

God and Pleasure

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[0 : 00] Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. For some of us, these are very familiar stories. For others, maybe they're new to us, Father. But for each of us, Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would come deep within us and write these stories in the command center of our lives so that they affect our memories, our imagination, our will, and how we live our lives.

And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Don't you think that if people had to follow what the Bible says about same-sex attraction, that you're condemning same-sex attracted people to a life of loneliness?

The reason I say this is, well, first of all, believe it or not, the scripture text that we have here today actually speaks very powerfully into this.

Some friends of mine and some friends of yours, the church that they attended for many years, is just beginning to go through potential denominational battles over whether the church should provide marriage ceremonies for those who are same-sex attracted so that a man can marry a man or a woman could marry a woman.

And one of the very moving arguments that was made as they're starting to look at this is don't you think it's the case? That why is it, you know, heterosexual people, they can potentially marry another person, but for those who are same-sex attracted and if God doesn't heal them or change that in them after prayer, aren't you condemning them to a life of loneliness?

[1 : 52] Like, isn't it a matter of, I mean, how can you do that? And if we're honest, this is a very powerful thing because who amongst us wants to condemn anybody to loneliness?

And in fact, if our heart breaks even maybe at hearing something like this, that this might be the case or the possibility. So believe it or not, the text that we looked at, that I read just a few moments ago, actually has something very powerful and formative to say about this.

So it'd be a great help to me. You can see it's going to be the story of Jesus turning water into wine. One of the things that we might be doing most Sundays when we preach on John is if there's a good piece of artwork to go along with the story, I'm going to put some of the artwork up on the screen so that our eyes can also sort of enter in.

It helps us just enter in. And so, by the way, if you folks, if you read ahead and see where I'm going, I'd love it if you send me suggestions for the artwork, by the way. That would be a great help. Can't promise I'll always use it, but I'd love the suggestions.

So if you turn in your Bibles to John 2, verses 1 to 11, John 2, 1 to 11, let's look at this first story, the story of Jesus turning water into wine.

[3 : 12] And here's how it goes. On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. Just sort of pause here for a second before we go any further.

On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. You might remember that... So John wrote a book, right? So books have structures. You know, they have ways that the author decided to write the book.

And the way that John is written, there's the first 18 verses are sort of this big philosophical, almost mystical, theological, cosmos view of Jesus and the gospel and what's going on.

And those are like the first 18 verses. And it's all written in very simple English and simple Greek. And then in verse 19, all of a sudden, it plunges into the world of history, the world of time and space, the world that we're in right now ourselves.

And when this begins here on the third day, John is going to keep reminding us as the gospel goes on that he's now talking about something that happened to real people in a real time, in a real culture, in a real place.

[4 : 25] And it's just one of those... We're going to see more aspects of it where John keeps saying, this is something that happened. You might think it's incredible. You might not believe it. You might not believe it. But I'm bearing witness that this is what happened.

This is what took place. So verse 1 again of chapter 2. On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. And the mother of Jesus was there. And just sort of pause.

This is another very significant thing. In the other three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they all have... Well, actually, Mark doesn't. But Matthew and Luke, of course, have the story of the birth of Jesus.

And it's very interesting how John chooses to write, right? So he has this... You know, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. You know, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

All these big, big, big ideas. And then he comes into history with John the Baptist. And now, like, how can you... Is Jesus human? I mean, that's a good question to ask.

[5 : 24] And yet, you know, human beings have moms. We have dads. That's human beings, right? Joseph's not mentioned.

It's believed by most people that Joseph must have died. Quite a few years before this. But it's just one of these... You're going to see many other things here in the story that just emphasize the fact that Jesus is human, that it's in real time and a real place, talking about things that really happen.

So, verse 2 again. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, they have no wine.

It probably means that Jesus' mom was related to the people whose wedding it was. In other words, Jesus had cousins. And he had aunts and uncles, because he's human.

Verse 4. And Jesus said to her, Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. And the language is, it's not a put-down of his mom, but it's a distancing language.

[6 : 33] It's a polite way of speaking, but it sort of is a bit of a shocking thing, because usually a son would refer to his mother, and there'd be some adjectives added to the word woman to show closeness.

So it's a bit of a distancing language from his mom. And in verse 5, his mother said to the servants, Do whatever he tells you. Now, verse 6.

Now, there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding 20 or 30 gallons. And as I said, that probably averages out to about 200 bottles of wine.

In fact, I actually went looking for an image of a human being standing with 200 bottles of wine, but I couldn't find one. And I don't have 200 bottles of wine, so I couldn't take a picture of me standing with them.

And if I did have 200 bottles of wine, you'd probably wonder about me. But that's another. I don't.

So I guess it'd be worse if I had 200 empties. But anyway, verse 6.

[7 : 29] Now, there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding 20 or 30 gallons, 200 bottles of wine. Jesus said to the servants, Fill the jars with water.

And the servants filled them up to the brim. And Jesus said to them, Now, draw some out and take it to the master of the feast. So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water, now become wine, and did not know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew, the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, Everyone serves the good wine first, but when the people have drunk freely, then the poor wine.

But you have kept the good wine until now. Now, there's the first of his signs. Jesus did it, Cana in Galilee. Notice, John's making a claim.

This is a sign. It's not just a miracle. It's a sign. Jesus did this. He did it in a place called Cana, in a place called Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

So here's the first thing about this story to see what's going on, because we might not just quite grasp the full, I mean, we don't grasp the significance. If you could put up the first point, that would be great.

[8 : 39] Here's the first thing, and we don't maybe notice it in the flow of the story, but the fact of the matter is, is that, I don't know, probably some of us can give witness to miracles.

I have some things that I think I could say were probably a miracle, God acting miraculously to do something that shouldn't have been able to happen. But when that happens, I pray to God and ask him to work a miracle, which God might or might not do.

I mean, God hears my prayer. Sometimes he says yes. Sometimes he says no. Sometimes he says not yet. But I pray to God and ask God to work a miracle, which he might or might not do. But Jesus willed the miracle. He just willed it. He doesn't say a prayer. He doesn't say any words. He doesn't touch the water. He doesn't do a religious ceremony. In fact, if you think about it for a second, maybe Mary was saying to Jesus, Jesus, you're very religious.

[9 : 47] They've run out of wine. Do something. And Jesus would do the typical religious thing. He'd take up a collection. Sorry, that joke didn't work as well as I thought it would. But anyway, I mean, that's one of those, you realize that, whoa, that's right.

Jesus just willed it. And then the other thing about it is that the story is emphasizing that it's a real miracle.

Like if some of you are wondering, well, George, like, no, but the story emphasizes it's a real miracle. Like you look back at it for a second here. Jesus is, if you look back in verse 3, verse 3, the wine runs out.

Jesus discovers that the wines run out when Mary tells him this. And then in verse 4, he says, well, what am I, you know, my time's not come. And Mary just says to the servants, do whatever he tells you.

There's no implication there that Mary expects Jesus to do a miracle. In fact, at the end of the story, it basically is saying that Jesus, up until this point in time, has never performed a miracle.

[10 : 50] miracle. And we don't know, obviously, what was going through Mary's. John's just recorded what Mary's actually told Jesus, but I don't know, maybe he just, maybe she was thinking he's just really competent.

He's always managed to work things out and help people from embarrassing situations, and he'll figure something out. And then you notice here, verse 6, there's stone water jars.

It's not like there's clay or something that, you know, is going to be keeping lots of wine in them.

And they're there for the rights of purification. In other words, there's stone jars which are there just to be used for water.

That's why they're there. They're not used for 53 different things. They're just used for water. And there's lots of it. 200 bottles of wine. There's lots and lots of it.

And then Jesus just says in verse 7, fill the jars with water. And then Jesus doesn't touch the jars.

He doesn't bring the water. He doesn't do any type of trick. And then they even mentioned that they filled them to the brim.

[11 : 49] In other words, it isn't as if they said, well, they filled it and they left like six inches and then maybe while everybody was looking away, Jesus had a couple of really good bottles of wine, like fortified wine, and he poured it in and it was able to blend up so that it sort of looked like weak wine.

No, they emphasized that it was filled right up to the brim. And then he says, now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast. And the implication is is that when the servant does this, once again, Jesus hasn't touched it, that the servant would have just looked and it would have just looked like water to him.

And in fact, then it goes, so they took it, verse nine, and when the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine and did not know where it came from, the master of the feast, just skipping down, called the bridegroom and said to him, verse 10, everyone serves the good wine first and when people have drunk freely then the poor wine, but you have kept the good wine until now.

So the implication is is that somewhere between the person taking the ladle, leaving the stone jars and coming to the master of the feast that both the wine and the water and the jars and the water and the ladle both had become wine and because it's good wine it means it really tastes like good wine.

A lot of wine in those days was greatly watered down. So whether it was both cheap wine, highly watered down, which is what the master of the feast was expecting, they said it tastes like really good wine so it couldn't have been watered down.

[13 : 08] Like the text emphasizes that it's a miracle and Jesus just wills it. Jesus just wills it.

So some of you might say how is this possible? I don't know if you're here as a visitor or maybe you've just come out of curiosity or you're maybe on a bit of a religious quest or a spiritual quest and one of the things that you might not know is that there's whole legions of Christian churches in the first world that don't believe that miracles happened.

That they would just interpret this as I don't know what they would interpret it as as a sign of the incoming of the kingdom or just how I mean they'd have different ways of trying but they don't actually believe it's a miracle but John has clearly organized the story to say this is a miracle and it actually happened.

And so some of you might say very reasonably how on earth could something like that happen? And how's it possible?

So here just before I'm going to give you three little things about this and here's the first thing. One of the things in some ways I could validly say that I don't in Canada I don't believe in God.

[14:32] Some of you who maybe came here visiting from a Pentecostal church said I knew I shouldn't come to an Anglican service the minister doesn't believe in God. What I mean is that probably if I was to ask the majority of Canadians what they mean by God I don't believe that God exists the way they describe God.

And I'm starting it's starting to dawn on me that maybe what I have to do when I talk to Canadians is saying you know I don't believe in the Canadian God I only believe in the God that Jesus reveals. I only believe in the God that Jesus reveals.

And in fact if you go back that's what John says in his prologue. In fact in John in those you go back and you look in those verses what John says is that Jesus is the exegesis of God.

He's the one who makes God clear and understandable to people the real God not the not the not the idols not the abstract gods not the gods of the philosophers but the real God who actually does exist that Jesus is going to make this God known.

He's introducing God. And so I think increasingly that what I have to say to people is that I don't believe in God as Canadians understand but I believe in the God who's revealed in Jesus.

[15:56] And what the God who's revealed in Jesus what he's revealing about God is remember how the John's gospel begins very famously in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God he was in the beginning with God all things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made in him was life and the life was the light of men that's how it's introduced.

So if you could put up the next point here's what I would say the second thing is that what Bible teaches what Jesus is introducing us to God is he's introducing us to the fact that God created matter out of nothing.

So how can miracles happen? Well because if you have a God who does exist who created matter out of nothing he can change one kind of matter into another. That's not a hard thing for him.

If you can make matter out of nothing it's nothing for him I almost put that up it's nothing for him to take some matter which he was the inventor of it and turn that matter into a different type of matter turn water into wine.

You see and so some of you might say okay George are you saying then that this whole miracle story depends upon the God that Jesus is introducing actually being the God who exists and I would say yes in fact I'm going to double down on it.

[17:21] I'm going to make it so that the choice is actually seen far more starkly. If you could put up the next point that would be great. Oh sorry there's a new piece. Go back there a second there.

We're having two pieces of artwork. The other one I mean it sort of looked like it wasn't a party did it? I mean just you know that earlier piece of artwork it was as if I don't know it was as if it was a wedding and the bride and groom didn't like each other and they didn't like their family and the two families didn't like each other this is probably more what it looked like.

I mean maybe it was. I mean we've all maybe we've been to weddings like that where nobody likes each other and it's just like really interminable. But you know most of us hope that if we had a wedding I mean I would hope with my kids that if there's a wedding that it looks maybe a bit more like that.

Anyway next point Andrew sorry only God created all things and only the same God who's created all things can sustain his creation keep it in existence and only the same God who's created all things and sustains all things can reveal himself.

If such a God exists who can create all things and sustain all things then I can't reveal him only he can reveal himself and only the same God can act to redeem his fallen human creatures.

[18:39] So what do we see in this story? It's actually quite an amazing story. what is being seen in this story is that Jesus wills the changing of one type of matter into another type of matter.

He's revealing that he's God. Come to reveal God himself and reveal the way the world really does work.

How things really exist. Just, you know, just this whole thing about God being the creator of all things, just, it's a whole other sermon but just very briefly, the choice is never between having faith and believing in science.

faith. That's never the choice. People might say that's the choice but it's not the choice. The choice is never between science and faith.

The choice is between two different philosophies to understand the science. And in one type of philosophy to understand the science, what ultimately exists is a what?

[20 : 04] Just matter, just energy, just time, just chance. Just how matter and energy works because of the way matter and energy is. And the other philosophy, the only rival in all the world is the Christian story, is in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, he was in the beginning with God, all things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made.

That's the only option to the philosophy, that there's only time and chance. And in that understanding, it's a who that is created and designed all things.

Now, just, we're going to move on with this. Just, here's the thing, this is, you know, one of the things I pray every week as I'm working on my sermon, I pray that God will speak to my heart.

Like, this isn't just something where I could come up with some really cool ideas and share it with you. And the way that God really spoke to my heart, this has been a constant, this has been a big issue in my life, especially, I've become more conscious of it as a big issue in my life over the last few years.

But, you know what, if this story is true, then the world is different than most people understand and believe. If this is true, if there really is a God who does exist, who created all things and sustained all things and contained water into wine, then the fact of the matter is, is that one of the besetting problems I have is it's easy for me to slip into living my life as if, as if God is small and everything else is big.

[21 : 46] But if this story is true, then I need to call out to God and ask him to work in my life so that I start to understand that God is big and everything I face is small.

Everything I face is small because the God who does exist creates planets, changes human history and changes human lives. Now, some of you might say, okay, George, that's all very, very, very, very interesting.

But you hooked us at the beginning by talking about people who are same-sex attracted and whether the Bible, if the Bible is to believe God is condemning those who are same-sex attracted to a life of loneliness because they're not allowed to marry.

And George, did you just sort of do that like a bit of a cheesy type of thing to get our attention and now you're going to just ignore it and hope we forgot how you began? Not at all. Not that I'm opposed to being cheesy sometimes.

But, well, let's think about this story for a second because it actually has something which does directly connect to this and about the issues of holiness.

[23 : 05] One of the things that this story shows is that religion is usually wrong. Why is religion usually wrong? Okay, if you could put up the next point, Andrew, think about it for a second.

If it was up to religion, Jesus would have turned the wine into water. Now, why are you saying, some of you might say, no, no. Actually, I mean, the story could have gone very differently.

Couldn't you just think about it? If there's a whole pile of really holy people, whether they were, you know, think about it for a second. Sean Turner did a great sermon a couple of weeks ago talking about how the normal way that we think about things in the world and religion is that, you know, first you have a time of purification, then you have a time of illumination, then you finally have union with God, and the Bible completely rejects that.

And you think about it for a second. In fact, when I was looking for some of the artwork, I was trying to look for the source from it. It was a Christian source about holiness, and every picture of the people who were pursuing holiness looked as if they had almost looked as if they'd been starving themselves for the last 15 years of their lives.

I mean, they made skinny people look fat. They looked completely and utterly emaciated, and they looked as if they had diarrhea and were eating prunes.

[24 : 21] They looked really ascetic. But if you think about it for a second, that's not just how many Christians portray holy people. That's how Muslims portray holy people.

That's how Buddhists portray holy people. That's how Hindus portray holy people. And that's how most of our friends who hate religion portray holy people, because they think, do I really want to look like I'm living on a diet of prunes, and I've just smelled a bad smell?

No. What we want to do is watch football and call up, could you bring down more chips and more beer? Like, compared to looking like that and watching a football game with some chips and beer, a lot of people in our culture say, I'm choosing the chips and beer.

And then, of course, they do the yoga and the Pilates and diet and all that stuff to try to keep their slim physique. But that's a separate matter. So you could easily see that if religious people were giving Jesus advice about how to work this, it would go like this.

Mary comes to Jesus and says, Jesus, there's a problem. They've run out of wine. And Jesus says, I know. I turned all the wine into water. And the religious people would be very satisfied.

[25 : 33] Yes, because, of course, real holiness means to be very ascetic, is to deny yourself. That's what real holiness is. But Jesus, could you put up the picture?

Jesus, I mean, that's not a really great picture. One of you folks, maybe later on, will want to draw a better picture or paint a better picture, and we can use it next time we preach on this. It's a party. Jesus turned the water into wine.

And Jesus is introducing God. And he's introducing God as the source of pleasure and joy.

If you could put up the next point, it's all I've done is just quoted Psalm 16, verse 11. You make known to me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy.

At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. You, the psalmist, is speaking to God.

[26 : 42] And in fact, if you go back and see Psalm 16, it's the culmination, it's the end of the psalm. It's the high point of the psalm. It's the whole psalm is moving to this declaration by the person who comes to realize who is God.

God makes known to me the path of life. God, in your presence, there is fullness joy. God, in your presence, are pleasures forevermore.

This is the true God. This is the real God. This is the God that Jesus reveals. And it's really interesting, as we'll see in a moment, this is the first sign.

This is the foundation sign. This is the ABC sign. This is the beginning grammar sign. This is the way that God, that himself, in the person of his son, wants to introduce himself to human beings by his first miracle.

That, folks, you got it all wrong. The devil did not create joy. The devil did not create pleasure. You know, in fact, what this text is telling us is that, amongst other things, is that God created a world where wine could be invented and enjoyed.

[27 : 54] Sin created drunkenness and alcoholism. God didn't create drunkenness and alcoholism. Sin created that.

But he made a world where there's pleasure and where there's joy. So how does this affect this whole issue of the same-sex marriage? You see, the fact of the matter is, is that in our hearts of hearts, we expect that to be really religious, we expect, you see, there's a big part of us that expects that God is the one who takes away joy, that God is the one who takes away pleasure, that really, really, God would love me far more if I was about 50 pounds lighter and I looked really emaciated and I fasted four times a week and I hardly got any sleep because I was up praying all the time and I was wearing rags because I gave all of my money away and if I was doing that, then God would really love me a lot more and in my heart of hearts, that's what I believe.

And so in my heart of hearts, when it comes to issues of holiness, we think, yes, that person's worries about somebody is completely and utterly correct. God takes pleasure away.

He takes joy away. And this God who takes pleasure away and he takes joy away, yes, he allows some people to get married and now God's not allowing that person to get married and all they're going to be stuck with is a life of loneliness and water, a life of no pleasure whatsoever.

Because that's what God is like. And that's why it's so important for all of us. It's what why might God suggest that we have to tithe? Well, at the end of the day, God doesn't like you enjoying your money.

[29 : 30] He doesn't want you to ever have pleasure. You know, why is it that God wants you to go to church? Well, because he wants to ruin your Sundays. He wants to ruin your weekends. He

takes your pleasures away from you.

Why do you want to read God's word? Well, because it's boring and God wants to bore you and he wants to tell you irrelevant things and impossible things to accomplish. Why? Because in our heart of hearts, we worry that God is like that.

We worry that he is not the one whose path will lead us to life. And that in his presence, there is the fullness of joy and in his right hand, there are pleasures forevermore.

And we don't believe in our heart of hearts that the same God who created all things and understands why things are created and understands where our pleasure buttons and our joy buttons are, that the same God who created all things is also the one who has now come to redeem us, to bring us back to the God in whose presence there is a fullness of joy and at right whose right hand is pleasures forevermore.

That in fact, in the new heaven and the new earth, when Jesus comes a second time and there's the judgment of the living and the dead and there's the new heaven and the new earth, that the rumor of a sniff of a distant smell of the pleasures of the new heaven and the new earth would so overwhelm us, it would destroy our minds and our bodies and our wills.

[31 : 02] Because in the new heaven and the new earth, there will be joy and pleasures that this fallen mortal body right now cannot possibly enjoy without being unmade.

And when Jesus comes a second time and there is the, there is the judging of the living and the dead and God says, come into my kingdom, my well-beloved son, George, you are clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world has taken away your sin. The time has come. The shadow lands are far gone. You now will have your resurrection body come into this new heaven and this new earth.

You will be like my son, Jesus, in terms of his resurrected body. And I will enter into an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

And so my brothers and sisters, my friends, my seekers, so will you. So will you.

[32 : 03] Now some of you might say, George, um, well, but just, just one other thing.

I was, yeah, I have a few minutes. Just one more thing before going. See, the way to understand this story amongst other things is this. So the, the guy who's organizing the wine, uh, the master of the ceremony, he knows how life works.

He knows you blow your wad on a couple of good bottles of wine you have right at first, and then you just keep getting cheaper and cheaper, and then you add water, and it gets more and more watered down as, as the celebration goes on for two or three days.

So you can well imagine that the guy who's organizing the wedding, he doesn't know what's going on. He doesn't know that the wine's run out. He sees the servant coming with some wine to taste, and you can just picture him going, oh, gosh, I have to taste this?

It's probably going to be really bad. Like, this isn't a very rich couple? And he's sort of bracing himself to, to drink something, and he takes, and he takes a sip, and there'd probably be the look of shock on his face.

[33 : 17] And then he takes a second sip, and it would be, wow, is this ever a good wine? God, you know, our pleasures and our joys, they're disordered.

They need to be healed by God. But friends, brothers and sisters, you know, if this afternoon you get a spectacular piece of firm tofu, and that's what turns your crank, be grateful.

Say, God, thank you so much for making this. You know, if it's a piece of nice big steak, a mousse steak, and you get to slice into it with your fork and knife and put it in your mouth, and don't feel guilty.

Say, oh, God, thank you so much. There is a world where there are pleasures like this. Now, some of you might push back and say, George, okay, you say that, and that's good, and I know your time's almost run out, but George, I don't know if that's, if, I don't know if you've really been fair to the Bible stories there, because, George, the very next story that takes place is Jesus driving people out of the market.

Now, George, I know maybe you're going to tell me there's something different culturally about that, but generally, George, I love going to markets. Like, markets are often fun. Like, George, have you ever been to some of the markets, like in Halifax, on the waterfront, and you go in there, and there's all these really great foods, and there's great things to buy, and people are relaxed, and, you know,

the water's there, and, you know, George, have you been to the market on a really good day here in Ottawa, and, yeah, I know there can be, you know, it can be a bit crowded and all that, but, you know, there's just a sense of life and bustle, and Jesus goes and ruins it all.

[34 : 57] Like, George, are you being consistent with what you say? Well, let's look. Let's look at what goes on here very briefly in closing. It's a page, it's verse 13. The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and money changers sitting there, and making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and oxen, and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables, and he told those who sold the pigeons, take these things away, do not make my father's house a house of trade.

His disciples remembered that it was written, zeal for your house will consume me. So, is Jesus here taking away fun? No, he's introducing God in another way.

He's introducing God in another way. That's a pretty amazing picture up there, eh? There's Jesus over there with his whip. He's introducing God in a different way.

Andrew, if you could put up the next point. Remember that in last week, we talked about how the way that God begins to introduce himself is by having Jesus be described as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And here we see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He drives out all who keep pagans from coming to him. See, because that's what's going on here in the story, is that when Herod made his temple, one of the things is that after the Babylonian, after Jerusalem was destroyed in the 500s BCs, the Jewish people were scattered.

[36 : 42] And one of the byproducts of that is that many people who are pagans started to become enchanted with the idea, with the God of Israel. And they became God-fearers.

And for many of them, they didn't want to go the full distance of becoming Jews. Let me just be honest. If at my age, I want to become Jewish, I had to be circumcised. I would think really long and hard about that.

Like, beyond long and hard. In fact, if there was a God-fearer option, that's what I would choose. I know I'm not very holy, not very ascetic. I just said I like beef and all that stuff.

But I would choose the non-circumcised route for me. And so when Herod rebuilds the temple, mindful of all of the Jewish scriptures, the Old Testament scriptures, that God wants the nations to come and worship them, that the pagans are to know worship them, he creates this whole area as part of the temple grounds, but not the temple itself, where pagans could come and pray.

They can't enter the actual temple building itself, but they could come to pray. And that's what was completely and utterly filled with animals and money changers.

[37 : 54] The pagans couldn't come to pray. And so what we see here isn't that Jesus is a killjoy, but we see that the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world drives out all who keep pagans from coming to him.

We see the loving heart of God. It's why, you know, in a couple of weeks' time, we're going to say Jeremy and Kendra, who left our congregation to be missionaries in Zambia, they're with us today, but we're going to have early March.

We're going to have more times for us to spend about it. But why do they leave here to go to Zambia? Why? Well, because there's Zambians that God wants to come into a personal knowledge of himself.

Why is it that maybe in February, we're going to bring in somebody and their family who are going to go plant a church in Jerusalem? Because God has people in Jerusalem who he wants to have know Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

Why is it that we have sent out people to Asia and Central Asia? Because there are people in those countries that God wants to have come to a saving knowledge of himself. Why is it that we have a ministry on campus?

[39 : 09] It's because there are university students that God wants to have know Jesus. Why are we thinking of starting another congregation in Kanata or Sunday evening?

Because God has more people in this city that he wants to have come to him. And this is showing the missionary loving heart of God.

So just sort of wrapping this up, if you could put up the next point, please. Oh, sorry. Just while that point stays up there, listen to what Jesus says after this, he clears the temple.

Verse 18, The Jews said to Jesus, what sign do you show us for doing these things? And Jesus said, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jewish leader said then, basically full of scorn, listen, Jesus, 46 years this work's been going on, it's still not built, you're going to raise it up in three days?

Like baloney. But Jesus was speaking about the temple of his body. And when therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed that the scriptures and the word that Jesus had spoken.

[40 : 24] The temple is where in Jesus' day, I went to meet with God. Jesus is revealing that he is now where I go to meet with God. Next point.

The temple in Jesus' day is where I needed to go and offer the necessary sacrifice so that I could be near to God.

Jesus is the once for all sacrifice provided by God himself so that I can live at home in God's presence into eternity. See, that's why it's so significant that he says, he's first introduced in John 1 as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The implication is that God himself is providing a once for all means by which we can be made right with him if we receive it by faith.

And it's not just that Jesus does this to make us right with God, but Jesus is also where we go to meet with God. He is both God's means to make us right with him and it's where we go to meet with God.

[41 : 29] The final point, please. And the resurrection of Jesus is the game changer. Jesus says it's the final sign. If you go through and you read John's Gospel, you're going to see that he keeps emphasizing different signs that introduce God, that point to God in very powerful ways.

Jesus reveals that the final sign is his resurrection from the dead. It vindicates who he is. It vindicates the outrageous claim that he is where human beings can now go to meet with God, that he is the one who introduces God correctly.

It vindicates that he is, in fact, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And it vindicates that he can still make people like you and me right with him.

That for people like you and me, living in Ottawa in 2018, no matter how it is that it seems that the culture is going, that we can meet with Jesus, we can be reconciled with God, and as we go through our daily life, we should not think that God is small and that Ottawa is big, Hollywood is big, Trudeau is big, Trump is big, Apple is big, secularism is big.

No, God is big. He creates planets, he holds them in his hands, he changes human history, he changes human hearts. And I'm introduced to be reconciled to God, to live at home with God, and live my day-to-day life knowing that God is big, and everything I face is small.

[43 : 06] Please stand. Just before I pray in closing, just remind you that, remember this, one of the things which is so wonderful about the story of Jesus throwing out the money changers is that it's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and he's the one removing the barriers so that pagans can come to know him.

If you have not given your life to Jesus, he wants to know you. He's not waiting for you to lose weight. He's not waiting for you to become more ascetic. He's not waiting for you to become more holy.

He's the one who's dealt with all that keeps us far from God. He's dealt with all of that, and he longs for you to bend the knee and to call out to him and say, Jesus, may you be for me the Lamb of God who takes away my sin.

May you be for me the one who makes me right with God. May you be the one by whom I can walk and follow and live my days learning from you.

May you be the one who is my Savior and my Lord. There is no time better than today to make such a call and cry out to God. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, we thank you for Jesus.

[44 : 30] Father, we confess before you that we should know better, but we slip into thinking bad things about you, wrong things about you, untruths about you.

Father, we slip into that so easily. We project our hard-heartedness onto you, our anger-drivenness onto you, our lack of love onto you, our chaotic desires.

Father, we put those on you, but Father, make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel and are learning to know who you are as you've revealed yourself through Jesus.

Father, help us to know you through Jesus and learn to live knowing that you are a big God, bigger than our problems, and freed up to live for your glory.

Father, we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[45 : 32] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.