

Lord of the Beginning and of the End

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[0 : 0 0] Father, our hearts, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in you. We ask, Father, we give you thanks and praise that you are the end of our longings and our yearnings, that the deepest longings and yearnings of our life find their rest and their true home in you.

We ask, Father, that at this time, as we gather around your word, that your word would speak very deeply into our hearts, and that we might know who Jesus is, and that we might rejoice in the grace that he gives, and we might respond this morning to the grace he offers us even today in a way which is worthy of that grace and good for us.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. I did a funeral yesterday the first time. Is this working right? Am I fine? Okay.

It's just weird to be on one side of the speakers sometimes. Anyway, I did a funeral yesterday, the first funeral in quite a while, actually, and St. Peter's and St. Paul's church graciously allowed us to use their facilities for the funeral.

And I know we all can differ on this, but gosh, it was nice to be in a church. Like, it was just, it was so nice to just be in a place which is designed for Christians to worship.

[1 : 3 0] And I know it might seem fuddy-duddy to a lot, and a lot of churches nowadays actually just look like a theater, only, you know, the front would just be all beige, not even necessarily a cross, but it was just really nice to be in a church.

On the other hand, I was thinking that there is something to be said about worshipping where we are. I know that people who are watching this online who've never been to the Ottawa Little Theatre, when they see the band, they get a bit of a sense of the whole set.

But there is something to be said about worshipping in a set that looks like where we live. To remind us that the Christian life is just not to be one perpetual church service, or to live a type of oil and water life, where we live one way when we're sort of in a churchy type of environment, and another way when we leave the churchy environment, which is basically all of the rest of our life and our time.

There is something to be said about reminding us of this all the time, to have a place to worship like we do. I just finished watching an HBO series called Perry Mason.

I'm not necessarily giving any recommendation for it. But one of the things in that show, it was set in the 30s in Los Angeles, is sort of what was driving it was a murder connected to a church.

[2 : 5 0] And of course, as the thing goes on, there's a great disconnect. Lots of the church people act one way when they're in church, but the fact of the matter is there's shady business deals and crooked business deals going on the rest of the time with their life, and there's this fundamental disconnect to the church life and to the rest of life.

So there is something to be said for worshipping in a place like this, where the set is a person, a writer, I think in the 50s, obsessed with death, which is why it says, West of the Dead, Cold Secrets, Dark Garden, Five Down, etc., etc.

The two stories that we're going to look at today in the gospel, they throw before us a bit of a challenge, because you see, what often happens to us unconsciously is that, you know, I say that it's important to live our life and all that, and we all go, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

But the problem is, often when we read the Bible, we forget that, and we read the Bible text purely from a churchy point of view, not from how you live your life 24-7, 365 days of the year point of view.

And so one of the things that we're going to do today is, when we look at it, is I'm going to try to push us to see how that connects to the rest of life. So let's look at the text. It would be a great help. That's, I was on the wrong page of my notes, is why they didn't look right.

[4 : 12] Turn with me to Mark chapter 2, verses 18 to 28, which is the text that we're going to look at today, two different stories of this ancient biography of Jesus.

And it begins like this. Now, John, just, actually, here's just a little tiny bit of a timeout, bit of note. You know, sometimes you'll talk to people, and they'll say, well, one of the reasons we can't trust the Bible is that it's filled with, you know, the textual tradition.

You know, from the original manuscript today, there's all these errors in it. And they can count. I don't know. Like, there's millions of them. But what they don't tell you when they tell you things like this is that, in fact, most of those supposed errors are not errors at all.

They're doing what I just, I'm about to do. So, for instance, I'm about to read this. Now, John the Baptist's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And if you look at your Bibles, if you're following along and you see it up there, you'll see it doesn't say John the Baptist.

Now, the John is referring to John the Baptist, but what I've just done is I've clarified it for people who aren't very, very, very, very familiar with the Bible. And if they're not very familiar with the Bible and they see John, they might wonder, is it, like, the disciple John?

[5 : 25] Or, like, who is it, right? So I've just clarified it. And none of you listening to me would say that I've now made the text untrustworthy. I've just tried to help you. And that's the same type of thing that actually goes on in some of the scribal things, is one of the things that happens in the original text, which would never pass a modern editor, is it goes he, he, he, he, he, he.

I'm not giggling, but he said, he said, he said, he said, he said. It's a long, long string of he's. And if you're just listening, you can forget, okay, one moment, who said that?

Which he is it? Is it Jesus or the other person? And so sometimes the scribes will just, rather than having the word he, they'll put in Jesus. But nobody reading that would say that that's an error in the text. Like, not really. Anyway, that's just a bit of an aside.

So I'm going to, in a sense, cheat a little bit as I read it to help you to understand. But here's how it goes. Verse 18. Now, John the Baptist's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, and people came and said to Jesus, why did John the Baptist's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?

Now, just sort of pause there for a second. Fasting is a deeply religious practice. Buddhists fast.

[6 : 43] Muslims fast. Hindus have times of fasting. It is a characteristic of religion and spirituality that there are times of fasting. And so one of the things which is going on here in the text is that the Pharisees are trying to figure out what's going on with Jesus because obviously he's, like, spiritual or religious.

Like, that's obviously the case. He has a type of authority about him, but he doesn't fast. Fast. And his disciples don't fast. So they're trying, in a sense, they just use from the normal, in a sense, the normal human mind and the way the normal average human mind evaluates religious and spiritual things and things like fasting are part of it, and Jesus doesn't seem to be doing it, and they're trying to sort out and figure out what's going on, who is he?

They're trying to, in a sense, put Jesus in their categories and their criteria, which they, in a sense, say, my categories and criteria, that's what reasonable people understand, and you need to fit into that.

At the end of the day, of course, when Jesus rises from the dead, what partly is happening is that all human categories and criteria for religion get blown up. But that's sort of towards the end of the story.

And part of, actually, the history of renewal and reformation movements within the Christian movement is that we start to sink into religion and fitting into the criteria of the way the mind normally works, and God, by his Holy Spirit, brings us back to the Scripture, and we realize we've got to throw that stuff out, that we've got our criteria all wrong.

[8 : 15] But that's what they're doing. It's a very... In fact, actually, a few years ago, just a few years ago, I read an article by a Muslim fellow, and one of the reasons he said that Islam is superior to Christianity is that most Christians hardly ever fast.

But Muslims fast for Ramadan, and that was, in fact, a sign of the superiority of Islam over Christianity. So they're asking this question out of this in a sense that the normal way a human mind works and tries to evaluate things.

In verse 19, let's see how Jesus answers them. And he only gives them a bit of a partial answer, by the way. Anyway, let's look at it.

And Jesus... Actually, he gives them the wisest answer in the world. He doesn't answer all of our questions with this text, but he gives them the wisest answer in the world. Verse 19, And Jesus said to them, Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?

As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. Now, a couple of things going on here. First of all, if you don't know anything about the custom of the time, this will be very helpful for you.

[9 : 22] In our day and age, when you have a wedding, and then afterwards, you might have a reception or maybe a breakfast the next day or both or something like that. But that would be it.

But in the Jewish culture of the time, if it was a man and a woman marrying each for the first time, the wedding celebration went for seven days. So it was seven days of eating lots and lots and lots of skewered goat and chicken and having fish and eating baklava and drinking wine and just seven days of feasting.

Okay? It sort of... And so it makes a lot of sense that if you're actually in there with the bridegroom, you don't fast during that time. I was thinking nowadays, modern couples, what we do is we fast and try to lose weight before the wedding so we look good in our wedding dress or in our suit or whatever so we look really good on our wedding day.

But, you know, that's one type of fasting. But you wouldn't fast at all. And the other thing about this that's going on here, which isn't obvious to us as we read it because we're not that familiar with the Old Testament or we forget, is that Jesus is making a claim to deity.

He's actually saying he's God. Now, one of the constant images in what we call the Old Testament and our Jewish friends call the Torah or the Tanakh is that, in a sense, God is the husband of the covenant people Israel.

[10 : 46] Some of you might remember when we went through the book of Lamentations, where, in a sense, Lamentations tackled me. I don't know if it tackled you, but it definitely tackled me. And there was this constant refrain about adultery.

And if you're familiar at all with the prophetic literature in the Old Testament, there's always this claim of Israel being adulterers, that they're cheating on their true husband.

And so that's all part of this very powerful imagery in the Old Testament, that God, in a sense, he's not the husband of each individual believer. He's a husband, in a sense, of the covenant people of Israel as a whole, who are his bride.

He is the bridegroom. Israel is his bride. So when Jesus here is using the analogy of why they're not fasting, which we'll see, look what he says in, yeah, what he says very specifically, they cannot fast.

Look at verse 20. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them and then they will fast in that day. He's making a claim of deity, that the Old Testament image of the bridegroom, that's Jesus.

[11 : 53] Why are they not fasting? The bridegroom's right here, right now. You know that bridegroom you read about all the way from Genesis chapter 1 to the end of Malachi? He's standing right here.

That's what Jesus is saying. And he's also actually making a reference to his death. Look again at what he says in verse 20.

The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them and then they will fast in that day. This is the first time in the gospel that an allusion, a pointing head to his death is evident.

I don't know how many of you have watched Fahuda and I'm not necessarily recommending it. It's an Israeli series and in that Israeli series, I think it's the very first episode, it's not a spoiler alert, I think it's in the very first episode, there's a Mossad operation in the West Bank in Palestinian-controlled territories and in the process of that event, it all goes upside down, sideways, inside out.

It just goes in a disastrous direction and what happens is that they end up killing a man in the wedding ceremony. They kill the groom and that fuels all of the chaos and the terror that goes on for the rest of it because it's such a huge offense for the groom to be killed.

[13 : 20] And we know that if there was a shooting at a wedding, it would be in the news. It wouldn't matter if it was in New Mexico or if it was in the Bronx, it would be in the news. And so Jesus says this very, very puzzling thing.

He's saying two types of things which would have just very puzzled them very deeply. On the first hand, he's saying, I'm the bridegroom. The second hand, he said, the bridegroom's going to die. The bridegroom's going to be taken away.

And then he goes on in verse 21. I'm going to sort of just tell you a little bit about the significance of that. In 21, though he says, no one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment.

Actually, that's not entirely true if you're a clueless 16-year-old male like I was. And it was cool to have jeans that were ripped and to make patches, put sew patches on it.

I didn't know that because I was a clueless 16-year-old male. I thought you could put fresh cloth in old jeans. But generally, people who are wise would understand, verse 16, no one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment.

[14 : 19] If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and the worst tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins and the wine is destroyed.

And so are the skins, but new wine is for fresh wineskins. And that particular image, back in the day, they would use, obviously, they'd been cured a bit. They'd use animal skins.

They'd put the new wine in there. There'd be still some fermentation that would expand. And because it was a skin thing and it had some flexibility, it would grow. And that's the high image.

But here's the thing. When Jesus says, you don't put a new patch on an old garment and you don't put new wine into new wineskins, what he's not doing, what he's not saying, is what you normally hear from evangelical churches.

He's not giving a consumerist understanding, hyper-modern understanding of the Christian faith. He's not saying, you take from this, by the way, boys and girls, men and women, that we should always embrace the new.

[15 : 22] You know, there's a new thing happening. It involves smoke machines and lasers and you can't put that with the old thing. You've got to get with the new. He's not saying that you have to do as in consumerism, that you have to always buy the latest stuff and you always have to get on board with the latest trend.

He's not saying that at all. You can't use the text to justify consumerism or hyper-modernity. What he's just saying is that God is doing something very, very, very different, very, very shocking and he's doing it in the person of Jesus that there's this profound mystery that the bridegroom has come and the bridegroom is going to die and the bridegroom is going to die and that is how all of these separate texts, all of these texts that on one hand have the image in the Old Testament of the bridegroom and his bride and all of these other images of the unfaithful bride.

It's not putting down woman because it's talking about Israel. It's talking about the covenant people and all of these things about how they've become defiled and they're broken and they're enslaved and they've ruined their entire lives and all of these texts that talk about the bridegroom and the bride, it's the death of the bridegroom that is going to make the bride beautiful and going to make the bride free and it's all done out of love.

That God is making a new covenant people. He's making a new covenant that emerges out of the bridegroom having been present and out of in love dying to make a bride who is beautiful.

See, this is one of the reasons why if you have Jewish Christians and then if you have Nigerian Christians and you have Scottish Christians and you can add a few other things.

[17 : 21] On one level, if you spend time with them, you know that they're your brother and sister in Christ. But the way they live and the way they worship might be very, very, very different. Because there's a new covenant and this new covenant is for people of every people group on the planet.

And it's not that we all have to follow the Jewish laws or anything like that. God is doing a new type of thing where we're made right with God by what it is the bridegroom has done to die for the bride that we receive by faith.

Some of you might remember there's quite a few years ago we had a Nigerian priest with us for three or four years. And on the final Sunday that he was going to be with us, he asked if he could do a Nigerian Anglican service for us.

And I don't know how many of you were here for that and might remember it. But at the hour and three quarter mark we hadn't hit communion yet by the way. But he realized that he was in Canada and he had to stop and he apologized.

But one of the things he announced to everybody he said and I was sort of a bit prepared for it he said by the way in Nigeria we don't pass the plate for collection the collection plate is right on the front of the Lord's table and we all sing and we give our offering by clapping and singing and dancing down the aisle to put in your offering.

[18 : 40] And he said so that's what we're going to do the band Jono might have been I don't know you weren't the worshiper and so he said the band's all prepared we're going to sing this long piece that's what we're going to do and by the way the rector is going to lead the dance.

And I was gobsmacked I think whoa he didn't tell me that I had to lead the dance. So yeah I know you should laugh I'm terrified of dancing by the way I only dance if there's absolutely nobody in the house and the blinds are drawn like then I might dance to some music and so I'm like I guess there's these two people in the church at the time and they could tell that I was the deer caught in the headlights and I was frozen and so it was very funny if we'd been filming it these two people it was Kendra and Guy one Kendra comes and grabs one arm Guy grabs the other arm and they do all the dancing as they drag me down the aisle and then the rest of the congregation come and you know do the little waving and wiggling and anyway you see but the point is this the point of it all is this is that when they're talking about they're doing a new thing that's the new thing which is being referred to not hyper modernity not having lasers nothing wrong with lasers and smoke machines per se right if that's how people are going to worship and enter God that in a sense is fine but it's not encouraging us to be consumers of spiritual products it's talking about the fact that God in the person of his son is doing something radically radically different now it sounds as if all I've done is talk about church but here's the thing that's going on within the story that starts to talk to us a little bit beyond what's going on in church we have different intuitions or clues human beings in general when they're reflective human beings have different intuitions or clues that there's something more that there's something transcendent that there's something bigger that it's not just you eat you eat you eat you work you work you work you sleep you sleep you sleep you buy you know and whatever and you just do this one thing after another but at different times some people have it a lot some people it's only occasionally we have these different types of intuitions or moments that there's something more and there's lots of different categories of that and in this image here we have two of those intuitions are directly addressed and the first intuition is that people have if they think about it is that there's something broken with the world there's something broken with the world

I did a funeral yesterday and it was a very fine man who died he'd had Parkinson's for a very very very long time and by the time he died for actually for quite a few years before he died the Parkinson's had really ravished him he was a strong handsome man but long before his death he was completely and utterly curled into himself his whole body was in a sense just one almost like a ball because the Parkinson's had ravished it and a man who was intellectually very very brilliant his mind had become increasingly fuzzy and you know those of you who are doctors or nurses or those of you who have a profession where you deal with people or those of you who have family members in situations like that when you look at them you say to yourself there's something broken with the world there's something broken with the world and this this story talks directly about that intuition why is it that the bridegroom has come and the bridegroom is going to die why is it there's something which would be so shocking if it happened and we knew that it was a bridegroom dying that it would be in the news the bridegroom dies because there's something broken with the world that only God can fix and that goes to in a sense the second one of the second a second type of intuition that we have and the second type of intuition that people have is that love is stronger than death now that defies all reason by the way scientifically it's not true scientifically there is just one thing after another thing after another thing and death is just one of those things that birth is no more natural than death they're both just natural processes maturing is a natural process having Parkinson's is a natural process and I guess they'd say that falling in love or whatever that means having the attraction of one of a male to a female so that there can be procreation that's part of a natural process you can add words like love and meaning and significance to it but it's just a natural process but when we see that we say no no no no no no we have this intuition this clue that love is stronger than death that justice is stronger than injustice that goodness is stronger than evil that mercy is stronger than self centered vengeance and getting even and here we see this being directly addressed as well because the image that Jesus uses for himself is the image of the bridegroom the image that though in a sense what he's saying for those who want to try to pay attention to it is that your image your intuition your sense that when you look at something like Christine and Michael that was the couple and the man died and Christine lived and when you look at their pictures and see the love that surely that surely surely love is stronger than death and Jesus is saying you know what that intuition it's true because the way to understand

God and the world and creation is that of between the bride groom and the bride now the next story goes even deeper and it actually goes in a deeper way than at first if you think about it it's a bit disturbing but you actually realize what profound good news it is because it's going to talk about a different class of intuitions that we have look what happens in verse 23 and 24 one Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain and the Pharisees were saying to him look why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath now just sort of pause most of us don't know this when we read the Old Testament where if we do we forget but in fact what the Pharisees are saying is not correct what the Old Testament what the Old Testament does is it provides remedy and help for the poor and it also in a sense institutionalizes hospitality and generosity and how does it do that when you don't have a modern welfare state and everything like that what it does is it creates a law that says a poor person a hungry person isn't allowed to go into their neighbor's field and they're not allowed to take a scythe or whatever like that and to cut down a whole pile of their grain they're not allowed to do that that's forbidden but what a hungry person could do in ancient Israel is when the grain is there when the orchard is there and they can see the olives or they can see the figs or the grain on a day when they're hungry they can walk through and they can pick the stuff that they need to eat and they can eat it they can walk through the grape field and they can take some grapes they can walk through whatever other type of fruit or figs and they can pluck some figs and they can eat to their hearts and they can eat till they're full they can eat grain and they can eat till they're full and the law required landowners to allow that to happen and what in a sense the law was doing is the law was making sure that people people our hearts naturally are closed to the poor like our hearts have a very we have a deep well of selfishness within us and it's very easy to ignore the poor and to forget the poor and not care about the poor or to say that the poor deserve what's happened to them if they just pulled themselves up by their belt you know their shoe straps or whatever they could carry and the Old Testament knew that because of the sin that had come into the world and broken the world there would be easy for people to say that so this law was required for the Jewish people that they as a landowner you couldn't go out and yell and say why are you walking through my why are you walking through my fig orchard and grabbing a couple of figs to eat not allowed to do that it was right that a poor person a hungry person a traveler where nobody had offered them hospitality would have a means by which they could eat when their food had run out and so what what the Pharisees have done is that they have taken in a sense that their view of what should happen in a church type of world that is so important that the normal concerns for generosity for hospitality and for caring for the poor that you could ignore that that in fact not only could you ignore it that you had to stop it you had to stop caring for the poor stop hospitality stop generosity because you had to keep religious rules around religious observances and that's what's going on here in the text but listen to how

Jesus deals with it in a surprising way verse 25 and Jesus said to them have you never read what David that's the fellow who would later become king what David did when he was in need and was hungry he and those who were with him sorry David and those who were with him were hungry how verse 28 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and ate the bread of the presence which is not it is not lawful for any but the priest to eat that's in the Old Testament law and also gave it to those who were with him now just pause what Jesus is doing is if you when you're reading the story which is found in 1st Samuel you read it and you realize that the text this is always a bit of an issue in narratives that the narrative isn't saying this is in a sense something which is bad that's happening that the implication is that this is something good that's happening and so what Jesus is saying is if you look at the stories you realize in a sense there's a way to understand and order the you know order types of things

[29 : 27] I mean it would be today as if you know even in places which if you ever go to Jerusalem by the way if you go to Jerusalem make sure you're there on the Shabbat it's shocking to see a city almost completely shut down like it's shocking that you have these four or five lane four lane roads six lane sorry like six or eight lane three or four on one side three or four going the other ways that normally is just the traffic is just going like this and you go there on the Sabbath and you could play catch with your kid on it virtually because everything just shuts down it's really shocking but even there what you'd have to understand is you still have to have doctors working stuff to feed the poor and part of the reason we sort of get that is from the Bible and how Jesus helps us to reframe how you order these types of things it's not that you should just disregard the Sabbath but you've got to realize that you should keep the Sabbath but you keep the Sabbath in such a way that you still practice hospitality still care for the poor and you're still generous and he uses a story but then he goes on and says and he said to them the Sabbath was made for man and woman not man and woman for the Sabbath so the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath if you come to an Anglican wedding and you use the

Book of Common Prayer which is sort of the basis of modern Anglicanism one of the things which is said is that marriage was instituted of God in the time of man's innocency that's the old language and what it's saying is that if you go back and you look in Genesis chapter 1 and Genesis chapter 2 before evil had entered the world before sin and death had entered the world God created a good world and part of the good world's creation was that he created men and women male and female with the hope that many of them would marry and that was part of God's original creational intention it's not as if you know that later on he had to have a law against stealing well you didn't have to the law against stealing isn't in a sense part of God's original creational intent you have laws to go to church well that you wouldn't have had laws about not laws you wouldn't have had encouragements to go to church that's something that's happened as a result of the fall and the remedy of the fall but part of the way

God created human beings is that he made them male and female man and woman with the intent that they some at least would marry and that that was part of God's original good design and what Jesus is pointing out here as well is that the Sabbath is also part of God's original good design because in the six days of work and in the seventh day that God rests so here we see Jesus is actually making a second claim to be God he's making a second claim to be God he's saying that the Lord who created the Sabbath is now standing in front of you and he's pointing out that why did God create the Sabbath God created the Sabbath to bless human beings God created the Sabbath so that they would know that there's a dignity to work there's a goodness to work but there's also a goodness and a dignity to rest and that part of the dignity of what part of the thing about the Sabbath is that human beings do not have to worry and grasp all the time that God will bless and so you can have a day when all you do is you gather to spend fellowship with God fellowship with other human beings to sleep to eat lots of extra food because God in his bounty is desiring to bless you and to give you a rhythm and an order to your life that will make you more fruitful and able to fulfill your creational intentions and that's what God has done in creating the Sabbath and this is how it touches a third whole category of intuitions or clues like if one set of intuitions and clues is that love is stronger than death like you can't prove that scientifically an atheist would say that you just

I mean Nietzsche would just say you don't have the courage to reject the Christian faith to acknowledge that God is dead but we have these dang clues and intuitions that love is stronger than death and we have these dang clues and intuitions that the world is broken and that there must be a way to have the world be unbroken and fixed and this is a different type of intuition and it's saying it's the intuition that comes if you're on a canoe trip or you're camping and you're just in the beauty of nature and the stillness if those of you who've been outside of the city where you're far away from the city there's a there's a type of a weight or a presence of the silence it's not just the same as being in the city where it's silent and even not just so much that with nature my wife and I like about a month or so ago we were in Montreal and we went through Mount Royal Park and everything and there's just something beautiful about that mixture of the beauty of nature and kids playing and all men and all women walking and you're safe and at peace and you just have a sense of there's something about that that's just more there's something transcendent about it just from the original creation see part of the problem that we have in Canada and we Canadians drink it in

I mean we Christians drink it in and I think actually it's a fundamentally human problem that's worse at some times than others is that we have unrecognized incoherence unrecognized incoherence you've heard me talk about it before but if you think about it for a second on one hand we read an article that tells us that evolution is true and that everything that came to exist was through that can be explained through that mechanism and then maybe after that we go to a funeral where we hear about a person who's died or we talk to a friend who's lost a loved one and we both just say they've gone to a better place never sort of thinking that if we've actually if there is a better place to go to then that means that how you've just described how things came to be can't be true that that's like incoherent and then after you've done that you have a bit of another discussion about how to understand a particular moral or ethical issue that you're trying to understand but you never stop to think one moment my understanding of the better place has nothing to do with how I understand how to live my life in a way that's good and that has nothing to do with how I think things came to be but we never stop to think that those things might be completely incoherent and then we go after having that discussion on our way home we go to buy some crystals or some other types of techniques that can help us to get in touch with the spiritual things never stopping to think that how we think that right and wrong happens and how that better place is that when we die and how things came to be in crystals that's completely incoherent like those things don't fit like they don't fit with each other at all like the better place if that's true then how on earth does that work with the crystals and how is it that you can have a good life but that has nothing to do with the like that's completely and utterly incoherent and then from that we might go to have to watch to listen to some music and have a profound aesthetic experience but never stop to think that our aesthetic experience is different than the crystals which is different than how you live which is different than the better place you go when you die and it's different than evolution and we walk through life never realizing that these things are completely in our we live in complete and utter unconscious incoherence and the shocking thing here of the bible is that Jesus says he is the bridegroom and Jesus says he is the lord of the sabbath and Jesus says he is the bridegroom who will out of for love's sake and mercy's sake will die for the beloved that in a sense when you become a Christian you are being invited to leave your incoherence behind and to walk to the end to understand that your intuitions all meet in just one person the true and living

[38 : 27] God Jesus God the son of God who came to die for you and you see it's why when you come to understand that it's only in Jesus that the incoherent intuitions and longings and practices of our lives can start to find a unity not just a unity that we create because we have to find a unity but because it's a natural unity it's not something we create or invent it's something we discover or recognize it's not something that we manufacture but something that's there that we can enter into and that when we enter into it we can learn to live out of it and as we learn to live out of it as we let the story of the gospel and the story of the God who's created all things and the breaking of all things and the fact that God has done something in the person of his son which will restore and rectify and renew and rebuild all things and there's this one story it helps us to understand how we can see here's the problem with fasting people use fasting to make themselves more powerful but what's at the heart of being how many people don't you think if you're watching a TV show or a movie and the person says

I'd really like to have a love relationship I think what I got to do is make myself way more powerful and people would be going I think making yourself more and more and more and more and more and more and more and more and more and more powerful isn't probably the way that you enter into a love relationship because that normally implies I don't know vulnerability giving in forgiving the other person you see in religious traditions and spiritual traditions you fast to clean your body of toxins to be more powerful you fast to show that you're part of the justified to earn those brownie points to be right with God in other words to become more powerful but in Christian fasting and obviously Christians get this wrong all the time they slip into doing it as a way to try to get more power earned brownie points but at the heart of fasting is that you voluntarily it's connected to that aspect of the love relationship where you know if a husband is never vulnerable with his wife the husband is walking away from his wife and pushing his wife away we fast not to become strong but to become vulnerable and to remember that we have this great bridegroom who's died for us and loves us and that we are closer to him in weakness this whole image of the Lord of the

Sabbath anyway we'll stop there no I'm going to do that there's an old joke there's an oil tanker going down in the water and they see one light up ahead big light but just one oil tanker has lots of light so they get on the thing they connect with him on the radio and say we're an oil tanker you're just you know we're coming you've got to get out of her way the person at the other end of the light says no no no no no you you've got to move we're not moving and the oil tanker gets back online and says no no no no no you don't understand we're an oil tanker you've got to move you've got to get out of the way the other light comes back I know we only have one light but you're the one who has to move you have to move we're not moving the oil tanker says no no no no no they're really getting frustrated you you need to understand we're a huge super oil tanker you've got to get out of the way and finally the person in their life says we're a lighthouse you've got to get out of the way and you see that's what's happening here in these stories it's part of what's at the heart of the very

Christian faith if Jesus really is the bridegroom if he really is the Lord of the Sabbath then what that means is that we in a sense don't just sort of fit him into our life as if somehow our criteria our way of understanding the part of our day or our week in other words he has to move around us because we're big and he's small that part of what the Christian life involves is coming to understand that he's the lighthouse and we got to move around him that the criteria that he reveals judge our criteria that we fit into the shape of what he brings into the world rather than what he brings into the world fits into the shape of what I'm doing with my world that's what it means for him to be the

Lord and to be the bridegroom and frankly for human beings that's very scary that I have to relinquish some control of my life and start to have his criteria be the criteria by which I evaluate politics and money and sexuality and my time and family and justice rather than him fitting into my commitments and if you're scared by that welcome to the human race but all I can say is what this text is telling us is why wouldn't you want to have your ego die so that love forms you why wouldn't you want your order alguém companies and blessing forms you why would you want to think that your ego has to rule those things?

[45 : 04] Don't you and I understand that if we die to our ego and allows the one who loved us so much that he died for us to form us, that that is both a way that the intuitions and longings and clues of our hearts actually we start to realize that they're not just intuitions or clues but we can begin to enter into them and live out of them?

If you're hearing this or watching this and you're not a Christian that's why you should become a Christian. You should say to Jesus, Jesus be my Savior and my Lord. And for those who are here and those who are here who are Christians that's why we say it is so good that we gather on a Sunday morning to remember this and to recommit to it.

To remember, yes, I know it's hard to let my sexuality be controlled by the gospel but it's worth it. I know it's hard to let my relationship with money be shaped by the gospel but gosh, it's worth it. Yes, my desire for vengeance, I want to just let that loose but gosh, it's good to remember that it's better to be shaped by the gospel.

Shaped by the gospel and formed by the gospel and learn to live out of something other than injustice or hatred or vengeance. It is so good to be a follower of Jesus and recommit to that.

Yes, let's live this week for his glory and the good of the city and for our true good. I invite you to stand. Father, if there are any here who can feel you knocking on the door of their heart, we ask that the Holy Spirit would help them to open the door and to look at Jesus and say, Jesus, please be my Savior and please be my Lord.

[47 : 07] Thank you that you are the bridegroom who died, that I might be beautiful and free, part of your beautiful and free people. And Father, for those of us who have already opened the door and allowed Jesus to be our Savior and our Lord, we give you thanks and praise that we can gather on Sundays to recommit.

Father, for those of us who have mentoring relationships or spiritual friendships or in small groups, we give you thanks and praise that there are other times when we can gather, whether it's with college and careers or youth group or small groups, and talk through how to live life shaped by the gospel to share our triumphs and share our sorrows and share our burden for the world and for the city and for just life and be able to share that around the gospel and to pray into that and to be formed by the gospel.

Father, we thank you that you have provided these means of grace that are so important that we can gather around and be part of. And Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the gospel. We thank you for Jesus.

We thank you that he is both the Lord of the Sabbath from creation and he, by being the bridegroom, is to be this, that you have called us to be part of a covenant of love and that by his death for us, the bridegroom, that he is the one who has made us, the church, beautiful.

Beautiful. Father, we thank you for this. Grip us with the gospel that we might live this week shaped by the gospel, living for your glory. And we ask this in the name of Jesus and all God's people said, Amen.