

JESUS ON TURNING AWAY FROM THE TRUTH

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that you would lead us and guide us into all truth. Father, lead us and guide us into all truth. Father, you know, some of us this morning, Father, we might be very sleepy.

It's going to be hard to seek all truth, Father, because we're really tired. Some of us may be, Father, very deeply distracted with some worries or some concerns, or just maybe with some excitement about something that will happen very soon.

And it's hard for us, Father, in these states. You know how hard it is for us to seek the truth and to know the truth. So, Father, we ask that you would gently but deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon us.

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us so that we might long and yearn to know the truth. Father, we confess that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, that you are the true and living God, that you are true.

So, Father, pour out your Holy Spirit. Pour out your Holy Spirit. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. Last week, my phone died as I was doing the sermon.

[1 : 1 2] And so when I can't see the time, that either means I'm going to be shorter than usual or way longer. So we'll see if my phone doesn't die. I'm not being blasphemous about this, but I'm going to do something in a few minutes that Jesus can't do.

And I don't mean I'm going to sin, but I'm going to do something in a few minutes that technically Jesus can't do. I'm going to preside at the Lord's Supper. And you might say, well, why couldn't Jesus do that?

And I can tell you, in Anglican polity, an unordained man cannot preside at the Lord's Supper. However, in fact, Jesus couldn't be the rector of this parish.

He was homeschooled. No offense to homeschoolers, but he was homeschooled. He never went to a proper institution to be trained to be a pastor. He doesn't have a university degree.

He didn't go to college. And by Anglican rules, actually, he wouldn't be allowed to be the pastor of this church. Now, granted, hopefully, Bishop Charlie, if I called him up and said, Charlie, I have a bit of a conundrum for you.

[2 : 1 1] Jesus is showing up this morning, and he wants to preach and lead communion, but he's not ordained. What should I do? And I think Bishop Charlie would say, well, if Jesus actually showed up, George, you should let him do those things.

And if other people are really mad at you, I'll take the – I mean, I think he would actually say that. But technically, by Anglican rules, Jesus couldn't, you know, homeschooled, not university educated, et cetera.

He couldn't preside at the Lord's Supper, and he couldn't be the rector of this parish. And in fact, I'm also trying to – we're starting a theological college. Jesus wouldn't be able to teach at the college, by the way, because he doesn't have a PhD.

So, you see, actually, on one hand, the issue that provokes this discussion that ends up going into judgment is actually sort of an interesting question, and it's not a completely irrelevant question.

I mean, the man who invented numbers wouldn't be allowed to be a chartered accountant. I could go on and on. You know, the man who – the person who designed the universe wouldn't be allowed to be an engineer. Like, it's sort of actually an interesting type of question.

[3 : 13] And it's sort of – it's funny, like a lot of conversations, that it begins with something which is sort of curious and ends up going in very surprising places. So, let's look again at what it is that Jesus said.

What is it that the community leaders, the advice leaders, and sort of the spiritual leaders, as they all come together, what is it that they were asking Jesus, and why is it that the conversation went south so badly?

So, if you have your Bibles, turn to Luke 20, verse 1, and we'll look at this text and sort of see, on one hand, they ask a very, very legitimate and valid question of Jesus, but then it starts to go south.

And here's how the text goes. Luke, chapter 20, verse 1. And just – it begins by saying one day. Just so you sort of understand the flow of the book, right, because the book of Luke is a book, and Luke is telling a story, a true story of Jesus.

And Jesus has been predicting since chapter 9 that he's going to Jerusalem to die. Last week in chapter 19, Jesus entered Jerusalem, and now Jesus is in Jerusalem.

[4 : 21] And so we don't know if this is the Monday of that week or the Tuesday or the Wednesday, but what we do know is that as this is going on, within less than a week, within four or five days, maybe even just two or three days, Jesus will have died upon the cross.

And Jesus knows this. Others don't, but Jesus knows as this conversation is going on. And so verse 1, one day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him – and just sort of pause, put your finger there – this is sort of a group of three people who don't necessarily like each other.

And so what – you know what's that saying? The enemy of my enemy is – no, sorry. The enemy of my enemy – yeah, something like that.

Yeah, you all know the quote better than me. I should have written it down, right? I only have sort of notes. And so this is a – what unites these three groups is that they don't like Jesus, and they find him a threat, okay?

Because normally sort of the elders would be like the political – because in older days, the categories that we had to divide people up doesn't – they don't quite work the same way. So think of elders as, in a sense, you know, Mayor Jim Watson – I'm not picking on him – and, you know, the local billionaires and the local power brokers in the community, the backroom boys and girls.

[5 : 43] And think of the – what they call scribes as the people who are both the guys and gals who have PhDs and are lawyers and give advice.

Like, so they write the advice column. And then the chief priests, think of the people who are exemplary people in terms of spiritual and religious matters.

And however you understand spiritual or understand religious, whoever you understand as being sort of the pinnacle of representing whatever it means to be religious or however you understand spiritual, these are the people who are your guides, who help you with the path.

And these three different groups come together and have come to ask Jesus a question. And so verse 2, and the question is, they said to him, tell us by what authority you do these things or who it is that gave you this authority.

And, you know, because Jesus is just – just before this, he's kicked the money changers out of the court of the Gentiles. He's part of the temple. He's been doing all sorts of teaching. So they say, Jesus, we don't think you're a rabbi.

[6 : 53] We understand you come from a questionable background, maybe an illegitimate birth, probably an illegitimate birth. You've just been homeschooled. No offense to homeschoolers, by the way.

I'm just giving how they're sort of thinking about it. You haven't been properly trained. Like, what gives you any authority to do this? And then in verse 3, Jesus answered them, I will ask you a question.

Now tell me, was the baptism of John the Baptist from heaven or from man? Now just so you understand here, Jesus is not blowing smoke at them. Okay, so this isn't like in question period.

I'm not insulting politicians, just making an observation. If there's any MPs here. You know how often in question period, you know, why did the government do this? And then they get up and they – I don't know.

They talk about their laundry list or how much they love their mom or how the Leafs are doing. And then they say, and you guys are doing all this, you know. And you don't really have a conversation. You just have people trying to show how good they are and clever they are and how sort of bad the other guy is.

[7 : 53] And I know I'm really stereotyping, but that's often a little bit how – and not only in politics, that's often how conversations work in bars and homes, in universities, et cetera, as well.

You just try to score points. And Jesus here isn't just trying to score points. You see, the fact of the matter is that John the Baptist was homeschooled. And he also wasn't a rabbi.

And so in a sense, Jesus is saying, okay, well, just before I answer your question, just answer this. Was John the Baptist – like, what about John the Baptist?

Where did his authority come from? Now, just so you know, John the Baptist is known in historical circles outside of the New Testament record.

Jewish and other historians refer to John the Baptist, and the people did think he was a prophet. Okay? So Jesus asks a very sort of appropriate question. In fact, what you see here is that Jesus, once again, goes to the heart.

[8 : 55] Okay? He goes to the heart of the questioners. He's trying to find out what's going on in their heart. Are they asking an honest question, or is something else going on here?

What's going on in their heart? You see, we often just talk about superficial things. Jesus regularly goes at what's actually at the very center of who you are. Jesus wants you to understand who you are at the very center of who you are, and to understand who you are at the center of who you are in the context of the living God.

And that's where he goes with this question. And you might think, well, why is that going to be a question that gets at the heart, the center of who I am in the context of the living God?

Well, you see it by how they react. Verse 4, sorry, verse 5. And they discussed it with one another. Imagine the little, like, not a group hug, but a huddle. And they discussed it with one another, saying, if we say from heaven, hmm, he will say, why did he not believe him?

And that's because John the Baptist told everybody that Jesus was the Messiah. And, like, being the Messiah, like the person who fulfills all the promises of God, that means you actually have some authority because God gave you the authority, right?

[10 : 05] But if we say, verse 6, from human beings, all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.

So they answered that they, so what did they say to Jesus? They answered that they did not know where the authority of John the Baptist came from. Now, right, they're lying.

They're not being honest. They're dissembling and cloaking. And so Jesus says to them, neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. In fact, actually, there's no place in their head to hear Jesus' answer.

There's no place in their head to hear Jesus' answer. Now, here's, let's sort of unpack this and try to understand why this is relevant to us. If you could put up the first point, Andrew, that would be great.

It might be a surprising point, but God gave me a mind to seek, know, love, and live the truth. Our minds were not made to avoid truth and exalt the self.

[11 : 10] Say it again. God gave me a mind to seek the truth, know the truth, love the truth, live the truth. Our minds were not made to avoid truth and instead to exalt the self or serve the self and its projects.

That's sort of, I have to understand, that's why God gave us minds. And in a sense, it tells us that not only is that in God's original intention and creation, that's how he created it, that's why he put a mind in us to do these things.

And it's also very comforting to know that in redemption, when we come to Jesus, that one of the ways that the Holy Spirit will try to convict us of sin will also be to try to get us back to this original creational intention.

That the Holy Spirit and the Bible won't work in our lives to say, oh, okay, now that the Holy Spirit's in my life, you're going to love fantasies, you're going to love delusions, you're going to turn away from the truth, you're going to only believe things, or only twist things in such a way that they serve your...

No, no, that's not what the Holy Spirit will do in your life. That's not what Jesus will do in your life. He'll bring you back, try to start to unbend, straighten you out, and bring you back to what God created you originally to do and to know.

[12 : 27] There's a certain whole realm of epistemology, it's sort of how people know, and it's some type of postmodern thinkers will tend to talk as if all knowledge is actually just masking pursuit of power.

That, in fact, all claims to know are really actually claims manipulating language so that one group or I will have power over other people, and that that's the claim.

And, in fact, of course, it's ultimately one of those... It's like a lot of ideas that sound actually very compelling, but actually it sort of doesn't make any sense. It's because, you know, on one hand, if what they're saying is true, then you shouldn't believe what they say because they're just trying to have power.

But if they actually are saying this because it's true, then they've contradicted themselves, right? So it's like a lot of ideas that... And it actually sort of doesn't really line up.

But they are on to something, is that, in fact, much of what goes on in my head and in your head and most people's head is actually just using our mind for utilitarian purposes, for purposes to satisfy ourselves.

[13 : 45] We get the bad news, we think of a fantasy. We get a bad... You know, we get some bad news that we don't like. We sort of just pretend that it's not there, that we get into an argument and we're more concerned about winning the argument rather than actually saying, wow, that's a really good idea.

I never thought about that. Many, many years ago, there was a woman that myself and another fellow that we'd witnessed to her quite a few times. We had quite a few discussions around things about apologetics.

And then she stopped coming to the fellowship. And about a year later, I go to a church or another Christian event, and she was there. And she told me that she'd actually become a Christian about a year ago, but she didn't want to acknowledge to us that we were right.

So on one hand, that's not good. On the other hand, the good thing was that she became a Christian and went to another church. I mean, it's sort of funny, but, you know, God redeemed it, right? So the fact is that many of our thinking is just like the scribes and the Pharisees.

You see, what they were consumed with was they just wanted to get some information from Jesus, and whatever the information was, they were going to use it to further their own agenda, to serve their self, to exalt themselves.

[14 : 57] That's how their minds worked. And Jesus is teaching us something here very, very wise and profound. It's not the case that all thinking, inevitably, is always about utility for ourselves or serving ourselves.

that we understand, or at least at times we understand, that some things are just true, and sometimes we realize that we're turning away from it.

I'll just show you one thing from my own life. Some of you have heard this story before. A long time ago, I got paid to do sociological research. I've taken all these courses in statistics and methodology a long, long time ago.

Anyway, I had a job to do that, and so part of my job was I was working for a professor, and we were doing this project analyzing the effect of, I think we were looking at 20 different OECD nations, and we were looking at the impact of different government policies on income distribution, and whether the government policies sort of made income distribution worse, or sort of ended up making it a bit more equal, or level.

And as I was doing this, I was the primary one running the numbers in the project, and as I was doing the different tests and the different statistical analysis, I'd get the results, and I'd think to myself, that just doesn't look right.

[16 : 22] That just doesn't look right. And so, you know, I was reasonably clever, and I thought, well, maybe if I control for this or try doing this or use this variable, and then I'd run it, and then I'd think to myself, no, you know what?

The results just don't look right. And then one day, it was as if the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, George, your problem is you want the United States of America to show up the worst.

And they keep showing up in about the middle. And you keep looking for new ways to move the data so the U.S. will be the worst.

I was very left-wing. I disliked, in fact, I hadn't even been aware until that moment, I had not been aware of the fact of how much my hatred, how much of a hatred there was of Americans and Americans as the preeminent capitalist country, that's how I would have put it, in the world at the time, how much that drove me in terms of how I thought.

It was one of those, in fact, if somebody the day before had said, George, you know what your problem is? That you are driven by a hatred of the Americans and a hatred of capitalism. I would have denied it. I would have been insulted that they said that about me.

[17 : 34] I was a fearless seeker of the truth. Not. Not. And it was as if God just spoke to me and said, George, that's what you're doing.

You just have to acknowledge they're above the middle. They're not the worst. Not the best either. Just around the middle at that time. I don't know what it would be like now. So, you see, here's the thing, is that it's, in fact, a common human problem.

And Jesus, in this, is trying to, is pushing us to remember and understand the context to understand this story is what did God desire in creation for our minds?

What are our minds, can our minds possibly do? And what is it that God wants to do when he redeems us? Well, God's intention is that we would seek the truth, know the truth, love the truth, live the truth, that we would know what is real.

Now, some of you might say, hey, George, that's actually sort of a, I hadn't thought of it in those terms. I was thinking of the text in more narrow, confrontational, religious terminology. But you said, I mean, George, isn't, doesn't, don't you think, don't you think, George, that this idea at the end of the text that you read of God being like a big stone that crushes people, like, George, that surely can't be true.

[18 : 57] Like, surely, George, that is something that Christians are doing to try to create fear and it can't possibly, that can't possibly be true. Well, let's look. Let's keep reading verse 9.

And Jesus began to tell the people this parable. A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while.

When the time came, the owner took a servant and sent a servant to the tenants so that the tenants would give the servant, the owner, ultimately, some of the fruit of the vineyard.

But the tenants beat the servant and sent him away empty-handed. So the owner sent another servant. But the tenants also beat that servant and treated him shamefully and sent the servant away empty-handed.

So the owner sent a third servant and this third servant, the tenants, also, they wounded and cast out. And just sort of pause here.

[19 : 59] It's not as obvious in English, but in the original language, there's escalating violence. And in fact, this third case, if you sort of try to unpack the original language, this third case of violence is so severe that it's, he needs a trauma word, that it's traumatizing violence.

It's not only violence that is traumatic to the body, but traumatic to the soul. And if it happened here, we would, you know, the first one might be, you know, you come back and you got a black eye, a couple of black eyes, maybe a bruised rib.

The second guy, maybe they broke their leg. The third case, the third fellow, he's been so badly beat up, the person would be rushed in the ambulance and go right through the waiting line and go right into the trauma unit for the severity of the injuries.

And in the original language, there's escalating violence. Verse 13. Then the owner of the vineyard said, in a sense, said to himself, what shall I do?

I will send my beloved son. Perhaps the tenants will respect him. But when the tenants saw the beloved son, the tenants said to themselves, this is the heir.

[21 : 15] Let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours. And so the tenants threw the beloved son out of the vineyard and killed him. So this is the end of the parable.

So now Jesus turns to the people and says, what then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? And he says, the owner will come and destroy these tenants, those tenants, and give the vineyard to others.

When the people heard this, they said, surely not. You could also translate that as, no way. No way. But Jesus looked directly at them and said, what then is this that is written?

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is very interesting. Just a little bit earlier, maybe the day before when Jesus had come into Jerusalem, the crowd quoted Psalm 118, verse 25, about the king coming in.

And now Jesus quotes to them Psalm 118, verse 22. And he says, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

[22 : 24] Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him. The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on Jesus at that very hour for they perceived that Jesus had told this parable against them, but they feared the people.

So, is this wise, or is it just unjust?

Is it just needlessly bloodthirsty? Well, we need to actually ponder this text a little bit more before we make a hasty decision. And the first thing is this.

If you could put the next point to understand this text, is that God made me to be morally sane. God made me and you to be morally sane.

In fact, I would say that at the end of the day, the Bible is an outline of sanity. The Bible is an outline of intellectual, moral, spiritual sanity.

[23 : 30] And you say, George, that's an odd thing to say about a text like this. Well, here's the thing, and I actually struggled a fair bit to try to figure out how to put this down and I don't know if this has helped.

But, you know, just as I said for the mind, remember how I described that with the mind that God gave me a mind to seek, know, love, and live the truth and our minds were not made to avoid truth and exalt the self? In the same way, God gave me a will to seek the good, know the good, love the good, and live the good.

And not just good because goodness and justice are at one with God. That they're not at all, they never contradict each other. That you could also say that God gave me a mind to seek the just, to know the just, to love the just, and to live by justice.

And since goodness and justice are at one with God, that that's how God made me. He made me to will the good and the just. And he made me not to have my will when it's confronted by what's just or what's confronted by what's good to turn away from it.

And in fact, believe things that only serve myself and the projects of myself. And you see, that's another way to describe actually seeking the good and the just and loving it and living it, knowing it, and not avoiding it.

[24 : 51] What you've just described is moral sanity. Wouldn't you agree? That's what morally sane is. Lots of things.

Now you might say, George, that's really good. Are you saying that only Christians are morally sane and that non-Christians are morally sane? No, I'm not saying that at all. This is a human problem. A human problem. I've shared with you before that one of the things I'm not very good at is telling people off.

I'm not very good at rebuking people. And one of the things I've discovered in life, I've shared with you before, I can share it again, is that when I come, and I finally have it, you know, Louise will tell you, I've had a sleepless night the night before, maybe two sleepless nights.

I'm really bad at this. And so finally, I come to try to say to a person that what they've been doing is wrong. And I can tell within two seconds whether this conversation is going to go well or badly.

Is the person going to have a tender heart where they say, oh, you know, I'm really sorry. Will you forgive me? Or will they come right back and say, how dare you say that?

[25 : 55] You're completely out of line. You're completely wrong. I'm completely blameless. How dare you accuse me? I can tell within two seconds by their body language and the feel whether this is going to go well or whether it's going to go bad.

I mean, how many of us, maybe even earlier on in the service when I'm praying about the fact that some of us are too distracted to know and hear the truth, how many of us are maybe too distracted to know and hear the truth because we're thinking, how dare my mother say that to me on the way in?

How dare my husband say that about me? How dare my wife say that about me? How dare my boss say that about me last Wednesday? Wednesday. It's still beating me up that my boss said that about me.

How dare my brother say that about me or my sister? How dare my friends say that? And we're still anxious and beat up and rebelling against it.

That never happened to anybody here, I'm sure. Nobody ever has had that experience. If you say that, the confession time is for later on in the service is just for you and for me because, of course, we do say that.

[27 : 01] Of course we say that. You see, we might not say that we've ever actually been a tenant where God has sent people, but you see, in a sense, if we understand that how many times has conscience awoken within us to convict us of something that we've done that's wrong?

How many has an external conscience like a wife or a boss said that we've done something wrong? How often has it been that the Bible has said that we're doing something wrong and rather than us having a tender heart to live in a way that is good and just, have we raged against it?

And all we can do usually in raging against it is just it's all inside of us, but sometimes it can be that we get right in that boss's face, we get right in the mom's face, we get right in the dad's face, we get up close and personal and we rage at them.

How many of us in fact maybe in the work world know that there's a person in the cubicle next door that nobody likes to ever say anything bad about them because they don't want to have to deal with the fallout?

How many of you are that person? This is a human problem that Jesus is addressing in this story.

[28 : 21] So you see the first thing is all of a sudden that we realize that at first this story looks like it's just maybe a very judgmental story, but actually Jesus is putting his finger on something in the human heart, not just for the hearers back then, those nasty chief priests and scribes, oh, they're so nasty, they're so bad.

Jesus is putting his finger, this text is speaking to my heart. How often do I choose moral insanity? I mean, the great comfort is what I can just tell you is that as we get closer to Jesus, as the Holy Spirit has a deeper role in our lives, as the Bible forms our minds, it will form us to moral sanity.

Here are just two sort of brief takeaway points. By the way, if you can't get them written down, they'll all be on the webpage later on tomorrow, they'll be on the webpage, but here's sort of very two quick takeaways.

To say to ourselves, to make a commitment before God, I will humbly seek the truth and humbly change my mind to know the truth. I didn't word that very well, but basically it's a willingness to change your mind, to acknowledge that I'm wrong.

Dang it all, the United States wasn't the worst at affecting income distribution. That's the truth. I got to change my mind. And boy, I didn't realize, God, that my mind was motivated in those days so much by hatred of capitalism and a hatred of the United States of America.

[29 : 50] I didn't realize that's what drove me. So make a commitment. See, this is why it matters. It matters when we go back to our work and if we're a lawyer, if we're an economist, if we're a mom with the kids or a dad with the kids, if we're a social worker, the truth matters.

Make a commitment before God to develop a habit of seeking the truth and being willing to say, you know what, I used to think that and I was wrong. This is actually more true.

And a corresponding thing in terms of moral sanity. Make a commitment before God to say, I will humbly seek the good and humbly repent and seek to choose to change my life according to the good.

That's the next, the second walk, takeaway point. I will humbly seek the good and humbly repent and seek to change my life according to the good.

Repentance and amendment of life. It's a thing that we can take away from it. Some of you might be saying, George, I don't know if I entirely believe you.

[30 : 54] Maybe somebody's here or they're listening to it online and they're saying, I know what you think about abortion and a few other issues. I don't know, George, if you're really morally sane. I don't know if the Bible's morally sane.

But it's at least comforting to know that that's what you think that God wants to do in your life. Because it's hard to argue against moral sanity. It's hard to argue against that as being a worthy goal.

But surely, George, this whole thing about the stone and everything like that, surely that's a problem text, isn't it? Isn't that going beyond this? I sort of understand this idea of moral sanity and I'm going to make that commitment.

But surely this text goes beyond. Well, let's look again at verse 16 and 17. Let's look at them and sort of have it fresh in our minds as we think about it again. And remember earlier on in verse 15, you know, earlier on it's the owner sends the beloved son, his beloved son, and the beloved son is killed by the tenants.

And then Jesus says, you know, what will the owner do? And he says, verse 16, he will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others. And when the crowd hears this, they say, no way. But Jesus looks at them directly and said, what then is this that is written?

[32 : 04] The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. And you'll notice in some of your texts that there's a little note with cornerstone and it says head of the corner.

And some of your versions might say capstone. And actually, in the original language, this one word can sort of mean two different types of stones.

stones. And you have to sort of tell from the context which one it might be more likely to be. But the fact of the matter is, I wonder if Jesus chose a word that intentionally had two different meanings, but they're very similar.

And if some of your versions say capstone, it's back in the days when they made natural arches without mortar. And I guess they'd have, I don't know, a wooden structure or whatever as the stones are placed.

And then at the final top of the arch, they'd put a stone that fits perfectly with all the others. And then they'd remove the wooden scaffolding and that capstone at the top meant that now the shapes of the stone and the arch, that gravity holds the whole arch together.

[33 : 11] The capstone holds the whole arch together. And the other image of this text is a foundation stone, sort of a bit different than a cornerstone, and it would be in building large stone buildings, a very, very, very large and substantial stone that would be where two walls meet.

And so this large stone would have to be so strong that it could support the weight of two different walls with gravity wanting to move those walls in different directions. And so it was absolutely essential to have a large, solid foundation stone to keep the building together.

And so that's what Jesus is saying. Jesus is saying the stone that the builders rejected has become this central piece to the entire integrity of the building.

So here's what Jesus is saying. We'll just unpack it very briefly. The person and work of Jesus of Nazareth is central to salvation and to life in the kingdom of God.

The person and work of Jesus of Nazareth is central to salvation and to life in the kingdom of God. The Bible describes Jesus as the power of God for salvation.

[34 : 25] In other words, God sends a power for salvation and this power for salvation is that Jesus and his death upon the cross. In fact, this sense of the stone being rejected, there's two different senses that work here.

It's a very, very cleverly written piece of literature because on one hand, what Jesus is saying is that the actual rejection of the stone is actually part of what makes the stone essential.

There's a story at the end of Genesis where Joseph, his brothers had sold him into slavery and eventually Joseph, God used that, Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers, God used that terrible evil thing to actually keep the nation of Israel safe.

And in Genesis 50, Joseph says to his brothers, you meant it for ill, but God used it for good. And in a sense here, the people who are going to kill the beloved son, they meant it for evil, but God used it for good.

It became the means by which humanity, those very same tenants, could possibly be redeemed and reconciled to God. And that's on one hand what it's saying here about the text.

[35 : 47] Christ. But some of you might say, okay, George, that's very, very interesting. If it's true that in fact God, that we, that these human beings meant the killing of the beloved son for evil, but God used it for good, that it would be the power of God for salvation.

And this power of God for salvation means that the death of Jesus upon the cross and his resurrection, his death for you and me, that it's the means by which we become God's adopted child or we become born again or we become justified.

It's also the means by which we become more Christ-like. It's also the means by which we are glorified so that we can be in the new heaven and the new earth, which one day, Lord, may it be soon, God will bring into effect when Jesus returns.

So you might say, okay, George, I sort of still understand that, but what about this crushing aspect? That's actually a really interesting turn that Jesus is saying on one hand.

You see, this is all part of knowing the truth, by the way, right? I mean, one of the things we can leave today is to say, God, please create within me a hunger and longing to know the true, the good, and the beautiful.

[36 : 57] Father, create within me a passion, a desire, the habits of knowing and seeking the true, the good, and the beautiful. And that doesn't mean that we look at the world through rose-colored glasses.

It means that we'll also seek and know what is real. but we'll see and understand the real in terms of the bigger picture of truth. We'll understand the reality of evil in the context of good and the defeat ultimately of evil.

We'll understand the things which are just ugly and completely and utterly disgusting and revolting. And we'll see that, but we'll see it and understand it within the context of the beautiful and the triumph of God who is the true, the good, and the beautiful.

And Jesus who came from the true and the good and the beautiful to die upon the cross to redeem those of us who are addicted to lies and evil and that which is completely and utterly disgusting and despicable.

And those of us who on one hand have an addiction to those things and cannot turn from it yet at the same time know in some sense that there is a true, there is a good, there is a beautiful that we should long for, but we do not have the power to do that in and of ourselves all of the time because we slip back to our choice of using our mind for our own utility and using our will to choose the bad rather than the good or the just or the loving or the fine.

[38 : 22] That's, that's, God, God uses this evil thing for a good thing and when we seek the true and the good and the beautiful it means we'll see the world as it really is but not on the world's terms.

Isn't that a thing to long for? To seek, to give your lives to? But some of you are going to say, George, okay, so what about this crushing? It just seems so extreme. Let's look at that verse again, verse 18, just very briefly.

Everyone who, verse 18, everyone who falls on that stone. Remember? So I remember I said there's sort of two very interesting senses. It's a very subtly written text that part of it is this Genesis 50 sense.

It's rejected but the actual rejection God uses for good, he uses it for salvation. But look at it, everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces and when it falls on anyone it will crush him.

Like how can this actually possibly make sense? Well, it's, we sort of, the way we understand that this text can possibly make sense is by thinking about love actually.

[39 : 30] It's about thinking about love and just to think about love. The church fathers, and actually thinking about reality.

Lost my place in the notes. Think about reality and think about love and if we think about that we'll see how this text makes sense. The church fathers, I can't remember which one, they use a very, very interesting analogy.

Let's say you have a crystal vase, you know, very fine, or China, very fine China vase. You have a very, very large, solid, hard rock.

If you throw the China vase against the rock, ends up badly for the China vase. You throw the rock against the China vase, it ends up badly for the China vase, right?

Doesn't matter in a sense if you throw the rock, the rock against the vase, or the vase is thrown against the rock. In both cases, doesn't change the rock, bad for the vase. Here's the thing which is behind this analogy for Jesus, from Jesus.

[40 : 39] We have one more point to go to help us to understand the truth of this text. Here it is. If you put it up, Andrew, one day the true and living God will be unfailingly, unavoidably, unchangeably, unstoppably, and undeniably present and real.

I'm not saying that God isn't real now, I'm not saying he's not present now, but what I would say is that God is always veiled to us right now. We have some sense of him and some of us, we have a very deep sense of his reality, but it's nothing compared to what it will be like in the new heaven and the new earth when we see God face to face and he sees us face to face.

One day, the true and living God will be unfailingly, unavoidably, unchangeably, unstoppably, and undeniably present and real.

And so what we see here is a dual image of judgment. Because surely we also understand how it is that a complete and utter denial of reality, a complete and utter denial of reality, even on this side of the grave, ends badly for us.

Like, isn't that one of the things which is so tragic about drug addicts or alcoholics, is that until they hit bottom, and hitting bottom means they finally realize that they've hit a rock that shatters them.

[42 : 02] But as reality, you know, reality makes them want to do drugs more. Reality makes them do all sorts of horrible things because reality just keeps driving them to this.

And we look at them from the outside and we just see that the reality is that reality is leading them to drink, and the other hand, that response to reality is ruining them.

It's breaking them up. It's killing them. How many of us have looked at people who are having some type of debt problem, and that rather than humbling themselves like a little child and acknowledging that they have a problem and maybe have to tear up all of their credit cards or do other types of things, but the fact of the matter is, is that somehow as they face, as they get the bill in, the way they respond to the bill is by wanting to spend money because spending money is just, it gives them a rush, it helps them to feel better in the face of reality, but all it's doing is they are just banging against reality and reality wins and they're getting crushed.

And so what if it is that one day, one day, for every single person who's ever been born, the veil will be lifted, and God who's always been present and always be real, he is in a sense right completely and utterly before us, unfailingly, unavoidably, unchangeably, unstoppingly, and undeniably.

And on one level, if that happens, and I just want him gone, I just can't, I don't want him here, get away, but he's real, and I attack him.

[43 : 49] I'm only going to add badly for me. It falls on me, bad for me. See, in fact, what this is describing is just what happens when us and our refusal to know the truth, the good, and the beautiful actually meets the real.

And in a sense, you see, it also actually describes a dual action of God and something about how real things and valuable things work.

Because if you think about it for a second, isn't partly our experience of knowing truth? Like when we actually remember those times, maybe as a child, maybe just last week, maybe just yesterday or this morning, and we learned some new truth, and it's so exciting.

And isn't it in some way like this dual action? Don't we somehow almost feel as if truth is entered into our heads? Doesn't it at the same time almost feel as if we've entered into truth? Like, isn't that how it works when we fall in love?

Don't we have a sense, excuse me, somehow, another, as if somehow, another, that we actually have fallen in love, and that other person loves us? And don't we have some type of sense that this person has let me into their life?

[44 : 55] And don't we have some other sense that this person, that I have let them into my life? And can't that be scary to have a sense of another person who loves you coming into our lives, and into your life, and viewing it?

Don't you see that that's actually how human beings work? That the true, the good, and the beautiful is something that we both enter into, and enters into us? And so it is, that if it is, that we finally see the real, because God is completely and utterly real, that we will not only, if we do not, if we actually have a rage and a hatred against God, that on one hand, what will be described as we attack that God and shatters, and that God comes into us and shatters us.

And the Bible is just described in what we accept with truth and love, and don't you have the sense with beauty that somehow we enter into it? That, you know, if you listen to something, if you like Baroque music, and you hear it well played, and you have this sense that somehow it enters into you, and then you think of all the movies, like Shawshank Redemption, and they play those beautiful parts by Mozart, and the guy says it was worth being in solitary because the music is in here.

It's in here. Jesus is outlining sanity. Some of you might say, George, I'm not special like you.

I don't know what to say. I didn't know that you have this ability that you can actually stand before God, and you're looking forward to having God be present and real, and I'm not like you.

[46 : 29] I've done some really bad things. You know what? I start to think that way, and then I get caught up with vengeful thoughts. I'm not like you, George. I can't possibly do that. I'm not like you. I'm not special like you.

All I can say to you is this. I am not special. See, what this text tells us is something even more remarkable. Remember I said that the way to understand this text is ultimately to understand in the context of love.

Andrew, if you could put up this final slide, it would be this. Jesus knew me to my depths, and still in love, he died for me.

What does this text reveal? Jesus says, you know what, Sinclair? You know everyone who's here? I know the fact that you don't always choose what's true. You know what?

I know that you use your mind to avoid reality, to avoid the truth. You know what, George? I know that you can be bent out of shape for a long time because your conscience has attacked you, or your wife, or your boss, or a parishioner has said something that's true, and you don't like it.

[47 : 34] And I know that's what you're like, George. I know you don't always choose moral and intellectual sanity. I know that that's what's going on in you. I know that there's times that you just rage against that and reject that.

And I know that you cannot stop that. And I knew all of that about you, and I died on the cross for you. I am the power that's come from God for your salvation that you are to accept by faith.

And when you accept in a weak, haltering, faltering way that this is what the gospel is, that this is what Jesus has done for you, then you know that there's nothing in your past, nothing in your present, and nothing in your future that will surprise Jesus and make him turn his face from you, because when he grips you, it is from the moment of your conception to the moment of your death.

That is why, I'll say it very quickly, but if you want to turn to Romans 5, I'm just going to end with these two things just from the Bible. That's why Paul says in Romans chapter 5, verses 6 through 11, he says this, For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[49 : 04] Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. It's because Jesus knows us deeply and still he dies for us that Paul, at the end of chapter 8 of Romans, Romans chapter 8, verses 31 to 39.

This is what Paul says. The final word goes to the Bible. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised. Who is at the right hand of God.

Who is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

[50 : 21] As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors. Through him who loved us.

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That is not a Martin Luther King moment. That's the Bible. Let's stand. Andrew, the final point. This is why we have to pray to begin the Christian life and to walk the Christian life.

Dear God, please make me a disciple of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, living for your glory. That's what motivates us to live the Christian life. To face reality.

To try to learn what the true and the good and the beautiful is. Because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, we thank you that you do not look for special people, but for ordinary people.

[51 : 36] You do not look, Father, for people who have some special gifts or special genes that allow them to always pursue the true and the good and the beautiful. But you look for ordinary people who've sometimes done just ordinary sins and sometimes have extraordinary bad things that they've done or that they desire.

Father, we give you thanks and praise that you knew at times how dark our mind can be, how dark our heart can be, how dark our will can be, how dark our life can be.

And knowing all that about us, still knowing clearly that you died upon the cross, Jesus, for us. And that in your death upon the cross, you are that power of God for salvation.

We thank you, Father, that when we turn to you and receive what only you can give through Jesus, that you take us as your own and that nothing will surprise you. We give you thanks and praise that that salvation is something that comes from you as a gift that we receive.

Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Make us disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, who live for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray.

[52 : 43] Amen.