

Living in Light of Christ's Return

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would fall with might and power and deep conviction upon each and every one of us as we think about your word. We ask, Father, that you would bring your word home to us to confront and connect with the real me, the real each one of us in the real world, so that you might do your work of grace in our lives.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. So, first of all, if you have been tuning into this service hoping you were going to hear something about Mother's Day, you won't.

We don't really celebrate Mother's Day at Church of the Messiah. Obviously, we're very pro-women and we're very pro-moms, but we don't do Mother's Day as part of our church service.

I hope each of you are doing whatever you can to honor moms and women wherever you are this morning. In fact, actually, probably as you were listening to Daniel read the scripture text, you were probably saying that's the weirdest Mother's Day text I've ever heard of, all about wailing and sorrow and misery and everything like that.

So, one of the things that we do is preach through books of the Bible. We're going through the book of James, and that means we're going to look at something which people, many, many Canadians, and to be honest, many Canadian Christians find this idea sort of such a weird idea that they downplay it or never think about it.

[1 : 3 4] But an easy way for the average Canadian to make fun of, I would call us, biblical Christians, is in fact to make fun of the doctrine of the second coming of Jesus.

I was just seeing something in the Babylon Bee, a satirical organization the other day, showing a picture of a man looking very confused and perplexed because he was trying to read the book of Revelation to figure out when Donald Trump would be president again.

And it's very easy for us to make fun of this doctrine, and it seems weird, and in many ways it seems very, very off-putting. But this text, you might not have noticed it, the text that we're going to look at today, at the very heart of it is this idea of the return of Jesus.

In fact, just to walk towards the problem, given, even though that many Canadians think it's a very weird idea, like, I don't know, is he going to sort of come down like Iron Man out of the sky, and somehow the whole world's going to see him, and he's going to change everything?

Like, it just sounds sort of kooky and weird and not very attractive. But the fact is, it's in fact an essential part of the Christian faith. It's not just a little tiny bit in one part that a group of kooky Christians focus on.

[2 : 5 1] The teaching of the fact that Jesus will one day return is a very important Christian teaching all the way through the Bible. Hence, even in James, it shows up.

So let's just look. In fact, James is going to be very helpful for some of us. Well, it's going to be helpful for all of us. But it's going to be helpful because it brings to the fore some of the off-putting aspects to many of us about the doctrine or the teaching of the second coming of Jesus.

So if you have your own Bibles, turn to James 4, verse 17. Very helpful if you read along with me. The verse will show up at the bottom of the screen, but there's something about having it in your own Bible and being able to look at it, maybe making notes to help bring it home to you.

It also helps to keep it before you so that you know I'm not playing fast and loose with the Bible. I just want to try to help us understand it and to have the Bible come. And at the end of the day, I think the doctrine is so important and so wise and just so important for each of us that I'm hoping that after I've talked about it a little while, after we've looked at the text, that even if you're not a Christian and you don't believe it, that you would wish it was true, that you would wish it was true.

So let's look. It begins like this. So whoever knows, chapter 4, verse 17, so whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

[4 : 15] I didn't cover this last week, and it's sort of a very important part for the next bit, but let's look at the whole idea about the second coming of Christ, just see what's going on, and then I'm going to come back and we're going to look through all of these texts.

I'm going to explain why it's important and why we need to take it to heart. The next bit, come now, verse 1 of chapter 5, come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.

Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire.

You have laid up treasure in the last days. And just sort of pause here for a second. Some of you know a little bit about the Christian faith.

The word for coming here, it's going to occur several times in the text, is actually the word *parousia*, which is actually a technical word in the New Testament for the coming of Jesus. And so this text very clearly says that the reason in verse 1 that people will be weeping and howling is because Jesus is going to be coming back.

[5 : 24] And then, of course, even the reference to the last days. For Christians, the last days began with the death and resurrection of Jesus. We all live in the last days, and the last days will end when Jesus returns.

So this is a text talking about the end of all things. And here we go. I mean, two types of questions would come with us. First of all, I think for most people, they'd say, George, I guess I could believe in the idea of the end of all things, but shouldn't it be happy?

Like, this sounds like a downer. Like, not only here, but when we look at verses 4, 5, and 6, it just sounds depressing. Like, why should...

Like, George, don't you think the last days, like the end, shouldn't it be more like a party? Shouldn't it be happy? Not something which is described with weeping and howling and misery.

Well, let's continue to look. Look at verses 4 to 6. By the way, this theme of unhappiness is going to continue here, but we'll see that it continues to sort of bring out the importance or talk about the return of Jesus.

[6 : 31] Verse 4. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you. And the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

You have lived on earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person.

He does not resist you. In this particular case, it's once again this idea that we can see that Jesus is aware of all of these things. In fact, even the imagery of the Lord of hosts is often...

It's throughout the entire Bible, but it's often very much connected with the idea of the return of Jesus, that once again, because of the return of Jesus, there's going to be these consequences for these particular rich people.

And then in verses 7 to 11, Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. Here we see this word *parousia* in the original language, very clearly connected to the coming of Jesus.

[7 : 35] I'll read it again. Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.

You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged.

Behold, the judge is standing at the door. Again, this idea of the soon return of Jesus. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Behold, we consider those blessed, who remain steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

And just pause. If you're watching this, just sort of out of curiosity, Job is a whole book in the Old Testament. I'm not going to sort of go into that in particular. But once again, you see this.

[8 : 39] In fact, for many of you, it looks part of the reason. So part of the reason we don't like the idea, the average Canadian doesn't like the idea of the second coming of Jesus, is first of all, it sounds a bit ridiculous, a bit kooky.

Secondly, it sounds like it's going to be time of misery, not something which is going to be good. And the third thing is that to many people, it makes it sound as if you don't confront the problems of the world.

Like, look how it goes. It goes from this profound problem of self-indulgence, of oppression, and of judicial, societal-approved murder, and then it tells Christians to be patient, because Jesus is coming back as if you shouldn't do anything about it.

So in many ways, James is perfect. There are three big problems with it, the kookiness, the sadness, and the fact that it's not happy, and the fact that it seems to lead to indifference, which all seem to be right here in the text.

And then just one final part. We are going to go back and I'm going to look at it. I just wanted to bring it out, right? So we see what's going on here. But just a final verse. And just before I read this verse, because I got my blog in late this week, you didn't get the blog yesterday.

[9 : 47] You'll either get it sometime today or you'll get it tomorrow morning. But I'm not going to talk at all about this next verse. I wrote my blog about it. So if you aren't on our church mailing list, send us an email, get on our email list, and you'll get the weekly blog.

And another thing called Growing in Grace, which I write every week, includes sort of some teaching on prayer, some help with good attitudes that will help you in your life, a memory verse for you to memorize.

So you'll get that if you sign up to the email, or get on the email list. And you'll hear about other things like the announcements and stuff. But I'm not going to talk about this at all in the sermon. I talk about it in the blog.

But I'll read it. But above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

So what on earth is going on? It seems to talk as if one day Jesus will return and the whole world will know that Jesus has returned.

[10 : 53] And doesn't that sound a bit kooky, George? And it doesn't actually sound very appealing. And you said that you actually think that if you think about it a little bit more, you're going to wish it was true, even if you can't yet believe that it's true.

So what's going on? And the reason this is such good news, love wins. Love wins. You look at the world right now, it definitely does not look as if love is winning.

In fact, if you look at most of history, it doesn't look as if love wins. In fact, maybe for many of you in your own life, it definitely does not feel as if love is winning in your life. In fact, it feels as if everything is winning except love.

But the thing which is so important about this text is that love wins. In fact, not only does love win, love wins, life wins, goodness wins, justice wins, love wins.

And in fact, if you think about it for a second, if love wins but life doesn't win, then how can you even say that love wins? If love wins but justice doesn't win, how can you say that love has won?

[12 : 08] If justice wins but love doesn't win, if justice wins but life doesn't win, how can you say that either life has won? Like what would it mean to say that life wins if love and justice and goodness doesn't win?

That actually might be more like hell, like a terrible version of this earth where at least there's occasionally some goodness and occasionally some justice and occasionally some love along with life.

But this text is telling us in a very, very powerful way. That's part of the importance of the doctrine of the return of Jesus is that love wins. And it's not just that love wins, but love wins, life wins, goodness wins, justice wins, and they win in such a way that each are at peace and make each other whole.

They're whole in themselves, and together they're even more whole. That's what the Bible is teaching. And only in the Gospels you get this taught about in a very, very coherent way that this is actually not just like a story of the tooth fairy.

It's not like the Easter bunny. It's not like Santa Claus, that this is real. This is true. This is something that you can stake your life on, that you can base your life on, that you can begin to look at the world in light of the fact that this is true.

[13 : 17] And why do we say that? It's because of Jesus. It's because of Jesus. Only the Christian faith has a doctrine of God that actually can make sense of love, that from all eternity the Father has loved the Son and the Son has loved the Father.

The Holy Spirit is both loving the Father and loving the Son, and is in fact almost the love itself between himself, between the Father and the Son. Every other God, whether it's just that everything is God, which has to include hatred, it has to include evil, and how can that be love?

And if God is everything, that has to include the opposite of love. And if there's only a singular God, like the God of Islam, then if there is any love in God, then it meant he has need love.

And we all know if we meet somebody who just seems to be really needy, have this huge need love, we stay away from them most of the time because we don't want to get sucked into this unending, you know, this unending need for love.

And that's what happens if you only have a solitary God. And yet, what the Christian Bible teaches and what Jesus has revealed with absolute clarity is that from all eternity the Father has loved the Son, the Son has loved the Father, the Holy Spirit loves the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is love, he is love.

[14 : 38] And out of love, Jesus sets aside God, the Son of God, sets aside his glory and prerogatives, he takes on human flesh, and out of love, he lives amongst us a fully human life, out of love, he dies on the cross for us, out of love, he takes upon himself all of the shame, all of the accusations that can be against you, in a sense, all of the things that make you anxious, all of the things that make you feel needy, all of the things that you are guilty about, he takes them upon himself, the demands that other people make upon you that you cannot pay, he pays that demand, he takes upon himself that punishment, he takes all there is to taste out of death for you, knowing that you cannot taste all there is to taste of death, you cannot taste God's judgment for yourself, it will unmake you, and so out of love for you, and out of love for me, he dies on the cross, and out of love for you, he exchanges his destiny for your doom, so that you are clothed with his perfect ability to love the Father, and to love the Holy Spirit, and to be loved, and that becomes yours in him when you put your faith and trust in him, and this same Jesus who died and tasted all there is to taste of death, who experiences God's judgment, is the same one who rises from the dead and defeats death, and he is the same one who will return, so when he returns, who returns?

Love returns, life returns, goodness returns, justice returns, and they return to win, the end of the story is that love wins, the end of the story, life wins, the end of the story, justice wins, goodness wins, truth wins, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that who is returns, and that is the end of the story.

Now, some of you might say, George, it's very hard to look at the world and think that all of this could come to an end. In fact, those of you who might not know much, our office is in the Gay Village, it's in Centre Town of Ottawa, and I was here in the office yesterday working on my sermon, trying to get it sort of finished, and several times I went out for a bit of a walk along Bank Street, sometimes I get sort of stuck, and a walk really helps.

And I, you know, I'm walking along, and I realize I'm going to be talking about this, and I realize, you know, it's hard, it's just so easy to see how people have a hard time believing in the second coming of Jesus, because it's hard to walk down Bank Street, and we're not far from the Parliament buildings, and it's hard to walk down this street and think that this could all come to an end.

In fact, the matter is, is that we do think about it coming to an end, but when we think about it coming to an end in our culture, it's always the death and evil winds. I mean, you go on Netflix, you go on Amazon Prime, you go on Apple TV, probably go on Crave, or all of those ones, and you will effortlessly find shows about the end of the world.

[17 : 38] You will effortlessly see worlds, movies or TV series about asteroids hitting the earth or some ecological crisis or, I don't know, some virus invented in a lab somewhere that gets unleashed in the world and ends up killing everybody.

And in all of those cases, there's evil and there's death, but it's very interesting, even in the bleakest of these movies, none of them end with just the final parting scene of everything dead.

It always ends with a spaceship and a couple who are out, who are going with the hope of some type of future, of a small number of people in Greenland that survived the asteroid hitting so that there's the beginning of some type of a rebuilding of the earth because there's something about us human beings that it is essential for us.

We cannot live without hope and that many of us, many of you, we live in seasons of despair, we live in seasons of hopelessness, but we hope against hope, we hope against appearances, we long that there be a return to us of some type of hope, a hope that we will be loved, a hope that we will be accepted, a hope that there can be a reunification of our family or of a righting of wrongs or of whatever it is, but we need hope.

And so even Hollywood and all of its bleakest and even our best story writers and poets and all of their bleakest, there has to be some type of hope at the end because in our bones we do not believe, we don't, you know, science tells us death is the end.

[19 : 12] That's the scientific truth. Scientifically, it will all end in death. But in our hearts we know there must be hope.

You see, that's why I say to you, some of you might say, George, I don't know about the death and resurrection of Jesus and I don't know about his return but I sure hope that's true. Because it would sure be good if in fact our longing for hope and a longing for truth and goodness and love and life and justice and mercy finally winning that that's actually true.

And that's in fact what the gospel proclaims and that's in fact the context within which the book of James is talking about this. In fact if you think about this that what the Bible is saying is because Jesus lived in history and he didn't just live in history and then die in history and rise from dead in history but he died in the context of what our Jewish friends call the Tanakh or the Torah and we Christians call the Old Testament a series of 39 books of unparalleled wisdom and insight and beauty an unparalleled repository and teaching about justice and how to treat people and the dignity of human beings and the foundation of human rights all of that is in this story and it is in the context of this story that Jesus lives that he dies that he rises and he will come again and it is a deep story not just in historical truth but in the context of deep and profound meaning and a meaning potentially for you so in light of that let's look again at what James is saying to us about how to live wisely how to live the good life the beautiful life let's look again let's go back to verse 417 we'll go through this very quickly but let's look again at chapter 4 verse 17 so whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it for him or for her it is sin so just think about it for a second if it is the case that love wins if it in fact is the case that love wins that the good life the beautiful life has to be more than just following rules and not breaking rules you see for so many things for so many religions so many spiritualities it's all about following certain rules and keeping certain types of rituals but if we understand that in fact love wins that we were made for love that the end of our life can be in fact finally being immersed in love and dwelling in love in an everlasting way then we know that this side of the grave the beautiful life the good life the loving life is always going to be more than just not breaking rules because you see that's exactly how it is it's not just a matter of the fact that the mom goes out throughout the day and says it's been a good day

I love my kids I only slapped them three times or I didn't slap them once no a good mom a loving mom she anticipates their needs she hugs them and she helps them they bake cookies together they do arts and crafts together they go for walks they look at nature they do all of those types of things because love is more than just making sure you don't break certain rules don't slap my kid or something like that when they haven't done anything wrong or don't slap my kid period or whatever it's not just I didn't break any rules it's no love is more and so that's why this text is so important it says that we can be guilty of sins of omission and that these sins of omission matter in fact I would say that three of the big types of sins that we are guilty of of omission is a failure to be generous a failure to forgive and a failure to love a failure to be generous a failure to forgive and a failure to love and that in fact points us right to the very next text it doesn't sort of go so much about the failure to love in the next text that's going to come up in the one after that but there's the failure of generosity let's look again at chapter 5 verses 1 to 3 come now you rich weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you the parousia the coming of Jesus that in this particular case these particular rich people the coming of Jesus is going to lead to them weeping

I'm going to talk about that in a moment it's going to lead to them howling for the miseries that come upon you verse 2 your riches have rotted and your garments are moth eaten your gold and silver have corroded and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire you have laid up treasure in the last days in other words while the last days are coming you've been just hoarding your treasures what's being talked about here is the sin of omission they've failed to be generous the text isn't saying you see here's the importance of understanding the doctrine of the second coming if you read the entire Bible what does it say about being in God's presence in God's presence there is a fullness of joy in God's presence is an end of our longings and yearnings there will be a pleasure a pleasure that if we were to experience it right now even the tiniest reflection or the shadow of a reflection if we were to experience that in its full heavenly just that tint of it we'd explode our heads would explode our bodies would explode in the new heaven and the new earth we will have resurrection bodies that are actually fit to experience a fullness of joy a fullness of pleasure so the Bible isn't against soft pillows the Bible isn't saying that you should have no luxury in your life because if it was it would mean that what Jesus is coming to bring makes absolutely no sense it would be contradictory but what we see here is a complete and utter failure of generosity a complete and utter failure of generosity you know here's the thing for us Canadians

[25 : 23] I can tell you this right now there is always good reasons to not be generous in fact it would be very very simple you go to a coffee shop I mean when we can finally sit in them or you go to a coffee shop you stand outside whether it's outside of Bridgehead Tim Hortons or Starbucks all of them within a close walk of here and you get talking to people and you're saying I was thinking I'd given \$100 away every single one of them effortlessly like that can give you 10 reasons why you shouldn't be generous and you could probably generate 20 reasons yourself why you shouldn't be generous there's always good reasons not to be generous and the second thing is there's never enough money to be generous I mean you might have a hard time believing that I mean how many billions did the gates have to have before they could be generous I mean you know and you have to wonder did they wonder a little bit about oh can I really be generous I'd sure like to hit that 70 billion mark you know but the fact of the matter is is that for most of us there's always something else that we could buy that would really make our lives a little bit more comfortable or for those of us who are a bit more careful about the future we could always put a little bit extra in our TFSA or a little bit more in our RRSP or a little bit more in some type of a really healthy environment and we can always say that when we just hit this level then I'll be generous when I just hit this level then I'll be generous when I just hit this level then I'll be generous when I and it just it goes on and on and on surveys regularly show that no matter what income level you are you think that if you could just have five to ten thousand dollars more a year life would be just actually begin to be comfortable and you can think that at forty at sixty eighty a hundred two hundred thousand dollars you still think that you see the fact the matter is for us as Canadians this text here is talking about you and me

I mean here's another thing about us as Canadians and generosity none of us think we're rich but I can I don't bet but I'd bet you a hundred dollars that for some of us if we were just to all of a sudden show everybody connected to our congregation what we make after we've said that we're not rich a big part of us would go oh yeah that's so rich you are so rich and we might you know some of us at the lower end of the spectrum are going yeah yeah yeah you think you're not rich whoa you are rich like this text is talking about you but the fact of the matter is I've been to Africa haven't been all over the world but I've been to Africa I've been Angola I've been in Kenya and let me tell you there is a large section of people in Kenya and Angola that for almost every single one of us if they could see the houses we have the benefits we have the streets that we live in the cars that we drive the money that we spend the food we can buy they're going to say yeah yeah yeah yeah you don't think you're rich you're so rich and yet there's always a good reason ever to be generous and there's always this feels as if there's never enough money to be generous and yet we listen to this text you see love wins

Jesus will return and what matters well at the end of the day the end of the day listen none of us can be generous enough none of us can out give God like none of us can I can't and the fact of the matter is I'll share with you this really really fantastic Bible text for you know the grace of our Lord if you want to get it later on and memorize it it's not going to be on your screen it's 2nd Corinthians 8-9 2nd Corinthians 8-9 for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich isn't that a wonderful text help you understand the gospel you know it's partially picturing that if every time you break a moral rule against another person or break a rule do something that damages the creation or do something that's against

God in a sense if you could put a monetary value to that at some point in time you which is by the way a very Canadian thing to think about you know if there's been injustice in the past let's give money to it right we can all relate to that can't we and so if you just think about that if every time you've done that okay I should have cut in maybe \$100 will make the person feel not mad at me anymore if I can just send it to their account and I butt in line I was rude to the barista or inattentive to my wife you know ka-ching ka-ching ka-ching ka-ching ka-ching ka-ching and before we know it to our horror we might think I don't know if you added up all the stuff I had to owe and never paid I know it's a couple hundred thousand dollars or something like that you know no big deal I'll get to it someday but God said no no those ka-chings ka-chings ka-chings ka-chings ka-chings buddy you're you know you're at the ten billion mark right now in terms of your debts and so what in a sense you see in the gospel is this idea that Jesus who is completely not really rich he becomes poor listen to it again for you know the grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich because you see that's the heart of the gospel is that not only in a sense does Jesus pay off all those ka-chings ka-chings ka-chings but then he gives you his amex card he pays off the debt and he gives you his riches and he does it why because you you only owe ten billion dollars rather than the really bad person down the street who owns fourteen billion no he does it because he loves you he does it because he loves you and he knows you can't pay it back that you can never pay it don't even talk about paying it forward you can't pay it back it's a type of arrogance to think we can live our lives paying forward when we can't even pay it back Jesus pays it back you see as the gospel grips you now here just a bit of a time out

[31 : 42] I'm going to talk for those of you who are just trying to out by Christianity you know whatever time out here just a note to Christians I mean on one level every single human being is made to be generous you know we were made to be fruitful and that means to be fruitful that there's lots to give and giving is the highest form of living that's very very true but I'm going to talk now specifically for those of us who are Christians if you aren't a Christian I want to tell you this right now I don't want you to ever give us a penny at the end of the service I'll say it right if you're having a hard time with COVID-19 if there's some way we can help you let us know we will do what we can to try to help you but we'd rather you never gave us any money why because Jesus doesn't care about your money he died for you not for your money we just want to lift him high but for Christians there is this very very profound call to be generous and that's the sin of omission the Bible isn't saying you should be miserable in fact a very good Christian rule of thumb here I'm talking to

Christians is save 10% because you need to prepare for your retirement for other things so your debt doesn't overwhelm you and money doesn't overwhelm you save 10% give 10% away with the other 80% have fun be moral but have fun if you like a Harley buy a Harley you know you like fancy sunglasses buy the fancy sunglasses save 10% give 10% and give 10% means give to the local church where Jesus is lifted high where compassionate work for the poor can also potentially be done where the gospel can be spread around the earth give to the poor but move towards tithing tithing is a rule of thumb because if we say how much is generous is generous you know that I'm bringing home \$10,000 a month and I give 25 cents to the bum and \$2 to Chio when they ask me at Costco no we need a rule of thumb in the Bible the tithe is a rule of thumb move towards tithing move towards generosity why

Jesus we are being prepared to spend eternity where we will be constantly generous and constantly overwhelmed with the generosity of God generosity wins some of you might say George why is there all this weeping and all that doesn't that seem to go against what you said no it doesn't go against it at all in fact actually here's the big problem that most most Canadians don't realize they have a problem when they think about these things you see most Canadians believe I think that it would be really good if love won that in fact love is very important we'd all easily sing all you need is love love love love love all you need is love it's a very very powerful thing that Canadians intuitively understand but here's the problem that Canadians don't understand there's no love without freedom there is no love without freedom

I mean imagine that one of you you have your best friend and they meet the guy of their dreams but then a week before your best friend is to marry the guy of her dreams you happen to overhear a conversation and you realize that the only reason the guy is marrying the woman is that there's this rich guy just playing games with the guy's head and he's going to give this guy 10 million to marry the woman he's not loving her because he loves her out of freedom he's in fact just using her he's in love with money and he's just doing this not because he loves the woman but just and wouldn't you instantly tell your friend I mean you'd be heartbroken you'd be both furious depending on your temperament you might want to pound the guy and you'd be crushed and heartbroken about revealing it to your best friend but your best friend wouldn't marry the person unless they did it in a cynical way to marry them make sure they got the money and then divorce them and get half of it or something like that but you'd see that the love dies right and so what this is just saying is it's going back to what we've talked about in other types of things you know for us human beings

I have to watch my time we're just going to talk about the injustice very very briefly and then one other final thing but see what it is you know there's I don't know if it's true or not but there's an old story about one of the ways to capture a monkey was that you you get a jar a bottle and you put a nut in it and the monkey can get his hand into the jar to grab the nut but the monkey can't get the hand keep the keep the nut in its hand and get his hand out of the jar and that's how you can capture a monkey and that's the fact of the matter that's the profound problem that we Canadians have we say listen I'd love to have love wins but I can't give up I can't give up I need to have this money I need to have this position I need to have this type of sexual expression or experience I need to have these views on politics I need to have these views on race I need to have this type of a feedback I need to be able to have this wife or control my kids or do this or that I need them to respect me and

[37:18] I can't I can't give that up and every single person we can weep and howl because the fact of the matter is is that we have our hands on that nut and the nut might be money the nut might be our looks it might be power it might be our time it might be control it might it might be autonomy it might be our own definition of ourselves but we have our hand on that nut and we will not let that nut go because at the end of the day we start to believe that that nut is more important than love winning and let me tell you this friends I am not saying that I figured out the secret to let go of the nut I don't want you to misunderstand me I am just like you I could not give up the nut all you can do is hear about Jesus and say Lord have mercy upon me I I want love to win I can't let go of the nut I can't let go of the money of the power of the prestige of being

Canadian of of being anti racist or being racist or whatever it is or just whatever it is that we cannot give up Lord have mercy on me and that's the heart of the gospel is that Jesus takes you with your hands stuck in these jars and he takes you and he wraps his arm around you and he says I will take you unworthy as you are and the message of the gospel is as if we're gripped by the gospel that Jesus begins to gently let us let go of the money or the power of the prestige see that's why it's so important to be generous just a couple of minutes we just need to figure out because this last part is really important and it leads to the important end of it let's just finish off we're not going to finish all of it but let's look at verses four to six where you can see the nut here as well but chapter five verse four behold the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields which you kept back by fraud are crying out against you and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts you have lived on the earth in luxury and in self indulgence you have fattened your hearts in the day of slaughter you have condemned and murdered the righteous person who does not resist you be patient therefore brothers and sisters until the coming of the

Lord see how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth being patient about it until it receives the early and the later rains you also be patient establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand and we'll just sort of pause in our reading here just a couple of things to bring it up to a to a closing you see the first thing is here is just as I was talking about when money and power and prestige start to rule you and it doesn't matter if you're really really really super rich if you're you're sort of way up I can't even point high enough or if you're here you're here you're here you're but you have any as money and power all those things start to control you there's all sorts of ways you'll cheat on your taxes you know you do little end runs around this you do something to argue down the price of the person who's you know shoveled your snow you look for different ways to make a bit more money to cut people out of it and this can just grow on steroids as you get richer and richer and richer and the Bible can condemn all injustice and oppression and fraud it condemns it God opposes the proud and one other thing is a whole other sermon the types of oppression in here that is being talked about that cannot go on without social political and cultural and religious enabling it cannot happen without social cultural political religious or spiritual enabling and it's all evil so why is it then that the Bible just seems to go from that to just saying being patient well friends here's the thing one of the great prayers and those of those of you who are watching it those of us who have had anything to do with a a know that there's a very very powerful Christian prayer that many people in AA have prayed and this text perfectly shows the wisdom of it and the prayer goes something like this Lord grant me the courage to change what can and should be changed the patience to be steadfast under those hard things that cannot be changed and the wisdom to know the difference I'll say it again Lord grant me the courage the courage to change what can and should be changed the patience to be steadfast under those hard things that cannot be changed and the wisdom to know the difference see that's actually the the text is modeling this you speak out against the evil and the injustice you do what you can about that but there are some things you can't change you just need to endure I mean those of us who've been in AA you know there's these stresses there's these anxieties maybe there's the relationship that you desire that you could restore but it's now too broken beyond it and part of the wisdom of this prayer is there's some things you can only be patient about maybe you can just pray that there will be peace to restore that relationship or that there will be a day when that person will forgive you and all you can do is pray and be patient it's all you can do but there are things you can do and there are those things you can do you got to do them and gosh you need

Jesus's wisdom to know the difference there's so many things we can change that we don't there's so many things we're patient under that we should seek to change we get really confused about this brothers and sisters we need each other you need to have mentors and small groups and worshipping communities where you can share your heart with one another and share your triumphs and share your anxieties and pray into each other and support each other and as we pray this prayer lord help us to understand those things that should be changed and can be changed help us to be part of that change those things that we just need to live under and bear under with patience lord grip us so greatly with the truth of the gospel and the truth that Jesus will return that love wins that injustice does not win death does not win hatred does not win grant us patience knowing that is the end of the story and the end of my story is not because I am so perfect but because of what

Jesus has done for me that Jesus says welcome friend welcome brother welcome sister welcome child and grant us the wisdom to know the difference friends I'm just going to end that sort of I'll say that prayer and if you haven't given your life to Jesus there's no time better now than just to say Jesus you know all those things all those nuts in my hand that so entrap me have mercy upon me be my savior and my lord never let me go and help me to never turn back from having you as my savior and lord let's pray father we ask that the holy spirit would fall with might and power and deep conviction upon us father first of all we ask that you would grip us again with the gospel with this wonderful truth that Jesus what he did for us on the cross what he offers to us in his grace and mercy father fill us again with a great sure and certain hope that Jesus will return that there will be a new heaven and a new earth that love wins life wins goodness wins mercy wins justice wins and father help us to live our lives in light of the fact that that is the true end of the story and that through Jesus we can be your child by adoption and grace and live in that future and father in light of that you know those nuts that we have our hands on whether it's around money or power or identity or sexuality or whatever it is father you know those things we ask that this the gospel would so grip us and the truth of his return would so grip us that you begin to gently help us to let our hands go of those things and live lives of generosity of forgiveness of compassion of mercy of standing against injustice of offering grace and all these things we ask in the name of Jesus your son and our savior amen