

Jesus & Ambition

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself? The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer for a moment. Father, I ask that you would gently but powerfully pour out the Holy Spirit upon us. Father, we are in your presence, and we are in your presence as you bestow grace to your children. And we ask, Father, that the Holy Spirit would help us to be in your presence, to receive grace from you, and to respond in a worthy manner. Whether that be repentance or gratitude or greater hope or greater confidence in the gospel. Father, you know the deep needs of our hearts. But we ask, Father, that the Holy Spirit would gently but wonderfully bring us into your presence, make us receptive to receive grace from your hand, and to respond in a way which is worthy. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

So just the other day, I had the great privilege of being invited to speak on Parliament Hill, to the Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship. And so I think I got invited on Tuesday or Wednesday or something like that, and I went at Friday at lunchtime. And so the deal is, when I speak there, that I don't sort of do a special talk just for them. I give them my early thoughts about the text I'm going to preach on on Sunday. And so I sat down with them. I said a couple of things. But one of the things I said is, unfortunately for you folks today, the scripture text has nothing to do with your life and with your experience, because it has to do with ambition. And we all know, of course, that in Parliament Hill, there's no ambition whatsoever. None of the staff workers, none of the MPs have any ambition at all. So I said, it's going to be impossible for you to relate to the text.

Now, you know, I've qualified it, of course, is anybody who knows anything knows that ambition's a problem. It can be a problem in families or an issue in families, definitely in the church.

[3 : 15] Everybody and their dog wants to be called a canon, just about in Anglicanism. I'm sure in Roman Catholicism, it's Monseigneur or Bishop or something or other. So it's an issue. And so Jesus has a lot to say about this, actually, some very, very wise and perceptive things.

Unfortunately, his words have often been misinterpreted in a way that is profoundly demoralizing for people who are low down in the social economic scale or low in the educational hierarchy. And so unfortunately, it's often been heard in a demoralizing way and in a way, in a sense, which validates or allows the powerful to just... Anyway, you get the idea. So let's look and see what he has to say. And in your Bibles, if you're using these, it's on page 64. And it's Mark. We're going to begin just a bit before the part that I read in the service. It's Mark chapter 10, verse 32. Mark 10, 32. It's on page 64.

And in terms of the flow of the gospel, the story, what's happened is at the end of chapter 8, Jesus, for the first time, very clearly predicted he was going to die. He was going to be betrayed.

He was going to die. He was going to rise from the dead. And if you're familiar with the story, Peter rebuked him. So that's never going to happen to you, Jesus. And Jesus rebukes Peter and says, you don't understand the things of God. And so if you're reading the story, everything from the end

of Mark 8 on is Jesus on his way to Jerusalem to die. He doesn't take the direct route. He takes a bit of a circuitous route, like a bit of a sideways type of route. But everything in the gospel text is preparing us for this, that he's going to go to Jerusalem to die. And he has several other times he predicts his crucifixion. And this, what we're going to read just now, is one of them. Here's how it goes. And they were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him. Now just pause there for a second. When it says they were on the road going up to Jerusalem, it's probably a fairly big crowd. It's not just the twelve. That's why out of the big crowd, he takes twelve of them aside at a particular moment. And so there's this big crowd, and Jesus is now taking the lead. They're walking to Jerusalem, and there's this big crowd walking behind. And it says that some of them, what does it say again? It says, and somewhere, they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And probably the best way, especially when you think of what Peter had to say, when you look at the same prediction in chapter nine, when you see what James and John are going to say in a moment, probably what is going to happen. So I've never served in the armed forces, and so I've never been to war. I know that there are some here who've served in the armed forces. I don't know if you saw any action, but many of us probably know people who have. You can imagine it's a little bit like, so these guys think, these guys think they're going to Jerusalem for the war. The Messiah is going to finally be revealed. He's going to deal with all the corruption that exists around the temple. He's going to defeat the Romans. He's going to restore the kingdom of David, and it's going to expand to the entire world. So they, in a sense, you can just well imagine that they're walking along, they're thinking they're going to war. And, you know, if you think about it a little bit, it's as if, I'm just imagining, but I hope it's sort of correct.

You know, troops, a couple of days before D-Day, or whenever they heard D-Day was going to happen, and they're there, they're amazed. They're getting on the ships. The day's come. It's amazing. It's come. The war's about to happen. But at the same time, they're also a bit afraid, maybe a lot afraid. Will they act with courage? Will they die? Will they be terribly wounded?

[7 : 21] What's going to happen? So there's this amazing, this mixture of amazement that it's coming. It's about to happen. And fear. So following Jesus, thinking there's going to be a very big battle, and that, and Jesus is going to win. But as you see at the end of verse 32, he says, he says to the 12, he says just to them, something's about to happen to him. And as you see, it's not at all what the 12 and everybody else expects. Look at what he says to them, verse 33.

See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes. And they, that's the chief priests and the scribes, they will condemn him, Son of Man, that's me, to death, and deliver him over to the pagans. And they will mock him, spit on him, flog him, kill him. And after three days, he will rise.

Now, just a couple of things about this text, which is very, very significant. In the original language, if you look again at verse 33, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests. Well, who's going to deliver Jesus to the chief priests? God the Father. God the Father is delivering God the Son, Jesus, into the hands of the chief priests and the scribes. And the chief priests and the scribes will use all of their freedom to condemn him to death and deliver him over to the pagans. And the pagans will use all of their free will to mock him and spit him on him and flog him and kill him. Now, just a couple of things about this. It's actually, just a pause, it's actually really a significant thing to meditate upon. One of the things which Jesus is saying here is that, you know how little kids sneak? Not just little kids, teenagers, all sorts of people sneak. You know, they might know what their parents want them to do, but they sneak to try to do something else. So what Jesus is making clear here is that the Father and the Son, and then if you think about the gospel as a whole, if you think about how in Mark, I think it's Mark chapter 1, you know, the Jesus is revealed and God, the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus as a dove and the Father says, this is my Son. What you're seeing here is it's not as if God the Father really wants to send you folks to hell, but Jesus is going to sneak and do something against the Father's will to save you. It's not that at all. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are completely and utterly united in their desire to provide a way for human beings to be made right with the triune God. They're both in complete and utter harmony with this, and that's one of the things which is being communicated here by Jesus. And the second thing, of course, is this is going to be very important. As you're going to see in a moment, it's that the disciples don't get it. Like time after time after time after time,

they don't get it. But these predictions of Jesus, that he is going to go to Jerusalem, he's going to be betrayed like this, he's going to be handed over, he's going to be given then from the Jewish leaders to the Romans, and they're going to have him killed.

[11 : 00] And Jesus predicts these facts, and that's part of what vindicates him when they all happen. The fact is, the fact that these things actually take place, he actually dies in this manner, and he actually rises from the dead, is part of what vindicates who Jesus is, what he says, and what he does. And it vindicates his interpretation of what's about to happen.

You see, you think about it for a second. Like there's a whole pile of scholars, a whole pile of scholars, like probably just about everybody at the faculty of religion at University of Ottawa or Carleton would all just say, well, of course we know Jesus didn't predict this, because predictions are impossible. We all know that this was written way, way after the fact, they just sort of created these predictions, you know, after all the things that happened to make it look like he predicted. Well, I mean, they say that. They don't have any evidence for it, by the way.

Like they have zero evidence. In fact, the actual evidence is all against them. I didn't mention this a couple of weeks ago, but one of the very earliest New Testament, not New Testament, one of the earliest letters that was written, there's a letter written, I think it was by, I'm going to get the, this was a couple of weeks ago, it was in my earlier sermon, I didn't write it here, I can't remember the name, but there's a letter from the 90s, that's the zero 90s, quoting Mark, quoting the Gospel of Mark, which they have, a letter by one Christian to others, quoting Mark. But, but here, you know, here's the, here's the big thing.

You know, all the, all these things about how it was just a, you know, it was just, because we know that, but basically because we know that predictions don't happen. And so therefore, you know, these things were just added, all written later.

But there's all sorts of problems with that, and, and, and, and one of them is that if they were doing that, they wouldn't have made all of the witnesses to Jesus' resurrection look so foolish and so bad.

[13 : 15] They would have added their own little thing, of course, that we believed Jesus when he said these things, and that's why we proclaim it now. And, and, and the, and because this was written while eyewitnesses were still alive, the eyewitnesses would have been able to call them on it.

They would have been able to say, no, no, no, no, Peter, James, John, you guys, you guys kept getting it wrong. You can't go ahead and write all this stuff. And in fact, that's just in, in general, the whole thing is.

I mean, there's people, nobody could say that these things didn't happen. Nobody, nobody, none of the eyewitnesses could say that these things happened. And, and, and nothing other than the truth of these things explains the profound growth of the Christian faith and the very heart of the Christian faith was this proclamation of a fact and a truth.

Like the part that I just read a bit earlier, and we're going to read again in a moment. It's one of the things which is really interesting when James and John ask, you know, that they, they make their question. And, you know, historically, the very first of the 12 to die, well, of course, Judas dies first as a, as a betrayer, but the very first one to die as a martyr because he claimed that Jesus actually lived and died and rose again was James.

And the last of the 11 to die, all the while proclaiming this fact, was John. Sort of interesting. It's as if, it's as if Mark was just, you know, right in his story, the true story of Jesus, he thought, and he would have, he wouldn't have known, by the way, that John would be the last, that just the Holy Spirit.

[14 : 56] But he would have maybe known already that James was dead when he wrote that. Anyway, what happens? Jesus is very, very clear.

It's simple to understand. Do the, do the disciples get it? Do they understand it? Well, let's look. Verse 35. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus and said to him, teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.

And Jesus said to them, what do you want me to do for you? And they said to him, grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.

And Jesus said to them, verse 38, you do not know what you are asking. And I just sort of pause there for a second. If you wanted to do a talk on prayer, this would be a very good text to talk about. Jesus looks right at them and says, and he doesn't despise them or hate them. He just says, you don't know what you're asking. Like, you just wait a week, week and a half.

[16:07] You're going to be so glad I said no to your request. Like, what they're really asking is, yeah, yeah, we don't want Jesus to die between two thieves.

We want to be on either side of Jesus on the cross when he's dying. We want to be crucified. That's what they, that's what they're going to get if Jesus said, sure, come along. And they, you see, one of the things, I was joking at Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship, one of the things that will probably happen in heaven, I mean, I don't know.

This is just, like, make believe. But one of the things that will probably happen in heaven is there's going to be, Jesus says no movie nights that are comedies in heaven.

And so one night it will be the George, the prayers of George that Jesus said no to. And they'll just have a big screen, and all of heaven will be around, and the angels and the archangels, and they'll just flash up on the screen.

Here's George praying. Here's what would have happened. Here's how disappointed he didn't get a yes. And everybody will laugh, right? Everybody will laugh.

[17:12] You know, my wife's here today, but, you know, I had a, in grade 12, I had a girlfriend for 10 months, the first and only girlfriend I had in high school. And she dumped me after 10 months.

And I didn't take it well. And for two years at least, I prayed almost every day that God would change her heart. And I am so glad Jesus said no to every single one of those prayer requests. Because it's so much better that I'm married to Louise. But that's just a small one. You know, all of us can probably even now in our experience think of some of the really stupid things we prayed for and are now glad that Jesus said no.

And just so, you know, the next night it'll be Harold's night, you know, the dumb things he prayed for. And then the next night it'll be Victor's and then Louise's and Emma's and on and on. Anyway, there's a whole sermon you could be doing there where Jesus says, you don't know what you're asking for.

Really? You don't. Anyway, so let's see how they respond and what he says more. Look back at verse 38. Jesus said to them, you don't know what you're asking. And then he says, are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?

[18:20] Now just sort of pause here for a second. This is one of these momentous statements. And it's really easy to see how things like this would stick in the disciples' minds and they'd want to write it down.

What Jesus is doing here is he's giving a bit of a hint about the nature of his death. And he's also, in a sense, even in a bit of a way, playing with two things that are going to become very, very important for centuries later in the Christian church.

The image of the cup, that's going to come again in Mark chapter 14. In fact, if you are going to follow up with this as a text on prayer, in Mark 14, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked the Father if the cup could be taken from him.

And God the Father says no. Like for all of us who get all upset when we ask for something in prayer and God says no, like get over yourselves. George, get over myself.

Jesus asked for something and the Father said no. But the cup is this, you know, fantasy movies have helped us to get a bit of an image.

[19:34] If you've watched Witcher or any of those things on Netflix, they've given us a bit of a way to understand this type of image. I've shared it before. I'll share it again. But if you were to just imagine that all of a sudden, you know, some creature or some, you know, elf or some, you know, whatever, warlock was able to come into the room and all of a sudden I'd be frozen and all of the evil that's part of George, all of the evil that I've ever done.

And it's sort of taken out of me and I get all twisted and my joints get all out of whack. And it turns into this foul black thing and then it sort of coalesces and comes into a cup.

But then it does it for, it does it for Scott and Harold and on and on and on. And Jonathan, it's all just going on and all of this one cup. And of course, you know, we sort of crumple and all of that.

And then the evil being drinks it. And of course, in fantasy movies like that, they drink it to become more evil. But there's something similar to that which is happening.

Only there's a very important twist if you read all of the Old Testament texts which underlie this image is that, of course, in things like The Witcher, it's an evil person trying to become stronger with evil.

[20 : 50] But in the real world, in the real world, there's a God, the triune God that does exist. And that evil that comes out also comes out, it's going to be judged.

And so in a sense, the images of all the human beings who've ever lived, all of the evil from them goes into a cup. And in that cup is not just the evil, but also the judgment of God on your evil and mine.

And when you see Jesus dying on the cross, what you see is him drinking that cup that has the evil from within you and the judgment which is proper to it being consumed by Jesus.

And that is why he says two things. First, he says, I mean, he says more than two things, but that is why he says, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And it's also why he says, it is finished. As he dies, it is finished. It is accomplished. The cup has been drunk. And baptism is an image of solidarity. It's an image of entering into death and coming out of the waters of death and immersed in death.

[22 : 11] And Jesus uses these images with these fellows as all part of the way which is going to be developed. There's not only capturing all of this Old Testament imagery, things that he's already said in the Gospels and what's going to continue to be in the apostolic teaching and the epistles, they're all sort of encapsulated there in this very, very simple but profound image.

Look at it again in verse 38. Jesus said to them, you do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?

And they said to him, we're able. They don't get the imagery, right? They're still just thinking we're going to Jerusalem. I mean, the good grief. You know, Jesus could calm a storm.

Jesus could feed 5,000 men and all the women and children with just a couple of loaves and fishes. Jesus could heal paralyzed people. And they also know of the other miracles not recorded by Mark but recorded by other people.

Jesus could make a guy born blind to see. Like, Jesus raised the dead to life. Like, how on earth could he possibly lose?

[23 : 22] Like, how could he possibly lose in a battle? Like, he can't lose. This is like, you know, a couple of us might get wounded and maybe we won't be as courageous. Yeah, but he can't lose. So they still think.

So they think, yeah, yeah, we can do all this stuff. You know, yeah, whatever that means, Jesus.

Yeah, whatever. We are able. Verse 39. And Jesus said to them, the cup that I drink you will drink. And with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized. But to sit at my right hand or at my left hand is not mine to grant. But it is for those for whom it has been prepared.

Now just sort of pause here for a second. Obviously, the two of them don't die on the cross beside Jesus. And obviously, they're not drinking the exact same cup that Jesus has to drink.

But you see, here's part of the wonder of the gospel. It's because Jesus drank the cup of the sins of all humanity is that if part of the image of my death, because, you know, if you go back to the book of Genesis, death is a judgment by God on sin.

[24 : 35] Sin came first, and death is both a judgment of God and a mercy of God. But that's a whole other sermon.

But when I drink the cup of my death, it will be a very different cup, because Christ has drunk the cup first. And when I, in a sense, am immersed in the waters of death, it will be a very different immersion in the waters of death, because I have a good shepherd, and so do you, a good shepherd who is with me in the valley of the shadow of death.

And I will fear no evil, for he is with me. His rod and his staff, they comfort me. And I will go and experience all there is to experience of death, but not with death's terrors, and not with the evil and the judgment that I deserve, because that, I go with him, who has died my death first.

And I am carried by him, as have been James and John. But verse 41, and when the ten heard it, what had happened, and even what, I mean, James and John said, I have no idea what he's talking about.

He said this stuff about baptisms and cups, and I don't know what it means, but it sort of came out. And when the ten heard it, in verse 41, they began to be indignant at James and John.

[26 : 08] And if you wanted to sort of really capture the original language, indignant should be bolded and italicized, like they were mad at James and John. I mean, basically, probably what was happening is they wanted to weasel their way to those two seats, and James and John got ahead of them.

They also wanted to climb the greasy pole, even if it meant stepping on the other ten, and they didn't appreciate James and John trying to be higher on that greasy pole, stepping on them, because they wanted that position.

And verse 42, And Jesus called them to him and said to them, you know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

And just sort of back up for a second, it sounds a little bit in English as if Jesus is dismissing them. You know, it just looks like they're, you know, Trudeau just looks like he's in power, but really it's all the World Economic Forum, and, you know, or, you know, some international conspiracy. Yeah, it looks like Pierre Polivare is the head, but, you know, he's just a puppet, and it's, you know, whatever. You pick your conspiracy theory. Pick your conspiracy theory. And it, but it, it, it sounds like that a little bit in English, but it, it doesn't, we're getting the wrong sense.

[27 : 28] It's partially our culture poisoning, in a sense, the way we listen. He actually is just saying, in the original language, it's just saying, you know, there are people who are rulers amongst the pagans.

I mean, that actually happens. I mean, that, that's really the, the, the sense of it. You know, it actually happens. There are people who are rulers amongst the pagans. And, and, you know, and you know what they're like.

They lord it over others, and, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Like they, you know, they put people down there. They build themselves up. Verse 43, but it shall not be so among you.

That but is a big but. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

Now, just sort of pause here. I haven't talked about this in a while, but it's just really good to remember that the word for slave there in the original language is doulos. And there's no real equivalent for doulos in English.

[28 : 35] If you think, when you hear doulos, if you think of the terrible things that happened in the American South before the slaves were liberated, that's not what's meant in the Roman world.

If you think of servant, because some English Bibles will translate the word as servant, then as I've shared before, that's not what's meant as well. Most movies, for instance, when they have servants in them, not all of them, but many of them, the servants are the smart and sane ones.

And usually the lords and ladies and their children are all nuts and incompetent. And the servants are always saving the day. But it gives you the wrong impression and a servant can quit. It is the lowest ladder in Roman society.

You can't go any lower than being a doulos. Like, that's the bottom. And so there is, to people here, an impossibility.

It's a little bit like what he just said just before this, where it's just as easy for the rich and successful and powerful ones that we admire on their own human ability to go into heaven as it is to get a camel going through the eye of a needle.

[29 : 48] Like, it's an impossibility. It's a bit of an impossibility here, this idea that somehow or another the Lord should be the slave, the doulos. It doesn't really make any sense.

And it's here, by the way, that things start to go a little bit odd for us. Is Jesus actually teaching here a type of primitive communism where there's no bosses, you know, there's no hierarchy, there's just all of us are completely and utterly equal.

Is he saying here that there should be no hierarchy? Is he saying here that if I be, you know, if a Christian, like if Pierre Polivare, I don't know, if a Christian becomes the prime minister, they shouldn't exercise their power.

Is he saying here that people shouldn't seek promotion? And this is where I was saying that often this text is interpreted in such a way that it's very, very demoralizing.

See, it'd be very easy for me to get up here and try to say, you know, you shouldn't be seeking, you shouldn't have ambition, you shouldn't be seeking promotion. Jesus is saying you should seek the lowest place, you should be a servant. And I might be able to give you very convincing arguments to show you that that's what the Bible's saying and have it stick in your head.

[31 : 08] But you know the thing is, I'm an old guy. I'm never going to be bishop. That's very, very, very profoundly demoralizing for those of you here who are in your 20s who'd love to have a promotion or your 30s.

You'd love to have a promotion. You'd like to do your PhD and you'd like to eventually be a professor. And is the text being interpreted in such a way that you shouldn't have those, you shouldn't even dream for those types of things.

You shouldn't do any work for them. And it might be that we all be very pious and not at it, but it's profoundly demoralizing for people who want to better their lives.

So is Jesus trying to demoralize us from wanting to better our lives? Well, he isn't. But let's look at the next verse and then we'll swing back to it.

Verse 45 goes like this. For, and this word for is very important. This is a purpose statement. It's an explanatory statement.

[32 : 19] It's the root. And it's providing us a way to understand this previous image. And it's in fact, actually, you know, one of the things, one of the things that a lot of modern New Testament scholars do is they try to use something.

Some of you might be familiar with this left word that comes from the left. I don't know if I'm pronouncing it correctly. Problematize things. And it's a very common technique in New Testament scholarship and Old Testament scholarship is they borrow this tool from the left.

And problematize things means that there's no subtlety. There's no nuance. There's no development. What you do is you take everything and you try to make it go in crazy trajectories so that there's nothing left in the text.

And then when they've done all these crazy trajectories, they bring in their BS. Sorry for my political comment. And they don't actually read the text because they problematized everything.

Right? And so what that does is, you see, but for people who don't do that, there's like two very, very, very big purpose texts. If you're just trying to read the text as a text and you're accepting the fact that there's going to be wisdom, there's going to be nuance, there's going to be development, but here you have, there's two very important purpose texts in the Gospel of Mark.

[33 : 37] And older scholars recognize this. The first one is at the very beginning of Mark's Gospel where Jesus says what the whole Gospel's about. The time is fulfilled.

In other words, everything in the Old Testament that's been talking about me is about to come to, is been coming to a conclusion. God is keeping His Word. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God has come.

And what that means is there's going to be a king, that's Jesus, and He's going to create the kingdom. It's not like Charles getting, you know, being made a king of a kingdom that already exists. There is no kingdom. Jesus is going to be the kingdom. The kingdom of God is at hand. And repent, which means turn from your direction and turn towards the king.

And believe, which means to open yourself up and enter in and to trust the Gospel, the good news. The good news. Well, what is the good news? That's the second purpose statement, which is right here.

[34 : 34] From Jesus. For even the Son of Man. Why did Jesus come? He came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

If you're looking for a tattoo, that's a good tattoo. I'm not encouraging tattoos, by the way, but I'm not opposed to them either. It's up to you.

You want to have a tattoo, you know, good for you. But if you don't want to have one, that's good too. But listen to that. For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

A couple of things here. The fact is, there's this profound mystery of what it is that is accomplished on the cross.

And sometimes preachers and academics and theologians will make it look like they can get every little word right down there perfectly expressed. And that's a mistake.

[35 : 36] I think, at the end of the day, the death of Jesus upon the cross is this profound mystery. And in a sense, we will spend all of eternity understanding the mystery in a deeper and deeper level.

There is this profound mystery that God, the Son of God, will die upon the cross, not serving Himself, but serving us. But just because it's a mystery doesn't mean that there aren't any images that can help us to try to understand it.

And the Bible provides a Jesus and the apostolic teaching in the New Testament provides a range of different images. And one of the images which is used right here is this image of ransom, that

Jesus' death upon the cross is a ransom.

And what that means is to become a doulos, to become a slave, sometimes you become a doulos because you're captured in battle. Sometimes you become a doulos because you go into debt and you can't pay the debt, so you become a doulos.

And those are sort of the two principal ways that you become a doulos. You either get captured in battle or you get into debt and you can't get out of debt.

[36 : 55] And you're a doulos until you can be free. And what Jesus is saying here is in the world of Jesus' time, doulos could be freed if the appropriate money was paid.

And if the money was paid, then the doulos could go free. And so the image which is here is that you and I are slaves.

Sounds like the matrix, doesn't it? You and I are slaves. And we can't get out of slavery. And God, the Son of God, pays the price.

He offers himself and pays the price so that you and I, when we trust in him, can go from slavery into freedom. And the freedom is being part of the kingdom of God where the crucified king is your king.

And that's why he is going to Jerusalem to die. The king is going to Jerusalem to die for the subjects, to deliver them from slavery into the freedom of his kingdom.

[38 : 11] Now, moderns can't understand how it is how one person's death could count for me. We are such profound individualists that we've lost any sense of solidarity.

And this makes, I mean, on one level, it's a very beautiful image. But on the other hand, you walk away from it, you say, George, but George, there's no possible way that one person's death could set me free.

So, some of you have heard this image before, but I think it's a beautiful image and I haven't thought of a better one to try to communicate how something like this could work. Imagine it's three years ago, Thanksgiving Day, 2019, Queen Elizabeth II is still alive.

There's maybe a soccer match, I don't know, between two big rivals, Manchester City and Chelsea or Arsenal or something like that.

Wembley Stadium is filled. There's over 100,000 people in there. Just like in all the action movies that come up every couple of years, a group of terrorists have infiltrated the stadium.

[39 : 17] They're able to lock all of the doors and have them completely sealed and they have all sorts of guns and they have rifles and they smuggle in a low-yield nuclear bomb and they put it right in the center of the field and they list their demands and they say that unless their demands are met, they'll detonate the bomb and all in the stadium will die and those nearby will die as well.

And they also say that if you try to do anything at all to try to rescue them will just kill people. And in this, there's no Bruce Willis or The Rock to try to do something heroic and save people.

And just because it can be a small world and the person's, you know, one of you recognizes, you know, one of you, there's a couple of professors here. One of you say, that's a former student and you share it with me.

That's a former student. I still have their mobile number. And I say, could you give me their number? And they say, sure. And I call them up and say, listen, I'm willing. You let them all go and I'll give myself for all of them. Well, they'd probably swear at me and hang up.

Because why on earth would they take me and let 100,000 people go free? But this is Thanksgiving weekend, 2019, and Queen Elizabeth II calls them up and says, I will go and sit on that low-yield nuclear bomb in the center of Wembley Stadium if you let all those go free.

[40 : 44] And if you allow the evacuation of London, I will go and sit on that bomb. And those terrorists wouldn't even think a second they'd take it. Wouldn't they? Queen Elizabeth II's funeral, the president of France, the president of France said she was our queen.

Queen. India would feel like it was in the center of Wembley Stadium. Kenya, Nigeria, Singapore, even the United States of America.

All of the world would be riveted. In a sense, all of the world was right there sitting on that low-yield nuclear bomb.

And when we think of that, we understand there is a way that one person can stand for more than themselves. And if the Queen Elizabeth II, as wonderful a woman as she seems to have been, could have stood for so many, how much more could God, the Son of God, stand for every human being who's ever existed?

And that is why this is profound good news for you and me. The only representative, the true representative for you and me, died in our place, drank our cup.

[42 : 19] What does it mean, that other part? I said, I am going to make a very brief comment about how this all affects ambition. and what it means to say, look at what he says again.

Look back up at verse 42. You know that those who are considered rulers of the pagans lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them, but it shall not be so among you, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Jesus is not here calling for the abolition of kings. He's not calling for the abolition of professors.

He's not calling for the abolition of bishops. He's not calling for the abolition of mothers and fathers. He's not calling for the abolition of police or the armed forces.

He's not calling for the abolition of any of them, but the fact of the matter is, is that when we have any of those positions of authority, we act out of different things, We not only are shaped by the institutions, but we shape the institutions and we act out of certain types of drives.

[43 : 32] Just for instance, in a very small one, it used to be 60 years ago, 70 years ago, that a university would have been one of the freest places to speak possible. Today it's not. I have more freedom to speak than most professors do.

Professors shape the institution, the institution shapes the professors. And as we all know, whether it's professors or bosses, some people act out of narcissism, some people are egotists, some people have been, are unbelievably insecure and cave into everything.

People follow the latest fads, they walk out of particular stories, and in our day and age, increasingly, people in positions of leadership act out of the fact of the matter is, is that, you know, what is it they say? You be you. Only you can be you.

Don't let anybody else tell you how you should be. You know, you gotta be authentic to whoever you are. And if you're in power, you gotta be authentic to whoever you are. And you gotta be you, and you gotta try to not only know who you are, you gotta move towards being you, and you gotta, and people should applaud you for being you.

And that's the governing story, and we act out of egotism, and we act out of weakness, and we act out of all sorts of images, as whether we're a dad, or whether we're a mom, or whether we're a boss, or whether we're the prime minister, or whether we're the head of the army, or the RCMP, or Hockey Canada.

[45 : 00] And Jesus is saying there should be a very, very, very, very different image that governs how you act. Act out of the security of knowing that you've been ransomed by me, out of slavery, into freedom in my kingdom.

And you act out of love. You act out of, you're in that position of authority, whether you're a dad, or you're a mom, or you're the prime minister, or a professor, or owner of a big business.

You're in that position for the benefit and the true good of those who are underneath you. That's why you're in that position. That's why you're in that position.

To seek the true good of them, not just your own glory, not just your own power, not out of your narcissism and, you know, expressive individualism, to use a fancy term for what is described as, you know, only you can be you.

You can be you. That's a fancy academic thing. Those are not to be the stories that govern you.

Those are not to be the things that motivate you. That's not how you're to look at the world in your position. As a citizen of the kingdom of God, you are to seek the true good of those who are under you, as you fulfill your duties and your responsibilities.

[46 : 25] And that's a hard thing. And what Jesus does here is he doesn't give you like five rules to success for seven rules for this or whatever.

He gives you that that image of who he is in the cross is to get deeply inside your imagination and your heart, heart to not only transform and change you, but transform and change how it is you relate to those above you, those beneath you, those around you.

That is to be the story you're to live out of. Please stand. Just as we go into this final prayer, there is, if you have not trusted Jesus, if it's never quite made sense to you why it is that the gospel is actually good news, and now you think he drank that cup of all the poisonous evil in my life and he

drank it for me and he died so that those things that enslaved me, that I would be free from them. And you've never quite got it, but now you sort of have this pressure building up within you that it's finally come to you. There's no better time than now. Ignore whatever I'm going to pray in a moment and just say, Jesus, I really need you to be my savior and Lord, and thank you that you died for me. And just say to him, just say to him, please, thank you for doing this and I give myself to you. All that I am and all that I have, I give myself to you.

[48 : 06] May you be my savior and my Lord. And there's no better time than now to pray that. Father, whether you're here or online, but now let us pray. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you love us, that Jesus loved us, that he died for us.

And Lord, you know that we struggle with narcissism and you know that we struggle with egotism and you know that we struggle with wanting to be authentic and you know all of, and you know that we act out of weakness sometimes and you know that we can act out of insecurity and you know we can act out of just pursuing idols.

And Father, you know all of those things. And Lord, we ask that as your children, that the gospel, that Christ would be more and more and more real to us.

And that we, the script of our lives and how we see our world and how we see ourselves, that that Father is, that more and more that is shaped by what the gospel is.

That you would make the gospel more and more real to our heart at a deeper level, to grant us that deep security that comes from the gospel. And that whether we climb the ladder or whether we get off the ladder altogether, Father, that what will govern us and shape us will be who Jesus is and how he lived and how he died and why he died.

[49 : 33] And that that would be what shapes us. And we thank you, Lord, that you're so patient with us that we can grow into this every day until we see Father Jesus face to face.

Pour out the Holy Spirit upon us. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus and all God's people said, Amen. Father Jesus, Lord.

P verse. light. The Lord. Do you serve the glory of the Son, Son, Son? There you have. Yes, you're so patient.

■■■ you will find a deleted DNA thing that you have created. It's hard to become he will find his blood. You know.

It's time to become.