's going to be accomplished when he dies upon the cross Andrew if you could put it up the gospel is the true story of Jesus in compassion humbling himself to live among us and heal our gravest wound by dying on the cross in our place it's the first thing these stories aren't here to crush us these stories are here for us to have a bit of an understanding of what it is that when the

Bible later on will describe that the death of Jesus upon the cross is a power of God for salvation like there's that is you know human beings are deep and they're multifaceted and our heart is deep and multifaceted and so the Bible Jesus uses a range of different images and metaphors to try to help us to understand this unbelievably huge thing that he will accomplish for us on our behalf that God accomplishes for us on our behalf when Jesus dies upon the cross and the gospel is the true story of Jesus and what motivates Jesus in compassion remember Jesus is saying you have to have a costly compassion don't just do things so you can get things back so Jesus so that not so he will get anything back in compassion seeing that we are poor and in need because we are locked into a world that thinks in terms of tower or cower and is terrified of the living God and is trying to protect ourselves from the living

God by trying to put him in our debt and yet he owns the planets he owns the galaxies he owns the universes how can you ever galaxies in your debt if you think about it for a second the whole idea is completely and utterly ludicrous and yet we live by that it's deeply gripped by our heart and Jesus is saying in compassion I come to you who are poor with costly generosity I set aside my glory in heaven and humbled myself to walk among you I will die on a cross with people lurking and watching to devour me amongst my enemies I will die and just as Jesus is God actually showing up and acting in defiance of all religion and spirituality and ritual which ultimately tries to keep God distant Jesus shows up and the miracle miracles are central and essential to

Christianity it's God's power at work to heal and the cross is the healing of our gravest wound Jesus heals the small wounds to show us that his death upon the cross heals the gravest wound I'm a guy not a gal but you know there's a woman who's blessed to have a baby that she carries within her you know maybe in heaven I'll get to understand what it's like to actually carry a human being in your womb as part of you and to feel that baby kick and I know there's bad moms and bad kids but don't you know we all know that at some level when there is a mother and their children and they're completely and utterly alienated later on in life that's a woundedness isn't it

I mean it's hard for the dad as well but you know there was that biological connection for nine months between the mother and the child and we all you know that's why so much of fiction and so much of movies and so much of entertainment talks about the whole consequences the tragedy and maybe if it's a good movie or a good story the reconciliation and there's a recognition that there's a deep wound in particular between a mother and child when there's alienation and anger and hostility and distance and so much movies and books are all about the deep woundedness that happens when a couple who are married and have pledged themselves to forsake all others and that comes to an end and they no longer love each other and they're at odds and they hate each other and we recognize that there's a deep wound there and many people who have been divorced that's a wound which they carry with them for many many many years not everybody but many people and we understand the wounds that come when close friends break but the Bible says that there is a God who does exist who has created us who sustains us that we are described as being sustained by God he made us for himself

[37 : 41] I can't blink my eye I can't think a thought I can't breathe a breath without the God who really does exist sustaining me and yet I am in rebellion against him and I cannot fix that rebellion by myself I have at the center of who I am the gravest wound imaginable and the gospel is the true story of Jesus in compassion humbling himself to live among us and heal our gravest wound by

dying on the cross in our place and Jesus is preparing us with a range of images to understand one way of what it is that he accomplishes on the cross and that story is to grip us and as the story grips us change takes place in our lives final slide as the gospel grips my heart

I am nudged and drawn and grounded and shaped see Jesus in a sense the way the gospel is set up is that we're not to read these texts as a new set of religious advice a new set of religious and spiritual rules of impossibly high ideals that we're never going to be able to live up to but it's not then that it describes us coming to faith in Jesus and after we've come up to faith in Jesus you know we can sort of close that little part because he redeemed us and now it's just all about willpower and rules and rituals and religion it's Jesus doesn't Jesus the conversion isn't just a religious moment that ushers us into a religious life the gospel not only is a power of God that God God does something that we cannot do ourselves that when we receive it it changes it the Bible uses the language of that there's a new birth inside of us that there's a new relationship a new covenant with the living

God and at the heart of all transformation is the gospel gripping us that we need the gospel day by day all of the time and you know as you think about this story as you grasp the story that the story is preparing us to understand that the gravest possible wound that I can possibly imagine that I have that that Jesus by his death upon the cross and when I receive that that wound is healed not because I have put God in my debt not because I am not because I have been a victim in my life or because I've never been victimized or because of therapies or because of rituals or because of ceremonies or because of my ordination or because I'm a Canadian or because of anything else but purely and utterly as an act of complete and massive grace Jesus leaving all in compassion doing it all for me he heals my wound when I put my faith and trust in him and I can never be re-wounded at that gravest level and as I think about the cross as that grips me

I find myself being drawn into new types of behavior and attitudes as the story of him humbling himself grips me before I know it it's easier to do something which is lowly and doesn't require honor as the story grips me I realize that maybe it's alright if something that I give a bit more sacrificially to help another person that as the gospel grips me I'm nudged and drawn and shaped and grounded grounded not in my righteousness but what Jesus really did for me and I know it's true because he really did rise from the dead please stand just bow our heads in prayer

Jesus we father we thank you that the gospel stories are true we thank you father that Jesus set aside his glory and splendor and divine prerogatives as God his appearance as God the honor and the honor that he was due as God that he set that all aside without stopping being God he took into himself our human nature that he humbled himself and in compassion for us took our human nature into himself that he walked amongst us and lived amongst us living a simple life performing miracles that show that father you aren't distant and powerful but you actually are real that you exist that the planet shaping God can exist and be present that he performed miracles and he taught and most of all father we thank you that he died upon the cross that his death upon the cross was something he did for us not himself that in his death upon the cross that there is this power that comes from you for salvation that heals our gravest and deepest wound and that you offer this to us if we but humbly receive what only you can do father we are we are beggars who come to you for this free gift of grace and we ask father that you help us to receive what your son did for us on the cross and we ask father that your gospel would grip us that you that we would be followers of Jesus gripped by the gospel now living for your glory father this is the cry of our heart and we ask it in the name of Jesus amen