

An Urgent Call to Repentance

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[0 : 0 0] God, thank you so much for giving us yourself. God, we love you so much. We long to love you and to know you and to walk with you even more intimately and fully and wholly in every part of our lives.

Lord, as we open your word and seek to listen to what you're saying, there's so many competing messages. There's so much noise in our lives.

In my life. Lord, would you silence the noise? Would you remove the distractions, whether it's just the busyness of life, the stresses, or even if there's just spiritual stuff going on?

Would you just silence the distractions and help us to hear your word? Lord, as I speak, would you give us discernment to reject the stuff that is just me?

But would you also give us the humility and the help by your Holy Spirit to embrace all that is true from you? Lord, would you shine through these heavy words we're going to hear today?

[1 : 0 8] As we deal with difficult subjects, would you, in your kindness and your love and your mercy, minister to us, your people. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. have some Bibles you can borrow right over here. I also want to say a really big thank you to Neil Stevens, who has joined our church as a pastor, joined the pastoral team. He served as a senior pastor, I think several different churches over the years, and it's such a gift to all of us to have him here at the church, to help lead the services, as well as to minister to our congregation and congregational care, and in so many different ways. I was just so ministered to him at the eight o'clock, ministered by him. He ministered to me at the eight o'clock service in such a precious way.

I just am so blessed to get to work with you today and in the future. So if you have Bibles, Amos chapter two, we're going to be, the text that was read earlier, it was verses four through 16, and today we're going to be focusing on verses six through 16. Last week we began our summer series through Amos.

George began his message with a video clip of Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous I Have a Dream speech, and I've loved that speech since my parents showed it to me when I was a little boy, and whenever I see that speech, and it's got the famous passage from Amos where Martin Luther King Jr. is so epically in his voice that I can't even imitate, said, let justice roll down from the mountains, and it's just, it's awesome. A lot of us were there last week, and we watched it. From when I was a boy to this day, when I see that, like I'm hearing it, I'm seeing it as if I'm one of the people there, as if I'm part of his movement, as if I would have been alive at that time, I'm sure I would have not forgotten to renew my passport like I did this past month, and I would have been there. I would have crossed the border. I'd be standing with him, standing for freedom. We often think of ourselves as being those champions. Now, in Amos, in the passage that George is dealing with last week, Amos is, he's speaking these words about 800 years before Jesus, around 800 BC, and he's a member of the northern kingdom. At this point, Israel had been divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and

Judah. Judah was where Jerusalem and the temple was, and those two, they were all the people of Israel, the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah, but they were at war with each other. They were enemies at this point. And in the opening words to this book of Amos last week, George, the part he preached on, there are these different pronouncements of judgment to the various countries surrounding Israel and Judah. Some of them were their historic enemies. These were people who'd been a thorn in the side of the people of Israel for centuries. And so if you were the people of Israel and Amos is speaking to you, prophesying the judgment, you'd be so stoked. And that's not even a bad thing. Like, if God all of a sudden sent a prophet into this room and he prophesied that God was going to, God had heard the cries of the victims of ISIS, of the Yazidis and the Christians and the various, like, Muslim minorities there, and that he was going to crush ISIS, I think that a lot of us would be like, God, thank you so much. And that's how the people of Israel were responding to this. They're hearing these enemies, those enemies. And then God also speaks of the contemporary enemies, the ones who they were at war with right then. And you're like, yes, do your thing, smash them. This is justice.

[4 : 43] And then in the passage we looked at today, we're looking at today, God then turns his attention to the kingdom of Judah. And even though a lot of these would be, like, family members of the people in the north, these two Jewish kingdoms are at war with each other. So again, you'd actually be hearing, like, yes, that is awesome. And then Amos, God through Amos, turns his attention to the northern kingdom, the one who Amos is prophesying to. And he says, you are just as evil, you are just as unjust, and judgment is coming on you if you don't turn, if you don't repent. And as I've been pouring over this chapter two, what we're looking at here, what we see in this passage is that the people of Israel had become so complacent, they'd become so confident in their being the people of God, that they couldn't see the wickedness and the perversion and the injustice that they had become complacent to or even active contributors to in their lives. At the time, it was much like today, where the northern kingdom of Israel, these are God's people, and the middle class was doing very well. They were very involved in spiritual activity. It was very comfortable. And they were very confident that they were just blessed because they're God's people, and they were taking it for granted. And now it's just a surprise punch to the face as God has just been, like, pronouncing judgment to all their enemies, and they're so stoked. And God says, you're just as unjust. And so as we go through this today, it's going to be heavy, but we're going to look at four different categories of sins, of transgressions, of these things that are of injustice that God is addressing in the kingdom of Israel, and that I believe he is still speaking to us today. So the first one you see in verse 6, because they sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted. So the first thing that Amos is addressing is this exploitation of the poor.

Quite literally, the buying and the selling of human beings as if they're things. A trampling on the poor. And so I've been actively praying. I know there's so many different avenues that we can explore in this, but what are some ways that we, as the people of God today, might be like the people of Israel then and are doing this? Well, one would be the issue of human trafficking, quite literally, the buying and selling of people. There are more than 27 million victims of human trafficking today.

And what does that victimization look like? Well, in some cases, it's prostitution. In others, it's the development of products that you and I enjoy. It's the development of products that you and I, as I know we're various demographics here, I'd definitely be on the, I'm not, for me to be able to buy good products, they have to be cheap. Let's just say that. So this morning, this morning, as part of my morning routine, I shaved my face. The shaving cream I use, it's the stuff that I can afford at Loblaws. It does the job, I think. Well, that stuff, just like the shaving cream that probably almost anyone else here uses, guy or girl, is most likely made by victims of human trafficking. That's not controversial and not some crazy act. That's just the case. Look it up. You can Google it. I don't even mind if you Google it right now. You can verify the facts, multitasking.

A lot of the bathroom products we use are made by victims of human trafficking, and that's why they're affordable for us to buy. A couple years ago, I turned my attention to trying to make sure I wasn't contributing to this stuff, and I was a student, and I just felt like I couldn't afford this stuff, the free-made stuff, and I went back to buying the products that you most likely are buying. And this is true for some of our clothing items. It's true for some of the coffee we drink.

You and I are living the comfortable life we're living partly on the backs of victims of human trafficking, on the buying and selling of people. Now, how do we make sure that we're not, by our purchases, giving money to people perpetuating human trafficking? That's not something, just as I was preparing this week, I thought maybe I can just toss my shaving cream and grab another one.

[8 : 48] I didn't want to do a token. I didn't want to do tokenism. I want to take the time in my life, and I hope that we as a community can actually talk about this stuff amongst ourselves, even over coffee today. Like, it doesn't just have to be talking about how the Blue Jays are doing and how we're sad that their winning streak descended. Why don't we talk about this stuff? How can we actually go and explore how we cannot be contributing to human trafficking? This is what Amos is calling us to do, that we would not be benefiting and participating in the selling of the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals. But he's not just talking about human trafficking. He's also talking about the exploitation of the poor, marginalizing these people, and all this type of stuff.

And in light of our, we're going to be showing the Martin Luther King Jr. clip a number of times throughout the summer. And in light of that, I think it's important for us to ask the question, are we, is racism a still present issue today? Is it part of our lives? I don't know about your life, but I have been at these pastor meetings, legit, I've been at these pastor meetings where we have people from various ethnicities there, and every single pastor who prays or is invited to do a devotional, our pastors who, like me, are white. And that we have pastors from Nigeria and from the Congo, and we have African Canadians and all sorts of people who aren't invited to speak. Now, there might be a number of variety of reasons for that. Perhaps it's just statistically, it's just a statistical anomaly that it just happened to be all of us who are white. But at least I should be asking the question, at least we should be asking the question, why is it that it was all the white pastors who were the ones who spoke? I know almost nothing. I'm a child. I'm honored to get to preach to you, but why am I invited to speak at these things? And you have these incredible Congolese pastors in the city who are doing incredible work, and they're not being asked to speak at these things. Is it racism? I actually don't know. But this week, as I was pouring over Amos, I began to ask that question. And so I called up a friend of mine, an African Canadian. I called her up. I'm like, hey, I don't even know how to talk about this. Like, I'm not an expert on this. I don't even really know, is the term African Canadian the right term to use? Is that offensive? But I was like, hey, have you experienced racism in this city? And she was telling me stories that she's had to put up with in high school and university and even in job interviews. And so we were chatting about it. I said, hey, I'm going to be preaching on Amos. And how can our church begin to kind of try to address this stuff? And so we talked about it, and we talked about whether or not I should, you know, ask her or someone else, someone from a congregation, maybe as part of this sermon to share like three minutes of their experience of dealing with race issues in Canada. I'm not talking about with Donald Trump.

I'm talking about Canada. And we talked about it. I said, you know what? This is my fear, and this is why I will not ask you to come speak three minutes as part of the sermon. Because I think that if, I don't know about you, if I had her come and share three minutes of this, then I would feel like, hey, Church of the Messiah, we just made space for a marginalized voice. We just, we got to hear, and like, we're a church with a difference. We gave three minutes to hearing about the reality of racism in Ottawa. And then we could just move on with our lives. I don't want tokenism. I don't think God wants tokenism. I actually think he hates it. God wants us to change. God wants his church, his people. You see it right here. Why are you trampling the head of the poor? God wants us to actually change and do something about this. The issues that she has as a black Canadian had to face, it's not just like little, like she's facing legit, legit like marginalization, like legit like abuse, racism in the city. But as you explore, what does it look like in Canada? Like we see it every day in the news these days about America. But what does it look like in Canada? I don't have answers. And that's okay because we as a church, I think if we're going to make a difference together,

I think we should look for the answers. So, but one of the areas we need to look at is the reality of First Nations Canadians. Like one of my sisters was serving on the west coast of Vancouver Island, the First Nations Reserve, and the suicide rate was in the high 80s for teens. Almost all their teens are committing suicide. It's almost 100%. Some friends in the neighborhood I've been living in, they're from a reserve in Canada, in Ontario, where the sexual abuse rate for the kids is almost 100% of them are victims of sexual abuse. Where they don't have access to clean drinking water in Canada.

We're going overseas, we're going to Mexico, and we're doing these cool missions trips where we like paint an orphanage building or something. But in our own country, we have third world conditions. Now, why is that? Is that just as simple as racism? Is it because that maybe there are some in, even in the First Nations governance structures that are actually where there's some corruption?

[13 : 37] There's corruption in governments. I'm sure there is. There's all sorts of explanations. But I think we need to at least be asking the question, is our complacency part of it? Are we, even if it's because of corruption, not because of racism? Even if it's, well, let us as a people, let us as God's people in Canada, get on our knees and pray, God, we're not satisfied with the whole demographic of Canada being so broken and marginalized and truly like such poverty. It should embrace God's heart. We know that.

Let it break our hearts. Let it break our hearts. There's so many different avenues which we can explore for the reality of the poor being crushed in Canada. But the last one I want to mention before we move on, that is an issue, is a reality in every single church in Canada, in all of our communities, in all of our friend groups, and most likely in all of our families, is that of abortion.

You know that 90% of children with Down syndrome are aborted in Canada. When I was a boy in Sunday school, like every Sunday school class, whatever church, my family moved around the country a bunch, went to different churches, and in every class, there'd be a child with Down syndrome.

They were such a delight. They were like, they're always my best friend. It was just so sweet. My little siblings who are in Sunday school right now don't have friends with Down syndrome. Not because there are no babies with Down syndrome in Canada, but because 90% are aborted.

Now, I discovered that not by heading off to the marches at Parma Hill, but I used to volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center in Ottawa. And there I got to see, I got to work with, it was such a privilege to work with some of these women who had abortions for very real, for very rough, for very meaningful reasons. Very, like, it wasn't, it wasn't for very real reasons.

[15 : 41] How, how, how did these women not find locally, in our city, the help they needed, or the truth they needed, or the, the friends they needed, in order to be in a place where they wouldn't feel pressured to make that decision? Were they given the resources? Were they given the truth?

Like, they're, they're being taught in school that, that a pre-born baby is just, just a blob of tissue. Were they being, was anyone, was anyone standing up for the, for the innocent lives, for the innocent blood that was shed? Tell them the truth of the science of the matter, that a pre-born baby is not a human, is not a potential human being, but a human being with great potential. Was anyone telling them that abortion is the decapitation, dismemberment, and disembowelment of a living human being? Was anyone sharing the truth? Was anyone coming alongside of them? Was this Christ's Parenthood Center was? And it was my privilege to get to work with them. But through working with them, I saw, this is, this is not just something happening in some other person's community. It's in our churches, it's in our families, and we need to be there both to embrace those who've been harmed by abortion, who've, who have given up their children to abortion, and also to do all that we can to stand for the 100,000 babies who are aborted every single year. 100,000 babies killed every single year in our country.

And so many of those who are giving their children up to abortion, they're not doing it because of, of, of, like, of, of, of, like, of hatred, or, like, they, not even because they think they're, they're okay with killing. No, they've been sold lies. And we have the truth. We should speak it.

We should speak it out. We should shout it from the rooftops with love, with kindness, and with compassion. But we must not be silent. We mustn't be silent. Proverbs 24, verse 11 says, Rescue those who are being taken away to death. Hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.

If you say, behold, we didn't know this. We didn't know they were stumbling to the slaughter. Does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it? And will he not repay man according to his work? Right here, God is not saying, simply, make sure that you're not leading those innocent lives to the slaughter. He's saying, rescue those who are being led to the slaughter. Hold them back who are being destroyed.

[18 : 01] He's saying, I care about them so much. And, and you are, as my people, to be joining me in what I'm doing, that you are required to go help rescue them. Are you and I rescuing the innocent in Canada? Are we part of that?

A great place to start, if you don't know how to be part of that, is, is, is start by just being an intercessor. Take time every day. When I was, when I was a little kid, before going to that Christ's Prensing Center, my sister and I, we just started praying. We were little kids, just praying every night before our bedtime.

Just praying, God, please, please come alongside those women who are in a tough situation, situation right now. We're thinking of abortion and help them choose to keep their child. And Lord, please remember the silent screams of these babies.

Please come through for them. Bless those organizations. We're just little kids praying. The Bible says many, in Proverbs 28, many men seek the face of the ruler, but from the Lord comes justice. And so as we look to God in prayer, we are, we're doing battle. We're helping rescue. We are.

And then I also recommend, get involved by volunteering or by giving money to those organizations, whether it's regarding the First Nations or whether it's regarding human trafficking or it's about abortion. Let us be those who are rescuing those who are being led to the slaughter, rescuing those who are being trampled on, who rescue those and giving, making space to give voice to those who are being marginalized.

[19 : 21] This isn't like icing on the cake of Christianity. This is what it means to be living life with Jesus, to be a follower and a believer of him.

That's the first category he's talking about, to stand up for justice. And then he turns his attention to this. A man, in verse 7, a man and a father go into the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned.

Like, Amos is speaking to the people of Israel, God's chosen people, saying, you are being sexually immoral and you need to stop. Are we being sexually immoral? That's a question worth asking.

Statistics show us about 90% of guys in Canada, and the same numbers are true outside of the church and inside the church, are looking at pornography. About 30% of women today are looking at pornography.

That's lust. Jesus said lust. It's committing adultery. Yeah, we're being sexually immoral. It gets even more intense than that. A third of girls and one sixth of boys are sexually abused by their 18th birthday.

[20 : 26] Sexual abuse is massively rampant in Canada. It's true outside of the church and it's true within the church. I guarantee you, we have more than three girls here, we have more than six guys here.

Some of us, girls and guys, have been sexually abused, for sure, within our church. And 95% of sexual abusers are either the family or friends or trusted people to that person who was abused.

They're the one who abused it. Which means if in every church we have been sexually abused, then in many churches and many communities, there are those who have or are doing sexual abuse.

We're broken people. And in case for a moment you're just like, oh yeah, that must be true in the other person's... So much of the best academic research today regarding pornography and sexual abuse shows that so much of this mainstream porn is filmed sexual abuse.

88% of mainstream porn contains physical aggression. And 49% contain verbal aggression. Now, physical aggression, sexual physical aggression is a crime.

[21 : 34] And when that stuff is filmed, that's not people acting out crime. That's people committing crime. And so porn, if you're watching porn, you're actually watching the evidence of a crime scene.

If you're watching porn, you are actually, by those websites getting those hits, by them getting more views, the people running that stuff are getting more money. So that means if you're watching porn, you're actually giving money to, that you might not be giving your money to, but you're ensuring that they're getting money from the advertising, these organizations that are filming people being sexually abused and uploading it to the internet.

This should not be the case. What is one of the most practical ways we can fight for justice, that we can fight against sexual abuse in Canada? By becoming free of porn and by helping those around us become free of pornography.

And in case you think, oh, maybe you talk about this, you and George talk about it too much from the front, when it's 90% of guys and 30% of girls, this is something affecting every one of our lives.

And even as it's so addictive and itself is an enslavement, he who the sun sets free is free indeed. And there truly is power to find freedom in the gospel, not in isolation, but in community.

[22 : 48] And so I want to invite you, if you are a girl or a guy struggling with porn, come talk to George, come talk to Shirley, come talk to me, and we would love to help you find freedom. He who the sun sets free is free indeed.

The third thing that God through Amos addresses is that the people are making, the people are drinking wine lying down by the altars, by where they worship God, and they're doing it, they're treating it profanely.

They're treating God with profanity. And when we think of someone speaking profanity, we tend to think of someone like cussing a bunch, or maybe taking God's name in vain. Maybe they're saying like, oh my God, but they're not saying a prayer.

But that's not actually what the word profanity means. The Hebrew word for profanity, which I don't actually know how to pronounce, it means to treat as common. God is saying that he's ready to pour out his judgment upon his own people because they're treating God as if he's just common.

How do you and I do that? Well, let me count the ways. There are so many different ways, and we're not gonna count them. But when you and I are at work, when you and I are at school, we're at work with our family or friends, and there is a moral decision to make, or there's a risk to take, or even when there's that tug in your heart to go share the gospel with someone, or there is something to take a risk, or maybe you just lied to your colleague and all of a sudden you're like, oh, I shouldn't have done that.

[24 : 13] And you have that, and you really know, you gotta apologize for it, or whatever it is that you know that God's not just asking, but really requiring us to do, and inviting us to do, and all of that. And you and I are just like, mm, not gonna do.

Not gonna do. You and I are acting as if God isn't actually God. We're acting as if God isn't actually the one who has all power, and is able to come through for us, and be there for us, and strengthen us, and help us to do the right thing.

And you and I are just treating him as if he's just a bro. We're treating him as if he's common. When you and I instead actually take that step of faith, and step out to evangelize, just like we know he's calling us to do, or where you and I choose to take the step of faith and apologize, or we have lied to someone, or where you and I quit that job in order to do the thing God's calling us to.

When you and I live a life that's treating God as if God really is God, because he is, we're not treating him as profane, as common anymore. We're treating him as if he is who he really is. And so this past week, I've just been asking, God, show me, search me, and show me how am I treating you as if you're just another, eh.

How am I treating you as if you're just common? Help me to live my life as worship, live my life in light of who you really are, in every part of my life. And then when you jump down, and in verse 14 he says, but you made the Nazarites drink wine, the command of the prophets saying, you shall not prophesy.

[25 : 37] The Nazarites are not those from Nazarene, rather the Nazarites were these people who would make this promise of the commitment to God, they'd make a vow to not cut their hair, to not drink wine, a few different things like that.

And we're Anglicans, we drink wine, we don't make promises not to, generally speaking, and I see a lot of us cut our hair, so we're not making that vow. I don't think a lot of us are breaking the Nazarite vow. So we've been asking God, God, show me, show our church, in your kindness, show us, what are vows that we're making, that we're not following through on, that we're breaking?

I think one obvious answer is, is our marriage vows. You know, the divorce right outside, inside the church is something like 30%, one third of us. We're making these vows in the presence of God, and then we're breaking them.

And God is saying, okay, everyone around you is doing this, you are my people, you are not to do this. You're to be faithful. What other vows do we make? Well, our baptism and confirmation, we're saying, God, I am yours.

I don't know about you, I've broken that vow. We're saying, God, I'm going to live for you, I've broken that vow. And God is saying, don't break these vows you've made to me of commitment. Don't break these vows that you've surrendered, like the Nazarites, surrendered your life to me.

[26 : 50] I'm going to live life, not for myself anymore, but for God and in his life. And he's saying, you're breaking your vow. Return to me. In the midst of all this stuff, God, it just kind of interrupts himself in a sense.

And in verse nine, yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars. God's saying, look, in the midst of all this, God kind of interrupts himself and says, I delivered you guys.

I brought you into the land of Israel. I delivered you from your enemies. And they were giants. And in saying this, he's saying like, you, you think you guys delivered that? You think you delivered yourselves? No, I did this for you.

Sorry, I can't help you hear that, but say that without hearing Julian Smith's voice in my head. You know, but I did this for you. I made this for you. And, and he, there's, there's such power in our returning our attention to that and remembering that.

First, there's a sense in which God's saying, these guys were huge. These guys were strong. And these guys treated me with profanity. They, they destroyed the innocent. They trampled the poor.

[27 : 56] Uh, they, they were not being faithful. I drove them out. They were mighty. You guys are not giants. You got, I can do the same to you. But I think it's more than that.

I think God is reminding them, look, look at who, look at who you're walking away from. Look at who you're walking away from. I'm the deliverer. I'm the liberator. I'm the freedom fighter.

I am your champion. And you guys are just settling for something so much less. Why are you settling? I made you for, I made you for justice. I made you for faithfulness.

I made you for purity. And yet, and, and, and look, I am, like, I'm the one that did this for you. And you're just, you're treating me as if I'm common. And God isn't taking, like, as some personal slight, like, oh, why, why don't you love me?

No. God cares about them so deeply. And he wants them to be living this life in the fullness of the justice and the purity and the wholeness that he made them for. Not only that, but God cares so much about the broken and the marginalized and the forgotten.

[28 : 56] He's saying, guys, join me in caring for them. And I believe that God is interrupting himself in the midst of this to share this, saying, look, remember, turn to me.

He's saying, I'm going to pour out judgment on you just like I did the people that I drove out for you. But, remember me, turn to me. We're so like the people of Israel, perhaps in some ways even more broken.

You know, the people of Israel began to copy their neighboring nations in the practice of trying to worship God by offering child sacrifice. They would take their beloved children and put them on a stone, like, idol thing that would have arms like this and they'd light a fire and they would kill their children through burning it.

And growing up, when I came across that, I always thought they were doing that to, like, Moloch and all these, the pagan gods, but they actually started doing it as worship to Yahweh, to God. And in Ezekiel, God says, the thought that you would do that never even entered my mind.

Which, for an omniscient God, a God who knows all things, that's a trippy thought, it never even entered his mind, but he knows all things. It's so horrendous. But listen, these people offered up their children as sacrifice.

[30 : 10] They killed their children because they believed it was the most precious thing they could give God. It's twisted to think that God would want that, but they're like, what? In their brokenness, they're like, this is the most precious thing we can give.

And so they were killing about a quarter of their children. In Canada, and in the church, we're killing a quarter of our babies, not because we think they're the most precious thing we can give God, but because we think they're worthless.

We're not that different, but maybe even more broken. But just as God spoke to the people of Israel, his people, saying, please, turn to me, your freedom fighter, your liberator, the one who delivered you.

So I believe he speaks to the church today. If we will but listen, if we will but silence all the noise and the competing messages and the ones that don't care about that, and listen to his voice, not my voice, but listen to his call to join him in fighting for justice, to truly be like a Martin Luther King Jr.

who's saying, let justice roll down. A man who, he had a great career and good education and this past week is just reading his letters from the Birmingham jail. People who would be willing to go to jail because we're standing with the innocent.

[31 : 25] People who would be willing to shut up in order to let the marginalized voices actually, not tokenism, actually have a voice. How do we do that? I honestly don't know, but I'm hoping that we as a church can actually change, that we as a church can actually figure this stuff together in the coming weeks through prayer and through conversations and through searching out the word and through listening to those who are marginalized.

Generally, when a pastor like this is preached, we hear it, we hear how heavy it is, and then the pastor, the preacher says, but the gospel, but the gospel, and then we're like, yes, thank you God, we're forgiven, and then we can go and have communion and then go and eat some coffee and have some, drink some coffee and have some cookies and go from here feeling good.

But that's a broken, shallow, perverted version of the gospel. It is. It is. Absolutely.

It's like Corinthians 3.18 says, he who knew no sin, he who knew no profanity, he who knew no sexual abuse, sexual abusing, he who knew no trampling on the poor, he who knew no sin became sin, that we might become the righteousness of God, that he who knew no porn became porn, that we might become the righteousness of God, that he who knew no injustice, it became unjust, that we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus died, absolutely, to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Absolutely. But that's just the very beginning of it. In the Old Testament, they would offer, they were supposed to do sacrifices of their cows, their bulls, their lambs, that kind of stuff, as worship to God.

[33 : 16] It's a sign that they belonged to him. They were part of his mission. Then in the New Testament, with Jesus dying, coming back to life, in Romans 12.1, it says that, in view of the mercy of God, in view of the gospel, in view of his forgiveness, offer your body as a living sacrifice.

We so often treat it like in the Old Testament, God required cows and bulls. In the New Testament, he just requires them, sorry. But it's absolutely true that because of the cross, we're freed from that, that never successful, never ending pursuit of trying to earn God's pleasure and trying to get right with him by our own doing and our own achieving.

We're freed from that. Praise him. But then, that doesn't mean that we just then go just chill and just pursue our own comfort. No, in light of him freeing us from our shame and our guilt, in light of him making us alive in him, then we have the freedom not to try to earn his pleasure because he gives us his pleasure and his favor and his blessing.

In view of all of that, he then says, now, not offer, not just your cows, give your very bodies to me as a holy and living sacrifice. Not just the absence of sin, but the fullness of life in him, a life of justice and a life of purity and a life of helping bring healing to the broken heart and helping bring the gospel to those who don't have it to join him in that glorious adventure of the Christian walk, of the walk with Jesus.

And so I think that I would be harming you if I was to preach these words and then say, because of the gospel, let's just go. But rather to say, because of the gospel, through the power that raised Jesus from the dead that is at work within us, we can change.

[34 : 55] Have you sexually abused someone? Well, you can find the courage in Jesus to come and talk with me about it. And we'll go to the police together. Have you been sexually abused and hurt?

It's not that you've done something wrong to someone, but someone's done something wrong to you. There's healing in the blood of Jesus. I'd love to explore that with you. Are you contributing? Am I contributing to human trafficking?

I am, by my very own shaving of my face. Can we come up with creative solutions to how to still be clean shaven but not be perpetuating human trafficking? Absolutely. And this isn't icing on the cake.

This is some of the meat of what it means to be a Christian, that we're following Jesus. Five times in the gospels, Jesus calls us to believe in him, but more than 20 times, he calls us to follow him.

To be a Christian is to follow Jesus. And we don't find the strength to do that by promising ourselves that we'll do better. We don't find the strength to do that by just trying to try harder, but we do that as we open up our hearts afresh to the gospel.

[35 : 51] As we eat the bread and receive the wine, we're both receiving his forgiveness, but also his grace that empowers us to change, to transform. And it happens, the very word communion is in community.

And so usually at the end of the service, in fact, I think every time at the end of the service, George or I or whoever's preaching, Jonathan Camere, will ask everyone to stand. I'm not going to do that today.

Sometimes, though, we do need a physical response, some way to be able to say, God, we're not satisfied with the status quo. I want to change. And so I want to ask us all to stay seated, and I'm going to join you in it.

I want us to just stay seated for a second and just take a moment. Just take a moment in the presence of God and say, God, is there any way at any of these four categories? The oppression of the poor, the marginalization of victims, any of that stuff is the first category.

The second category is, is there a sexual sin in our life, that lust, or perpetuating abuse, or anything like that. The third category being the breaking of our vows.

[36 : 54] And the fourth being the treating of God with profanity as if he's common. If any one of those, or all four, anything like that, is something that there's conviction in your heart, and you want to change, I want to invite you to stand.

To stand to say, God, I'm not just, I'm not satisfied to hear someone else talk about this. I want to change. I want to join you in that, afresh, in that life of, of bringing healing and wholeness and living life in light of the gospel.

I want to invite us in a second to just stand. I want to just be quiet, quietly just pray on your own, in your own words, a prayer of commitment to the Lord, and then I'll pray to close. So, let me be, I'll, yeah, let's stand if that's you.

God, I have sinned against you, and we have sinned against you.

We have broken your call to care for the broken. you've broken your call to live a life of sexual integrity.

[38 : 16] We've broken our vows. We've treated you as if you're not God, but just a common thing. God, we're broken. We're bent out of shape.

We cannot heal ourselves. I honestly don't know how to change some of these things in my life. And Lord, I think that this is true for many of us.

But God, we want to change. We thank you that even now, in the midst of our brokenness, in the midst of the reality of our frailty, and all of the stuff that we've done or not done, that we come to you not as your enemies or your adversaries, not even as abandoned lost children, but Lord, we come to you as your beloved children.

We come to you as your adopted children. We thank you that you love us, that you have cleansed us from all our sin. We thank you that you have embraced us as your own.

We thank you for the gospel. We thank you for the death and resurrection of Jesus that has made it possible for us to be in your presence now and enjoy your goodness. And we thank you that you have called us not just to believe in you but to live life with you.

[39 : 33] And so, Lord, we're asking you to help us to change as individuals, as families, and as a church. God, let us be a church. Make us a church. Make us a church that truly cares and helps rescue and gives voice to the oppressed and the poor and the marginalized.

Make us a people who are walking in sexual integrity and freedom and purity in you. Make us a people who are faithful to our commitments and make us a people who are living life in light of who you are.

You're not common. God, make us so fully alive in you. Lord, we believe that you can do this in our midst and we are committed. Lord, we're standing to say we are committed to you.

So, it's not just that we're going to promise ourselves once again but we're asking you to be faithful to your promise that you will never leave us nor forsake us but instead you'll be with us to the very end of the age and that you who began a good work in us will see it to the end.

To you be all honor and glory and power. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.