

Martyrdom

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Date: 20 February 2022

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[0 : 00] Father, maybe it's only in times like this when we gather in your presence to worship you on the Lord's Day that it sort of comes into our head that often we, too often, maybe always, we flatter ourselves too much to detect or hate our own sin.

And we confess, Father, that we are way, way, way better at seeing little specks in other people's eyes and we can be completely blind and unfeeling about the log in our own eye.

So we ask, Father, that as we now spend some time reading your word again and thinking about it, we ask, Father, that the Holy Spirit would move with might and power and deep conviction.

And we give you permission with no qualifications, Father, for your word to come into the very depths of who we are, for your word to speak and rule within us.

Father, because we know through the gospel that as your word rules within us, it is for our good, for our healing, for your glory, for the good of the world. And so, Father, we ask for this wonderful work of grace.

[1 : 07] And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So, I don't expect people to always remember what my sermons were the week before.

In fact, I don't know how much time I always remember them. But for some of you who listened to the sermon last week, you would have a very, very valid type of critique of me, or at least potentially a very valid critique.

You'd say, George, last week you didn't tell the truth. Last week you gave us completely false expectations. Last week, George, the text that went just before this, just before this text, you told us that if we sort of trust God's will and do God's will, that our needs would be met.

In fact, George, you even used as an example tithing, that part of what the purpose of tithing is, is that if you trust, if you obey God and trust him and give away some of your money, that your needs are going to be met.

And that's what you said the text was about last week. And now we come to this text, and here you have a guy, John the Baptist. He obviously did God's will, and his needs weren't met. In fact, he gets beheaded.

[2 : 17] He gets killed. So I just want you to know, George, I do not have a need to be spent to go to jail and then be beheaded. That's not how I would understand having my needs being met.

So, George, what's going on? In fact, some people might also say, in fact, George, this is part of the reason I don't like Christianity. I don't like religion in general, but I don't like Christianity in particular. Because you seem to say one thing, and you try to cover up other things, and you're not really honest, and it's just very, very confusing to understand. And that's a very valid type of pushback.

It really is. And, I mean, it's something that we need to really look at to try to sort of figure out what's sort of going on with these types of, you know, this question and these types of complaints.

So let's walk towards it. And, in fact, actually, for some people, if you're maybe here for the first time or you're watching for the first time, one of the reasons that at this church we preach through books of the Bible is precisely not to hide things.

[3 : 21] It would be we want to go through it. We don't want to just say, oh, I'm just going to look at this little happy-clappy bit and this little happy-clappy bit and this happy-clappy bit and then this other bit that's really angry at all the people who aren't like us and then another half.

No, no, we don't do that. We go right through the book from beginning to end, and so nothing's hidden. So let's look. And it's Mark chapter 6. It would be a great help to you and to me if you follow. I mean, the words will be on the screen, but it's always a good help for you to look at the Bible yourself and just see if I'm actually being fair and honest to the text and to have your own questions.

So here's how it is. As I've already said, what's just happened before this is that, first of all, Jesus was rejected by his family and his home village and his relatives.

Then Jesus sends out his 12 disciples for a ministry of proclamation, and that's what happens just before this, and now the story continues like this. King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known.

[4 : 21] Some said, John the Baptist or John the Baptizer has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him. But others said he is Elijah, and others said he is a prophet like one of the prophets of old.

But when Herod, King Herod, heard of it, he said, John, whom I beheaded, has been raised. Now, you just sort of have to pause here for a second. One of the reasons that modern or Canadians have troubles reading the Bible is that we're very used to lots of emotional descriptions.

And generally speaking, the New Testament doesn't give very many emotional descriptions. It, in a sense, just records what happens, and so what we need to do is we need to be able to, in a sense, put ourselves into the story a little bit and try to understand emotionally what's going on.

And so here's the thing. In fact, just for a moment, imagine that you were responsible for beheading an innocent person, and then later on you hear that he's come back to life with miraculous powers. Would you be happy or worried? That's a stupid question. That's the fundamental plot of almost every horror movie, isn't it? Somebody who's been terribly treated, and then all of a sudden they either come back to life or they rise out of the whole mess, and whoa, all of a sudden they can make fire, they can do all these things, and everybody runs, and there's lots of screaming and lots of death before the movie ends, either on a happy note or a bad note.

[5 : 52] This is like the standard plot of a horror movie. All right there. And so what you need to understand is you have, if you're doing a movie of this scene, you would have Herod in his mighty fortress, and you'd have the scenes of his soldiers walking around, maybe doing their exercises out front, the servants and all the, you know, the boot lickens and, you know, butt kissers and all that sort of all fawning around him, but he is there in the midst of all his pomp and glory, deeply worried.

The man that he had beheaded, the innocent man that he had beheaded, has miraculous powers and is on the loose. That's where Herod is in this particular thing.

Just as a bit of an aside, but it's a very important aside, much of the, what we're going to see in this story is actually validated by one of the most important historians, non-Christian historians of the ancient world for that region by the name of Josephus, who talks about John the Baptist, talks about Herod, and actually talks about some of the events that take place in this story.

It's all part of what I say over and over and over again is that when you're reading the book of Mark, some of us might have a hard time with Mark because it records miracles, but what Mark is, it's an ancient biography based on eyewitness testimony, which the more that archaeologists know about the past, the more they discover, the more they see that it's historically accurate to the point that it's not uncommon, in fact, it's very common, that Jewish archaeologists go to the Gospels to get information to help them make archaeological discoveries.

And so what we're reading here is an historical account of two people that are known in general history. And so you have this picture of Herod brooding in his castle, and now if this was a movie, what you'd have is the flashback that brings him up, that shows why he's brooding.

[7 : 56] And that's what John does. That's how Mark writes his book. Look at what happens in verse 17. It begins with a flashback. For it was Herod, verse 17, who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her.

For John, that's John the Baptist, had been saying to Herod, it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. Now just sort of pause here for a second as well. First of all, in the original language, it's John the Baptist doesn't just sort of say it once as a throwaway comment.

He says it over and over and over again. He wouldn't shut up. He said it many times. And it sounds as if he said it before he got thrown in jail and even after he was in jail, he would continue to say that it was in fact against the law.

Now for many people, reading this now, I mean maybe for churches, you know we're supposed to agree with it and we're supposed to not have any questions and we're supposed to not have any problems, so it's you know, blah, blah, blah, let's just go on.

Of course it's all the right thing. But let's just be honest for ourselves, just even as Christians, if I was to discover that one of you folks were working on Parliament Hill and you were making a big fuss about the marital status of somebody, some of you might say, George, would you tell him to

shut up or her to shut up or would you say, no, no, no, no, no, go into the fact that he's divorced or would you say that that's just, you know, don't you think, George, that we Canadians are wiser and smarter and we've understood that you don't make a big fuss about things like that, sexual things like that.

[9 : 28] You just don't make a fuss about it. George, wouldn't you counsel the staffer or the person who works for the think tank, you don't even bring up that stuff, like, you know, move on, get on with life, don't make a big fuss about it, don't ruin your career.

Isn't that what you would say, George? Like, we Canadians are wiser. But the problem is when we think things like that, that we're actually not really being, in fact, actually, to think that is to not live in the real world.

I mean, good grief. Has there been a greater time over the last decades when sex hasn't been a bigger issue? I mean, good grief.

J.K. Rowling's been cancelled from the whole Harry Potter thing because she doesn't have an acceptable view on sex. Isn't that true? I mean, the fact of the matter is, because we occasionally talk about that, we have to actually think through whether lay people can get up and be on YouTube because they might get cancelled.

Because our culture is unbelievably opinionated and fixated on having the right views. So this isn't an unrealistic story.

[10 : 44] This is a very contemporary story. And for a Christian or non-Christian to think that they're making a mountain out of a molehill that has nothing to do with today's world, it has everything to do with today's world.

Everything to do with today's world. And now, I have to be careful, I don't go down a rabbit hole, but I need you to give me a little bit of a moment's mercy.

Maybe more than a moment. The fact of the matter is, is that this is talking about divorce, which isn't a big issue in our culture, because in our culture, our culture maintains a myth, a whole pile of myths about divorce, of the happy divorce, the divorce without consequences.

And I have to be very careful. And I'm not, what I'm going to say in the next minute or two isn't meant to make anybody feel guilty, although it might. I mean, the bottom line is that the Bible is the, that the gospel is about restoration and about new life.

It's about forgiveness. And, and no matter when the gospels talk about sin, it's always in the point, it's just like, I often tell men if their wives are confronting them, they confront you to connect with you, not to push you away.

[12 : 11] They confront to connect. And that's what the gospel is doing. The fact of the matter is here that every single one of us has been affected by divorce. Some of us have had marriages that have almost ended in divorce.

Some of us are divorced. Some of us are probably divorced more than once. Many of us, if not all of us, have siblings who are divorced.

many of us are children whose parents divorced. And so in some cases, people here know what it's like to be abandoned, abused, or to have had your, your spouse commit adultery.

And it's also probably the case that some of us who are here were the one who abandoned the spouse or abused the spouse or broke up the marriage by adultery.

And my point here is not to make anybody particularly here to feel guilty, but I'm trying to, it's very, very funny.

[13 : 14] People will talk about the Bible not talking about the real world, but what often is happening is that we don't want to deal with the real world. We don't want to deal with the reality of our heart and the reality of what we've done.

But the fact of the matter is divorce does cause deep wounds. It causes deep wounds.

Maybe not for both, but at least for one. And often then it expands beyond to children and to grandchildren and to parents and parents-in-law.

it's not nothing. And so we might not particularly agree on the surface with John the Baptist making a fuss about this, but the fact of the matter is we can't really say anything about it given how obsessed our culture is about the right sexual views.

And actually, even in this particular context, I'm going to tell you something. Remember I said that this whole incident is covered by ancient historians. Here's another thing about this in the real world.

[14:29] This is what actually happened. It's not recorded in the Bible story, but this is what we know from historians. So what happened is Herod has a brother and Herod's brother is married to Herodias and they have the daughter who's unnamed in this story and Herod is also married.

And so Herod wants to be married to Herodias, whether it's for a combination of just, you know, he's tired of Model A and he'd rather have Model B because Model B is younger, cooler, hipper, more pretty, you know, more pleasant, more flattering, whatever, or it's also going to maybe help that his career and her likewise.

So he divorces his wife and she divorces her husband and they marry. And so in the mythology of our culture, of course, there's no harm that comes from it, but actually there's almost always harm. And the story not recorded here actually tells you the harm because you see what historians tell us is that Herod was married to the daughter of a king. And the king was the neighboring area.

So they're all under Rome, but Rome generally let like kings or other high level people manage territories for them. And so Herod is married to the daughter of a neighboring king.

[15:47] And just as we see that Herodias has a big grudge in a moment and she's not going to forgive John the Baptist for questioning the marriage, well, the fact of the matter is, is the king is really bothered that Herod just dismissed his wife like she's just like garbage.

And he holds a grudge. And a couple of years after this incident, this king invades Herod's kingdom. Herod's kingdom is ruinously defeated.

And a couple of years after that, because of the ruinous defeat and the discord that Herod has caused, Herod is deposed. That's what actually happened.

That's what happened in history. In fact, all of a sudden now you'd say if John the Baptist is saying, listen, dude, you divorce her, you're going to bring about a ruinous war, and not only is it going to lead to you being deposed, but the fact of the matter is, is that when there is a ruinous war, generally speaking, it's not the king's or prime minister's kids who die in the war, but working class and middle class and the poor who die in the war.

And all of a sudden we think, whoa, maybe John the Baptist was on to something. We shouldn't have dismissed it. But now we're actually dealing with the real world. The way the world actually works is how the Bible is talking, and the Bible is holding up a mirror to us and giving us a window into what the world is really like.

[17:30] And now, actually, the very next thing, it's really interesting, what immediately happens after verse 18, which we've just read, is two deeply human moments, if we're able to see ourselves in it.

Deeply, deeply human. Look what happens in verse 19. So remember verse 18, you know, he's been saying, you shouldn't be married, you shouldn't have taken your brother's wife. Verse 19, and Herodias, that's the new wife, the current wife of Herod, had a grudge against John the Baptist and wanted to put him to death, but she could not yet.

for Herod, verse 20, feared John, knowing, and feared, probably the better word for feared there, when some of your versions might say perplexed, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man and kept him safe, when he heard him, he was greatly perplexed and yet heard him gladly.

And this is very, very interesting because the fact of the matter, this is what the real world is like, isn't it? You do something and somebody hates you for the rest of your life. Isn't that just like real life? In fact, maybe some of us here right now, if we're honest about it, somebody's done a wrong to us and we hate them still.

One year, five years, ten years later, we still hate them. And in fact, actually, that's often, there are many people who hate Christians.

[18:59] I mean, if you think about it, it was only a year ago that 50 churches were burned, or defaced, and virtually nobody in the chattering classes were upset with it.

Yeah, the Bible has nothing to do with the modern world, nothing at all. And the other thing about Herod, I mean, I'll be honest, the year processed before me becoming a Christian, in many ways, I was Herod.

I was both really drawn to Christianity and repulsed by it. Drawn and repulsed.

Drawn to it because there was something, gosh, when I was with Christians, there was just something there. I felt a presence. At the same time, I was repulsed by it.

it would mean that I was never going to be a cool kid. It would mean that I, it would make me have to believe things that weren't going to make me fit in.

[20 : 06] And so, in many ways, if you think about it, Herod or his wife are us. Now, one of the things about the divorce, and I'm not going to go into it, actually, down the road, we're going to talk about divorce because it's going to come up in Mark's gospel later on.

But one of the things that Christians need to understand is that the fact of the matter is, is that we are the inheritors through the Bible of a 3,500 year sexual revolution.

A sexual revolution which is deeply wise, that goes right back to the giving of the Ten Commandments, and it's deeply wise. And it constantly is countercultural to the world, and constantly the church has to be drawn back.

The church becomes a thing of horror when it forgets the Bible and is shaped by the world, and we constantly need to be brought back to hear the Bible afresh, to speak wisdom into us about the sexuality of things.

And one of the things which you're going to see here in the story is part of the wisdom of the Bible, part of the 3,500 year perpetual sexual revolution that the Bible launched and continues to be.

[21 : 26] Look what happens in verse 21. But an opportunity came when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.

So three groups. He brings his nobles, he brings the military commanders, he brings the leading men of Galilee, all men, it's an all-male gathering. And what does a very, very rich tyrant do when there's an all-male gathering and there's going to be a feast?

There's lots of alcohol. Okay? And sorry to offend vegans, lots of meat. Okay? And all the things that go along with that.

Verse 22, for when Herodias' daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests, and the king said to the girl, ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you.

And he vowed, whatever you ask me, I will give you up to half of my kingdom. Now, pause here, and I'm going to be X-rated. This is his niece and his stepdaughter.

[22 : 31] And the word for girl is the same word in chapter 5, talking about Jairus' daughter around 12. It's the same word. She does a sexually provocative and arousing dance that pleases all the men.

It almost makes you want to vomit. It almost makes you want to vomit. And him and the men, his niece, his niece, his 12 to 14 year old niece and his step daughter, does this dance.

And they're all so aroused and clapping, he makes this rash promise. See, one of the things that's at the very heart of the Christian sexual revolution that's constantly having to deal with our natural inclinations, and we can really see it very powerfully today, one of the problems with today's world is that everything is sensualized, everything is sexualized.

And as everything becomes sexualized, it gets harder and harder for there to be a place just for a kid to be a kid, for a dad just to be a dad that doesn't take any type of sexual advantage on others or his family or neighbors.

others. But, you know, in the ancient world, everything was sensualized, everything was sexualized, worship was sexualized and sensualized. In the coliseum of the day, in the coliseums of the day, to the roaring of the crowd, bestiality was practiced.

[24 : 22] That's the world that John the Baptist lived in and Jesus lived in. That's the world that the gospel was first proclaimed. And one of the major religions of the world thinks it's fine for underage girls to get married.

And there's a problem with sex slaves and trading of young daughters all over the world. In the midst of this, the constant sexual revolution of the integrity of the male and the integrity of the female, and that sexual knowing is to be restricted to sexual knowing between a husband and a wife in the covenant of marriage.

It's a profound revolution, and we are in the after stages of the Me Too movement, reacting and rejecting to the centralizing and sexualizing of everything, which always benefits the powerful at the expense of the weak.

Always. Always. Always. Always. Always. Always. Always. Always. Always. Always. Always. I have to watch the image.

leasen carefully because what we actually see next isn't entirely honest, not that the Bible's lied, but you need to understand that the Bible records the way somebody Say good to ask and think if that's actually accurate, if his self-perception is true.

[25 : 51] Look what happens in verse 24 to 26. So he's promised up to half her kingdom. And she went out and said to her mom, what should I ask for? And the mom said, the head of John the Baptist.

Friends, if you're here today and you are nurturing long-term hatred of another person, this is the day for you to repent and ask for God's help to give up your anger and your hatred.

She said the head of John the Baptist. Verse 25, and she came in immediately with haste, that's the young girl, and said to the king, I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests, he did not want to break his word to her. And that is a lie. Come on.

If she'd said, I'd like half your kingdom. You have four fortresses. I'd like two of them. You can keep the rest of the fortresses in the land. Even in arousal, and even with a lot of alcohol under him.

[27 : 05] The reptilian eyes would focus on her. And said, would say, no matter all the oaths, you better change your request.

Isn't that what he would do? That's what he would do. That's what he would do. But you see, the fact of the matter is, is that John the Baptist is just a little person, and little people don't matter to the powerful.

Little people do not matter to the powerful. Little people can be just inconvenient, like gum on a hot day stuck to the bottom of your foot, or that you just scrape off.

So if she'd actually asked for something that mattered to Herod, he would have said, I don't care about my oaths. In fact, there might be a place in my dungeon prepared for you. But because John the Baptist is a little person, well, what happens?

Let's look. Verse 27. And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The executioner went and beheaded John in prison, and brought John's head on a platter, and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mom.

[28 : 19] And when his disciples heard of it, that's John's disciples, they came and took his body, minus the head, and laid it in the tomb. So the sermon began is, the sermon began with a very valid type of, an understandable, I should say, maybe not valid, very understandable pushback about, last week I talked about how, you know, what was going on there was, when Jesus sends his disciples out, and he says, don't bring any, you know, money, and don't bring extra clothes, and, you know, don't bring swords, and, you know, just basically have nothing, and go and proclaim, and do works of healing, and do works of deliverance, and, and, and really the messages, it's just like that Hudson Taylor's famous line, God's work done in God's way, will receive God's supply.

And that's one of the many places in the Bible, you could have got that saying, God's work done in God's way, will receive God's supply. And I said, God's needs, you will, God's, he will meet your needs.

And now here we see this story, where, a person, and you'd have to say, but, I mean, doesn't Jesus say later on in chapter nine, that, like, John the Baptist is like Elijah?

Doesn't, doesn't he say that, doesn't the, the Jesus in other places say that, John is the greatest of all the prophets, and all that? So how, how does that fit, George, with this? And that's a very, very good question, and if you could put up the first point, it would be very, very helpful.

Here's the first point. Remember, the Bible is a mirror, and often what it shows us, if we're willing to let it show us something, is something not very pleasant about myself and yourself.

[30 : 00] You cannot walk the way of truth, or of love, or of goodness, without the real risk of suffering. You cannot. You cannot walk the way of truth, or the way of love, or the way of goodness, without the real risk of suffering.

You can't. Eventually, you will come face to face with a lie, a lie held by a person who has lots of power. At some point in time, you might have to say to your boss, that's just not true.

At some point in time, you might have to say to the government, that's just not true. And you know that if you say that to your boss, or you say it to a powerful person, there might be consequences.

And so what we think of in our own minds, is on one hand, we want to do the two things, and we're just not aware of it. This is the mirror. The mirror is, I'd like to have as my self-image, that I am a man of the truth, that I am a man of love, that I am a man of goodness.

But at the same time, I want to say to myself, well, there's no point making a fuss about that truth. There's no point making a fuss about love in this case. There's no point making a fuss about

goodness in this case, because if I do, I'm screwed.

[31 : 15] But I'm a man of the truth. Well, in this world, you cannot love without suffering, or at least the risk of suffering. You cannot truly be good without the risk, at least, and probably the actuality of suffering, small or big.

And boy, if we were ever a time in our culture where to actually speak the truth, and to be a person of the truth, and to live not by lies, might have consequences, we are in that time right now, brothers and sisters and friends.

And so the fact of the matter is, is that our complaint about the apparent contradiction between these two texts flows out of the fact that we aren't honest about ourselves. We aren't honest about ourselves and the world that we live in.

Jesus says to go out and bear witness, and your needs will be met. But the fact of the matter is, if you bear witness, you constantly have the risk of suffering for the truth, for goodness, for justice, for mercy, for love.

I mean, that's the world we live in, friends. What about this whole thing about divorce and sex and all of that?

[32 : 40] Like, George, shouldn't just religion just be about spiritual things and not, like, about that type of stuff? Well, here's the thing. If you could put up the next point, that would be very helpful. Jesus is the Savior and Lord of all of who you are.

Jesus is the Savior and the Lord of all of who you are. He's not just the Savior of the spiritual bit of you. He's not just the Savior of the emotional bit of you.

He's the, you know, you are a person and I am a person. We live in a physical world. We have responsibilities for, you know, cleaning the house. And if you've been, if you've been blessed with a house or, you know, cleaning your apartment, washing the dishes, you know, some of us have, you know, obligations towards family and friends and those things are important and partly how we get our identity and we have to make money and we have to spend our money and we have to save our money and we have sexual desires and we have imagination and we have creativity and we have, we have willpower and we have minds and we have all of these things and all of these things and we have a history and we have a future and all of these are the things that make us us and when Jesus comes he takes the place of all of who I am and all of who you are with nothing left over and you don't go to heaven you without a mind, you without a will, you without an imagination, you without creativity, you without responsibilities, you don't go, you don't go to heaven without all of those things, you're not even a human being if you don't have those things.

He dies for all of who you are and if he dies for all of who you are, he is lord of all of who you are. It means, it means that it's not in tithing that you say something like, well, 10% of your money belongs to God, 90% belongs to you, no, 100% of it belongs to God.

All of it belongs to him. How much of my imagination belongs to him? All of my imagination. How much of my sexuality? All of my sexuality belongs to him. How much of my body?

[34 : 44] All of my body. It all belongs to him. He's lord of all of it. He's the same one who's created all things.

He is the same one who dies for all things. He is the same one who will restore and remake all things in the new heaven and the new earth. And we are wiser and stronger and taller when we bow to him.

But the text isn't just a mirror to help me understand who I am.

As I said, it's also, we see here a bit of a window because it's describing, helping us to understand better what Jesus does. And there's an even greater window, which this and the next point would be a bit briefer, but very, very important.

If you put up the next point, it's this. John the Baptist's death is a good example. Jesus' death is the good news.

[35 : 44] John the Baptist's death is a great example. It's a great example. But Jesus' death is good news. You see, apart from the gospel, John the Baptist's death is a good example, worthy of emulation.

But at the end of the day, if you think about it, Herod lives and John dies. The powerful continue to live and the weak die. And it might be that, in hindsight, John the Baptist has a better reputation than Herod, but you know what the fact of the matter is, is a lot of people say it doesn't help you when you're dead.

And if Jesus was just an example, well, then you still have the Roman power, his enemies in power, him dead.

But the fact of the matter is, is this is preparing us. The story of John the Baptist, on one hand, is looking back to help us as disciples understand, well, you know what it's helping us to understand? If you come to receive communion on the pieces of bread, if you get one of the little pieces of unleavened bread, there's a cross indented on both sides.

And in a sense, what we're being asked to realize when we take the bread to eat it, to feed on Christ spiritually, we're being asked as if to say, on one hand, in me, all your needs will be met.

[37 : 09] In a sense, on one side of the one piece of bread, on the other side, the cross is reminding us, pick up your cross and follow me and die. And it's the one piece of bread, mindful of Christ's death that we partake of and we think about and we feed on spiritually.

But it has those two sides, the cross on both sides. All of your needs met. Take up your cross and follow me. You see, Jesus' death is good news in the most unbelievable sense because in the case of Jesus, he also dies like John the Baptist.

John the Baptist is foreshadowing both Jesus' death and what is vastly greater about Jesus' death, that Jesus also dies at the hand of his enemies, the innocent, at the hand of the evil and the wicked, the people who do not love truth and do not love goodness and do not love justice and do not love mercy.

And he dies at their hands. But he doesn't just die as himself. He dies. As God, he can die for everyone. And as man, he can die for you and for me.

And so his death is a death as my representative. It is his death as my substitute. And in his death, all of the things which have kept me separate from God and all of the consequences they have with my alienation from others and with God and with the universe, they all are laid on him.

[38 : 38] And he tastes all there is to taste of death as my representative and my substitute. And on the third day, he emerges on the far side having defeated death, having defeated that which causes death and having defeated all hostile, spiritual, social, worldly powers in his resurrection.

And because he does all of this in my place, when I put my faith and trust in him, I share in his victory over sin and evil and injustice and hatred, over death and all hostile spiritual powers, weak me and weak you.

When we look to him and ask him to be our savior and lord, he rushes across that infinite distance and takes you into his arms. And his death, you share in his victory. Could you put up the final point?

Doing to become ends in either image management or despair. The gospel teaches you to grow day by day in the security that Christ has done everything that is needed to be done for you to be reconciled to the triune God and be unfailingly in him and him in you.

You see, that's the power of the gospel. You see, religion says, if I do, if I do, if I do, I become something acceptable to God. And as I do and I do and I do and I do, if I'm becoming acceptable to God, then all these good things will happen to me and that's the way to do it.

[40 : 17] And the Bible says, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. If you try to do that, all you end up doing is image management or you get into despair. The Bible completely and utterly, that's why this is good news. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. You see, Jesus has done everything for you.

He's the one who's defeated death. He's the one who carried your sin. He's the one who clothes you with his new life. He's the one who gives you everything. He's the one who gives you the security that you are now the child of God, that the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, they dwell in you.

He dwells in you. God dwells in you. They will never leave you. They will never forsake you. Jesus is your hope of glory. And out of who you have become in Christ, you begin to take the baby steps of doing in the security that he will never leave you.

He will never forsake you. He will only love you. He will only love you. He will never forsake you. Never.

Nothing you have done is so bad that he didn't die for you. Nothing that you will do in the future is so bad that he will change his mind of you. He died for all of you from the moment of your conception to the moment of your death.

[41 : 26] He died for the depth of you. And when he takes you as his child, he will never leave you or forsake you. And it is out of that security of who you've become in Christ that you can begin to do and pick yourself up when you fall.

Thankful for his grace and mercy. Week by week, pledging once again that you are his. That is good news. And it is good news for you.

It's good news for you. There's no better time than today to give your life to Christ. Say, Jesus, take me. I want you to be my Savior and my Lord. And I thank you that you will never let me go.

And I know that I don't deserve it. Thank you. Just take me. There's no better time than today to pray it. And for those of us who know it, there's no better time than today to once again say, Jesus, some of us might say, this has been a pretty good week.

And others will say, Jesus, I am so glad you died for me knowing how bad this week would be. And I recommit to you. I recommit to you. Let's stand. I invite you to stand.

[42 : 33] In standing, let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise for Jesus.

We thank and praise you, Father, that he died in our place. He died for all that makes each one of us us. That he is my hope. He is the sinner's hope for glory.

Give you thanks and praise, Father. It's not about my righteousness. I am, Father. I'm just one beggar telling another beggar where to find the bread of life. And, Father, thank you for that bread of life that makes us alive.

Ask, Father, you know how hard it is to be a person of truth, to be a person of goodness, to be a person of love, to be a person of justice, to be a person of mercy. You know, Father, how selfish we can be and flatter ourselves when we give in to the lie or we give in to hatred or indifference or injustice.

And, Father, you know how hard it is. And we thank and praise you that it's not you looking at how well we do, but that you want us to live out of the freedom and the fullness that Christ has won for us to be shaped by the gospel so that we can, day by day, increase in being a person of the truth and a person of love and a person of goodness and a person of justice and a person of mercy, a person of compassion.

[43 : 59] So, Father, grip us with the gospel that we might begin out of the strength of the gospel to live for your glory, for our good and for the good of this city and the world.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.