

Follow Me

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- [0 : 0 0] Father, we come now to study your word. All of us have minds. Some of us have really, really, really great minds. Some of us just may be average minds or even below average.
- But, Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would help us to use our mind and our will and our imagination and our heart to the very best of our ability to attend to your word. And at the same time, Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would humble us so that we know that unless your Holy Spirit draws your word to our hearts, our minds cannot truly grip your word.
- So, Father, pour your Holy Spirit upon us and make your word alive to us at the very center of who we are. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.
- Please be seated. Every one of us know people who suck all of the oxygen out of the room. You know the type of person I mean.
- They have to be the center of attention. They have to have their needs being met. If the conversation starts to focus somewhere else, they get very, very uncomfortable and they do something to try to bring the attention and the conversation back to themselves.
- [1 : 1 4] They just literally suck all of the oxygen out of relationships and out of the room. And I'm not just talking about two-year-olds. I'm talking about people who are vastly older than two. And we all know people like that.
- In fact, some of us might be that person without realizing it. It's one of those things that our few remaining friends or our family just don't have the courage to tell us. But we just, the people who just suck everything, all of the oxygen, all of the energy out of the room.
- It's funny because on one level when we meet people like this, we tend not to like them. Where we like them at first maybe because they're, I don't know, very witty, very charming, seem to have lots of excellent qualities.
- But once we spend some time with them and the fact that there's never any type of reciprocal thing going on, they're just sucking all of the energy, all of the oxygen into themselves, the room is empty, they're just sucking it, we tend not to like them.
- But, you know, it's funny that our culture is a bit confused about this because at the heart of a lot of our cultural advice, at a lot of the heart of our movies, we actually encourage that behavior.
- [2 : 2 5] Without realizing that we both encourage the behavior, yet when we actually meet people who suck all the oxygen out of life, we don't like them. And by that I mean, I wrote a little blog this week and it sort of talks about this a little bit.
- But if you think about it, much in our culture is taken up with what I call the three A's. And that is with this quest for autonomy, a quest for authenticity, and a quest for affirmation.
- And these three things are very, very closely connected. Autonomy is this idea that at the end of the day, it has to be true for me, it has to be right for me. I'm the only one who can know what's true for me.

I'm the only one who can know what's right for me. In a sense, how dare you tell me what's right for me? Like, how dare you do that? Like, if we were at a party in a room and somebody was trying to tell somebody else what's right and what's true, and you just, you know, everybody in the room, even if they weren't pointing their fingers, you'd sense that they're pointing their fingers.

And it's a very, very funny thing. We would say, how dare you point your finger at them while we're pointing our finger at them? But we don't sort of realize that. But it's a very, very common type of advice. Only the individual, only I know what can be true, what is important, what is valuable, what is right, what is wrong for me.

[3 : 42] And I need to be able to, in a sense, to live that and have that acknowledged. And the thing which goes along often with autonomy is this quest for authenticity.

It's a very similar type of thing. It's the idea that I'm the only one who can understand what I need to accomplish, what's going to fulfill me, which is going to give my life meaning.

I'm the only one who knows that. I'm the only one who can figure that out. And how dare you try to impose your vision of happiness, your vision of the good life on me?

When I'm in coffee shops, I hear counseling advice between friends around this all of the time. Like people saying, how on earth can your husband or how on earth can your sister or how on earth can your mother or how on earth can your father be telling you you have to do these things?

Doesn't he know that that's not right for him to be doing those things that you need to make? You need to have time for yourself. You need to make space for yourself. You have to put limits on what he or she is doing.

[4 : 48] And you need to just grasp that only you can. Like it's constant advice. How many movies are based around this idea of you have maybe two friends? And one of them, really, what they would love to do is they don't want to live under their father's rule or their mother's influence or their wife or their husband or their circle or their coach.

You know, these people maybe want them to become a doctor or want them to become an engineer. But in your own heart of hearts, you'd rather be a dancer or a poet or some type of an artist.

And then in the course of the movie, the person doesn't grasp their autonomy and their authenticity and they bow to their father's rules or their coach's rules or expectations and they become that doctor.

And in the movie, or they become that lawyer or whatever, accountant. And in the movie, the person's really good friend. They're not rejoicing with them. They're sad. Why? Because the person wasn't doing what was authentic to them.

And the movie will move and progress to the point that finally the person has the courage to leave law or leave medicine or whatever it is to embrace dance or poetry or art or whatever it is that really is going to make them authentic.

[6 : 04] It's the constant advice and desire of our culture. And often with all of this goes the third A, which can be called acclaim or applause or approval.

So, you know, once again, the same thing. If I, you know, I'm sitting my own, I understand what's right. I understand what's wrong for me. And I understand what I need to do so that I will be the real me that I was meant to be.

The me that's really at the heart of my feelings and my sense of myself. And only I have that proper sense of myself. And I need to pursue it. And you need to approve of it.

Like if you don't, how dare you not give me approval? How dare you not applaud that? How dare you not? And in our culture, everybody would be with the person saying, how dare you not give me that acclaim, that approval, that applause that I deserve because I am pursuing authenticity and I am the captain of my own ship and my own soul and I am doing that.

And you have to give me, must give me the acclaim and applause that I deserve. The affirmation. You see, it's a very, very funny thing.

[7 : 27] That's the, sort of actually, by the way, the three things, the autonomy, authenticity, and acclaim, applause, approval. It's almost like the Trinity in Christian thought.

The three of them are separate, but they're one. And they go in here with each other and all three of them have to be present, really, for a person to really be a well-functioning Canadian.

But the problem is, if you think about it, that a person who really lives that ends up having to be a person who sucks all the oxygen out of the room. Because it's very funny in the type of advice that is found in so much counseling, so much self-help books, that it's found in Hollywood, that's found in academia, that's found just whether it's a Tim Hortons or a Starbucks or some other type of place or not a coffee place at all, McDonald's or Subway or a high-end hipster place.

All of that advice is very similar. But if you follow it, then how is it that, well, how is it that you relate to other people in a good way? If it's, in a sense, I'm the center and it's all about me and your life and your needs and your autonomy and your authenticity and your need for applause, it's very hard for those two things to fit in our culture.

Well, the text that we're going to look at today has some really interesting things to say about this dilemma. And part of the thing which is also very interesting, not this dilemma, just this whole cultural move of autonomy and authenticity and affirmation and the problems with them.

[9 : 05] And the text is easily misread and misunderstood, but it has very powerful wisdom to speak into this. So it would be a great help with me if you could turn in your Bibles to John 15, verse 21.

There are Bibles up there at the front now. The text will be up here as well, but it's really good just to have something in your hand that you can follow along. So John chapter 15, sorry, John chapter 21, beginning at the 15th verse.

And many people are a bit confused by this text, especially if you're reading it as a new Christian or as an outsider. It almost seems as if Jesus is trying to suck the oxygen out of the room.

I could easily imagine lots of people, if they were there, saying to Peter that Jesus is being out of line in what he's asking Peter to do, that Peter needs to grasp his own autonomy, his own authenticity.

And so our culture helps us to not understand this and misread it. So let's look at it. John chapter 21, verse 15. And what's happening here, the book of John is now coming to the end.

[10 : 12] John is a very peculiar type of biography, but it is a biography about Jesus. And what makes it peculiar is that an inordinate, far too much time compared to a modern biography is spent with the last little bit of Jesus's life.

But that's because John understands that the last bit is so unbelievably important. And John has shared how Jesus is condemned by the religious and political and cultural elites, and he's sentenced to an unjust death, how he dies by crucifixion, how his death is guaranteed by Rome, how he's put in a tomb, how then the tomb is found empty with the grave clothes there.

And then John lays out a series of appearances, resurrection appearances, where Jesus appears alive to people. And this is the end part of a third time when he's appeared to all of the disciples.

And just before we start reading this on verse 15, if you have your Bibles, just look up a tiny little bit to, it's not going to be able to be on the screen.

If you just put up a little bit to verse, I can't find it right now. Oh yeah, verse 9. What's just gone on before that is that Jesus is, as I said, he's made a nice breakfast for them of fresh fish and fresh bread.

[11 : 33] He's cooking it over in verse 9, a charcoal fire with fish laid out on it and bread. And now we're going to go to verse 15.

And the charcoal fire is very interesting because there's only one other place in all of the Gospels where a charcoal fire is mentioned. And that's the very night when Peter, when Jesus has been captured, and Peter's going to deny Jesus three times around a charcoal fire.

And many of us know that, you know, we might think that we've gotten over something. We might think that we've forgiven somebody.

Or we might think that we've gotten over feeling embarrassed or ashamed about something. But then all of a sudden we're somewhere and it comes back to us all of a sudden with great power.

Something triggers a memory of what had gone on in the past. And one of the most powerful triggers is smell. And so the very distinctive smell of a charcoal fire, you just have to wonder as Peter gets out of the water and comes to see Jesus, and that charcoal fire is there.

[12 : 45] And the last time Peter maybe was around a charcoal fire was when he was denying Jesus three times. And here he is now, that smell in his nostrils.

Everybody would know about the fact that Peter denied Jesus three times. And now after breakfast, the story continues, verse 15. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

Jesus said to Peter, Verse 17, Jesus says to Peter the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, Do you love me? And Peter said to Jesus, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.

And Jesus said to him, feed my sheep. And just sort of pause there for a second. Now, just before we get into sort of the big thing which is going on here, sometimes pastors will talk about the significance that two different words for love were being used in this text.

[14 : 21] Jesus uses the word agape, and Peter responds with the word philia. And then the final time, Jesus finally switches the words.

And sometimes pastors will go out a long time talking about the significance of that. There's probably no significance in the difference of the language. You know, in the early centuries of the Christian church, there was a lot, most people who, if they read, they read Greek.

And in the first four or five centuries, when people were still basically, were Greek speakers, none of the original people who knew Greek, I mean, Greek was their native tongue, none of the commentators on this text except origin, one person, made a distinction between the two words, not one.

They just saw it as a stylistic difference that didn't have any substantive context. So it's not as if Jesus is saying two times with this one word, and Peter's not giving him the right answer, and then finally, you know, Jesus switches and Peter gives the same answer.

It's nothing like that's going on in the text. It's a very, very simple thing. The English has captured it very well. Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? And Peter says every time, you know that I love you, you know that I love you, you know that I love you.

[15 : 40] And every time, Jesus gives him a particular commission to feed, in a sense, the young and the vulnerable, to pastor people or be a shepherd to people, and then to feed people who are more mature and more developed Christians.

The same, the English has captured it very well. But here's the thing that's going on, which is very, very interesting. If you found out that every time I met with one of my interns, or if every time I met with the council, I began with it saying, do you guys love me?

You'd all think that that was weird. In fact, you'd say, why is George so needy? Like, why is it that he has to ask his interns every time he meets with them, do you guys love me? I hope you love me.

Sounds like it's sort of needy. Or is Jesus actually doing something like what I described, trying to suck all the oxygen up out of the room, that he wants to make sure that Peter's given him all of the love, because he's the center.

He has to be getting all of the attention. That's what's going on here in the text. Is Jesus needy? Is Peter, in fact, not doing the right thing?

[17 : 01] As I said earlier, should Peter have been saying, listen, Jesus, it's so nice to see you, but I have my own autonomy project. I have my own authenticity project, and I need some affirmation and acclaim as well.

I need you to tell me that you love me. I need you to tell me doing really well. Is that what's going on in the text? One of the things which is so interesting about this text is that it brings up at least three problems with autonomy and authenticity and acclimation.

It brings up at least three types of problems. One is it really brings to the fore how if you see somebody wanting to get all of the attention, all the oxygen, that type of advice that we give people just so casually that you have to be autonomous, you have to be authentic, you have to have affirmation, it always ends up creating somebody who is the center of attention, and we don't like it.

We end up seeing them as being needy and not, in a sense, an admirable person, but somebody that we feel almost pity for.

Just like, as I said, if you found out that every time I met with my interns, I asked them if they loved me. If every time I met with counsel, I asked them if they loved me. If I made efforts to always be the center at all times, you would start to not think more of me, but less of me.

[18 : 33] And the second thing which is going on in this text, which is very, very interesting, is that the very word love is used. Because, you see, one of the problems that we have in relationships nowadays is if you have two people...

See, on one hand, what we really want is love. I was having a coffee the other day at a local coffee place, and the way they had organized the tips there, it's a regular feature of that place, is they always have two cups, and you can put the tips in one of the two cups.

It's sort of like a little bit of a game. Like one time it might be dogs, and the other cup says cats. So if you're going to give them a tip, you put in whether you like dogs more than cats or cats more than dogs.

And the other day, the other day I was there, and one of them was Lord of the Rings, the other one was Star Wars. But there was this time I was there getting coffee, and the tip choice was between Captain America and Iron Man.

And so I looked inside to see how the vote was going, and I couldn't believe it, that Captain America had all of the tips, and Iron Man didn't have a single tip put in the jar.

[19 : 46] And I said to the baristas, I said, that's just so surprising that all the tips are going to Captain America, and none of them are going to Iron Man. And one of the two baristas said to me, well, that's no surprise, because Captain America is way better than Iron Man.

Now, I have to confess, just given that Starbucks and baristas and their culture and everything like that, and these particular ones, I would have thought they all were voting for Iron Man, because Iron Man is filled with irony and sort of rebellious against authority and all of these things, all of these sort of very Canadian types of virtues.

And I said to that, well, I would have thought you guys were all like Iron Man people. And one of them instantly said, no, no, like I'm a Captain America person, because I mean, amongst other things, Iron Man is arrogant. And then this barista, she actually put her hands, she said she loves Captain America, she actually put her hands around like this, it's not only, is he like a good guy, but he does things for the love of a girl, for the love of a woman.

And she put her arms on her chest like that when she said it. And it's so funny, because I, you know, from the outside, I wouldn't, this is just me getting confused about things, but, like I can sometimes forget that, you know, beneath all the postures and all the hardness and all the edginess that can go on in the world, the fact of the matter is, is that most of us, what we really desire is deep love relationships with other people.

That's what we desire. It's a common, common human desire. The problem is, if we're getting all of this advice about how we have to have autonomy, that only I know what's going to make me happy, only I know what's right and wrong, and only I know that what's going to fulfill my desires and what's going to, what's going to actually make me be the me that I was really meant to be and I need to pursue it and you need to, and you need to applaud me.

[21 : 46] If I'm saying this and I'm trying to live this, and at the same time I want to be in a love relationship with this other person and she's saying the exact same things and how on earth is marriage going to work?

Like, it's just going to cause constant friction. It's just going to mean that it's constantly short term because both want to have autonomy, both want to have authenticity, both want to have applause, and nothing in that worldview suggests reciprocity or the importance of serving the other person or loving the other person.

So in a very, very interesting way, this text, where the language is the language of love, highlights part of the whole problem with what's going on in our culture and the third way that it really highlights the problem is what's going on with Peter, not what's going on with Jesus, but what's going on with Peter.

You see, this is the hard part. At a very, very, very, very significant, in a very, very significant way, in a very, very significant moment, Peter was a public failure.

Not just a private failure, but a public failure. He denied his friend and master in public. He made claims and boasts that he, everybody else, all the other disciples, they could all fall away, they could all have their problems, they would all be weak, but he would be strong, he would not bend, he would not be broken, he would stay with Jesus and defend Jesus right to the very end, and after he makes all these public promises, he fails completely.

[23 : 34] And it'd be hard not to imagine that it means that he loses face and that he feels guilt and that he feels some shame. But how would you counsel Peter, if you're a good Canadian, how to be his own authentic self within that?

See, that's the whole problem with seeking to be authentic and seeking to be autonomous. It doesn't help us when we go through things in our lives which are just really broken.

It doesn't help us when we go through things that cause us shame. It doesn't help us when we do things that, you know, it doesn't matter what people tell us about, but we actually feel significant guilt about.

And if it's part of who we are is a mixture of shame and guilt and failure and desires and strength and maybe anger at the situation that's caused us guilt or maybe a wish that we could somehow repair it, the fact of the matter is that our inner life is very, very confused and all full of bits and pieces.

And to think that somehow or another out of all of this brokenness and all of the shame and all of the guilt that we can somehow form an identity out of that, well, how does that actually make any sense?

[24 : 59] And how does it actually deal with the real guilt that we feel and the real shame that we feel? And so much of what passes for wisdom in the world doesn't actually deal with the significant shame or guilt that we feel or the broken relationships and the regrets that we feel.

Even lots of the current advice around things like mindfulness and stuff, it's really just a type of a way to give ourselves a pass and to numb the deep feelings that we have.

And I guess what I'm just trying to say is if you're just thinking of Peter there, Peter is a mass of emotions. He's really happy that Jesus is alive. He's excited. He's pumped.

At the same time, he feels shame. He feels guilt. He feels uncomfortable. And almost all of the advice that the Canadian culture goes implies that somehow or another human beings are just this simple, singular thing that we can build an identity on and don't come to grips with the deep complexity and brokenness and strength that makes up real human beings.

And so the advice of autonomy and authenticity is inherently unstable because it doesn't deal with what's really going on in a person.

[26 : 33] So if you could put up the first point. Jesus does not suck all of the oxygen out of your life. He is pure oxygen and eternal life so that you can live whole and free.

Jesus does not suck all of the oxygen out of your life. In fact, he is pure oxygen and eternal life so that you can live whole and free.

You see, that's what's going on here in this particular text. This is happening after Jesus has died on the cross. And what that means, and he's risen from the dead, and at the very, very center of the gospel, time and time and time and time again is this simple idea that God in the person of his son has given his life for yours.

The way we human beings keep being pulled to try to live is to try to be self-centered and be selfish. That in a sense, it's my, you know, you have to sacrifice your life for me.

You have to sacrifice your life for me. And in a sense, lots of Canadian advice is all centered around that. You need to give me the applause. You need to give me the approval. You need to give me the acclaim.

[27 : 53] You need to give your life for mine. What people often want nowadays in marriage is they want to find a soul friend. And what they often really mean by a soul friend is really what they mean as a person who as we change and go through the different stages and phases of our life that you will always give me your approval, your acclaim, your, you will always give that to me.

But that's not a recipe for a marriage or a relationship or a friendship that's going to be enduring or last, which is really what we want. And what we see in the person of Jesus is that God, the light that made all things came and took on flesh and he gave, in a sense, his lightness to take upon himself our darkness.

The life that has created all things takes on flesh and he takes upon himself our death and illness and gives us his life.

The love that has created all things comes and takes on flesh and he takes upon himself our hatred and indifference and gives us, in a sense, a way to be connected to love.

Jesus describes himself as the bread of life. He describes himself as the light of the world. He describes himself as the one by whom, when you have faith, springs of living water will well up from within you when you drink of him and partake of him when you are connected to him.

[29 : 40] He is the source of life and light and love and to be connected to him is not our love for him, our desire and affection and moving towards him is never going to suck all the oxygen out of my life.

It will actually begin to give me oxygen that I might be whole and I might be free. And if you could put up the second point, Jesus is also dealing here with another very, very common problem which is that we cut off people who hurt us and we never want to see them again.

Or if we begin to have a friend that seems to be very, very filled with shame and very, very filled with need, often what we do is we want to shoot them, we want to just have nothing to do with them, we cut them off.

And so Peter has publicly fallen and he has this shame and the guilt that he doesn't entirely know what to do with.

And Jesus walks right towards it. Jesus always walks towards your sin and your shame to save and restore you. Jesus always walks towards your sin and your shame to save and restore you.

[31 : 05] I mean, that's what the whole gospel is all about. It's all about God with us. That God, the Son of God sets aside his glory and divine splendor and he becomes flesh. God comes and is with us in the midst of our sin, in the midst of our shame, in the midst of our death, in the midst of our illness, in the midst of our hatred, in the midst of our indifference, in the midst of our strengths, in the midst of our glories, in the midst of all of the things, all of the complicated mess that makes human beings, Jesus comes and lives among us.

And then that path continues because when Jesus dies on the cross, if you might remember in the story, it's very clear just before Jesus is captured by a mere mention of who he is, all of the soldiers fall down and it helps us to remember that when Jesus is on the cross, what is holding him on the cross is not the nails, is not the threat of soldiers, is not the condemnation, but it's love that holds him on the cross.

And as he dies upon the cross, he is taking into himself our darkness, our death, and our hatred. He takes that all upon himself.

He walks towards our sin and shame not only to live amongst us but to also bear it. And then by bearing it, he defeats it for us.

But once we are his, like to be a Christian is to understand that every single thing that every single thing that I have ever done that is wrong, all that which causes me shame, all of that was laid upon him.

[32 : 42] And he died for me. He died in my place. and his life and love, his light and love and life is given to me.

He takes my darkness, my death, my hatred and indifference. He takes that and he gives me life and love and light.

Amen. And all that would be against me is borne by him and all that I need to stand in God's presence is given to me.

And so when Jesus is talking to Peter, Jesus isn't saying, by the way, what you did doesn't matter. It matters. But what he's doing is he's giving Peter an opportunity to be restored because Jesus has already paid for Peter's failure.

He's already dealt with it. But you know what it's like. It's hard to be really gripped by the gospel and understand that my sin and my shame has been dealt with by Jesus. And so even though when I put my faith and trust in Jesus, I am his forever because it's his righteousness and his sin bearing that makes me right with God.

[34 : 10] But he wants me to start to become more like him in my daily life. And so Jesus will always walk towards your sin and he always will walk towards your shame.

That's what discipleship is. He'll always walk towards it because he already knows about it and he's paid for it and he walks towards it and he walks towards it so you can begin to be gripped by the gospel and understand that the price has already been paid.

And you can be gripped by the gospel to understand that all Jesus wants to do is always to restore you, to restore you, to restore you. He doesn't shoot the wounded.

He saves and restores. And that's what Jesus is doing here with Peter for every one of his denials. Every one of his denials. Jesus gives him a commission.

Now if this was just where the gospel ended it would be really, really good. But Peter, John wants to deal with a couple of final things that Jesus does which really matter because he talks about the significance of dark times in our life and of death.

[35 : 25] And so if we just would continue reading on, if you could put the text back up on the screen, let's continue reading at verse 18. Peter is now, I mean Jesus is still speaking to Peter and he says, truly, truly I say to you when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted.

But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go. This Jesus said to show by what kind of death Peter was to glorify God.

And after saying this, he said to Peter, follow me. And just sort of pause before I read the next little bit. I, when I read the commentaries and I talk about the original language, at the level of the original language, it's obvious to all of the people who know the original language that Jesus is referring to Peter being crucified, that that's how Peter's going to die.

The English can't capture it. I'm just telling you what smarter, wiser people who know Greek know. And so Jesus has revealed to Peter that how he's going to die will be by crucifixion.

he will be captured by the Roman authorities and he will be condemned and he will die a death of crucifixion. It's a very hard thing that Jesus shares with Peter.

[36 : 47] And let's just see what happens after this. So Peter, verse 20, Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, Lord, who is it that's going to betray you?

When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, Lord, what about this man? It's very natural, right? I can well imagine if I was walking along with Matt and Jesus showed up and said, by the way, George, I want you to know that you're going to die a terrible, painful, horrible death.

It would be very natural for me to say, what about Matt? And that's what Peter does. He says, what about John? And Jesus said to him, verse 22, if it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?

You follow me. So the saying spread abroad among the brothers and sisters that this disciple was not to die, yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die.

But if it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? basically what Jesus says is I will sometimes reveal things to you about what's going to be happening in your life.

[38 : 09] And the main thing is that even if I reveal them to you, you follow me. I'm not going to reveal to you necessarily things that are going on in other people's life. I'm speaking to you, you follow me. You follow me.

And he doesn't satisfy our curiosity necessarily about what happens to others. The other thing that's interesting here is that twice Jesus says very clearly that he's going to come a second time which is an important doctrine for us as Christians to understand.

And then Peter, John wraps it up, verse 24, this is the disciple who's bearing witness about these things and who has written these things and we know that his testimony is true. So John is saying, listen, this is an eyewitness biography.

I've given you names of lots of other people who are also eyewitnesses. You can check it out with him and I want you to know everything I say is true. Verse 25, now there are also many other things that Jesus did where every one of them to be written, I suppose, that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

If you could put up the third point, that would be very helpful. Just to wrap it up, a Christian is an ordinary person who trusts Jesus as their Savior and follows him as their Lord. As John's Gospel comes to an end, it's very, very interesting.

[39 : 19] If you go back and read John's Gospel again, you'll see the very, very first words Jesus says. The very first words that Jesus is recorded as saying is a question. What are you seeking?

See, every human being is seeking something all the time, seeking meaning, seeking love, seeking food, seeking prosperity, seeking fame, seeking success, and Jesus, the very first words of Jesus are, what are you seeking?

And the people give the answer and he says, come and see, come and see. And that's what John's done with the whole book. He begins by saying to each one of you, you're coming to Jesus, the first thing you have to ask yourself as you're trying to understand Jesus is, what are you seeking?

Like, know yourself. And then Jesus says, well, come and see, and that's how John organizes the Gospel, around the miracles, around the I am statements, about the trial, about the death, about the empty tomb, about the resurrection, and then the final words are a very, very similar thing.

If the first thing is, listen, figure out what you're seeking, but come and see, from me. And then the very final words of Jesus are, follow me, follow me.

[40 : 30] And a Christian is an ordinary person who wants to follow Jesus, because he trusts him as his Savior and wants to follow him as Lord. You can't have him as your Savior without having him as your Lord, and it makes no sense to have him as your Lord if he isn't your Savior, but that's what a Christian is.

Next point, please. When you follow Jesus, even your suffering and death can bring glory to God. When you follow Jesus, even your suffering and death can bring glory to God.

This would be a whole sermon in and of itself. In the eyes of the world, suffering and death can bring nobody glory and nobody any type of significance.

And in a world where there are suicide bombers, the whole idea of death glorifying God can be very, very, very frightening. But, you know, Muhammad died as a result of poisoning of one of the family members of his hundreds and thousands of victims.

And Jesus dies on the cross because he loves you. God's and Jesus is not pardoning suicide bombers. It's a completely and radically opposite different religion.

[42 : 00] Jesus is saying that even in your suffering and death, there is a way to suffer and die when you are following Jesus that can bring God glory.

God's and if you could put up the final point, Jesus is speaking to you this morning as Savior and Lord. He is the Savior and Lord and he is saying to every single one of you, follow me.

Follow me. I can't say follow me. I don't want you to follow me. Only follow me if I'm following Jesus because we need to follow Jesus. And this invitation is given to every person who is here this morning.

That's how the gospel basically ends. Follow me. Every one of us will go through the valley of the shadow of death. And unless Jesus comes before we die, we will all die.

But when we follow Jesus, he will lead us in the valley of the shadow of death. He will lead us right into death and beyond, which is the new heaven and the new earth. We can follow him in success.

[43 : 02] We can follow him in failure. We can follow him when we are ashamed. We can follow him when we have sinned. We can follow him when times are hard and when times are good. We can follow him. He wants to be our savior and he wants to be our Lord.

He wants you and me to follow him. Please stand. Let's just bow our heads in prayer.

Father, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you, Father, that when we come to Jesus, we are coming to a person who knows everything there is to know about us, that he knows every sin, every shame, everything which is really good about us, everything which is whole, everything which is broken.

We thank you that when we come to Jesus, he knew us in the womb, he knew us as babies, that he knows even our future, what will happen in the days and weeks and months or years ahead.

We thank you, Father, that when we come to Jesus, he knows every mask, every thought, everything there is to know about us, he knew and he knows.

[44 : 19] And still he loves us and still he died for us. And still when we put our faith and trust in him, he accepted us in all of who we are with nothing left over.

and we thank you that he died for all that makes us us without anything left over. And that he has paid for all that makes us us with nothing left over.

And that he has covered us with his righteousness in all that is with us with nothing left over. And we ask, Father, that you would grip us with this deep truth of the deep knowledge and love of Jesus for us, that he is water, he is oxygen, he is life, he is love, he is light that makes us whole and free.

And Father, help us to follow Jesus. And all God's people said, Amen.