

The Basics

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- [0 : 0 0] I might have to move from this spot because there's going to be visuals with this sermon and I'm not sure if I can stand here with the overhead on, but we'll find out in a moment.
- Sometimes a few words can make all of the difference. Sometimes a few words can make all of the difference in the world. Some of you have heard before the story of how I came to ask Louise to marry me.
- I know that it was in the late afternoon. I wish I could remember the time precisely. I know that it was the 15th of May, 1981. So for the purpose of this, let's say it was 4 o'clock in the afternoon.
- At 4 o'clock in the afternoon, I said to Louise, Louise, will you marry me? Just five words. Louise, will you marry me? Five simple words.
- And she's right about most things and she claims that she just waited a few seconds. I'm sure it was like 15 minutes. It felt like forever. I wouldn't have asked her to marry me if I didn't think she'd say yes.
- [1 : 1 1] But of course, there's always that little bit of a doubt that she might say no. And then she said to me very properly, she said, you should be on your knees. And I thought about that for a few seconds and I knew that she was worth it.
- And so I got on my knees and I asked a second time, Louise, will you marry me? And then I'm sure there was a 15 minute wait. But she says it was only a few seconds and she's probably correct.
- And then she said yes. And, you know, if that all happened at 4 o'clock, I know it was the late afternoon of the 15th of May, 1981. Life for Louise and me was very different at 3.55 on the 15th of May than it was at 4.05 in the 15th of May.
- And the difference hanged around five simple words and then the response of yes. Today, I'm going to do something which is a little bit different for me and for this church.
- I'm going to share with you very briefly the basic Christian story. And at the end of sharing with you the very basic Christian story, I'm going to invite those who have not invited Jesus into their life to invite Jesus into their life.
- [2 : 3 3] Some of you might have been coming to this church for a while and you've heard sermons on this and on that. And maybe you're like me, that you felt, you know, quite a few years ago, you felt an increasing drawing and attraction towards Christ.
- And you just weren't maybe quite sure how to sort of close the deal or how to cross that threshold or how to turn the corner. And it's my privilege and honor to share with you the Christian story and then at the end of it just describe briefly how you turn that corner.
- And at the same time as I do this, I'm going to also be sharing for those of us who are Christians how it is that you share the gospel. You know, first of all, the thing we have to understand fundamentally is that there's only one evangelist.
- It's not Billy Graham. It's not the Pope. There's only one evangelist and it's God. God is the one whose Holy Spirit moves in lives and draws people to himself.

And so the first thing I'd like to encourage each of you is those of you who have given your life to Christ, that you have a fundamental obligation to pray for people who have not yet come to faith in Jesus.

[3 : 42] Just pray for them. Maybe it's some cousins. Maybe it's some family members. Maybe it's your best friend. Maybe it's some of your people you work with. Or just God has put people in your path and he's calling you to pray for them that they will come to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

And I would just like to encourage you that you do that. And then maybe one day after you've been praying for your best friend, maybe you go back home to work for four months and you've decided you're going to pray for your best friend and you're working with your best friend.

And then one of the scariest things in the world happens three and a half months after you've been praying for them. One day during lunch they say, you're a Christian, eh? And you say, yeah, I'm a Christian.

And they say, like, what's this Christian thing all about? And what would you have to do to become a Christian? And for many people that would be one of the scariest things that could happen. Somebody asked you that question and now you have to sort of give a bit of an answer.

And, well, maybe what we'll do today will help you with that. If you could put the first thing up, Kendra. One of the things, this little model that I'm going to be sharing with you is something that was actually developed by an Anglican.

[4 : 48] He's now the Dean of the Cathedral in Sydney, Australia. And his name is Philip Jensen. And sometimes if you want to share the gospel with something, something that can be very helpful is if you have a pen with you and there's some napkins and stuff around, you can just draw a couple of simple little pictures which will help to communicate the story which you're telling.

And if you're really, really, really, really, really on top of it, you can have some Bible verses that you've memorized because it's always helpful to be able to try to show people that it's not just you making this up, but it's ultimately God's Word.

In your bulletins, there's an insert which gives you these different diagrams which Nat has kindly generated for me. So if you just have this little napkin, you just sort of write this big crown and a person standing there on the earth.

And the Christian story begins with this, that God was originally, God is the one who's created all things. And when God created all things in the original creation, it was wonderful.

God had his kingly rule and authority over the entire created order and the entire created order was completely and utterly at peace. Humans would have been in complete communion with God, perfect fellowship with God, closeness with God.

[6 : 08] The book of Genesis even describes it in the terms of a wonderful picture story that it would be as if every day God came from heaven and said, George, let's go for a walk.

And it would be as if your very best friend, the best friend you could ever possibly imagine, just wanted to go for a little stroll with you in an absolutely beautiful setting and just chat about your day.

And this picture from the book of Genesis describes what was the original intention in creation. The book of Revelation, which describes the final things, has this simple verse which describes what was originally intended.

It's Revelation chapter 4, verse 11. And if you'd like to try to follow along as I started, we're going to look at one scripture verse with each of these pictures.

And it's on page 1063 if you're using your pew Bibles. And it's Revelation chapter 4, verse 11. And here's angels are singing this hymn of praise.

[7 : 11] And they sing, See, so here you have, in a sense, the original picture that God has created all things.

His kingly rule goes throughout all the created things. And there's just harmony and there's peace. And God is acknowledged as God. Well, if there's one thing we all know, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that that's not the way the world is today.

Far from it. You just have to, you can't read the newspaper or listen to the news or even look at your own life in the mirror and know that that does not describe the way that the world is today.

Kendra, if you could put up the second slide. The second picture shows what's happened to human beings. And one of the things which God created in us human beings is freedom, free will.

And we human beings have used our free will to turn our back in God. And in fact, we've turned our back on God and we've decided that we're going to live as if God doesn't exist.

[8 : 18] And we want to be the rulers and the kings of our own lives. In a sense, we've said, God doesn't exist and I want his job. And that's the motto of human beings.

God doesn't exist and I want his job. And so in this picture, we can see the big crown representing God. And before there was God and people over the earth. And now we have God crossed off.

The earth is still there. And human beings are off to the side with their own little tiny crown. And we walk through this life being our own kings and our own rulers.

And there's two Bible verses which talk about this. More than two, but these two sort of point you to it. The first one is a very hard verse and it's very hard for people to accept.

But it's Romans chapter 3, verses 10 through 12. If you want to use your pew Bibles, it's page 976. And Paul here is quoting from the Old Testament.

[9 : 24] And here's what it says. Page 976, Romans 3, verses 10 to 12. As it is written, It's a very, very hard text.

But it's trying to describe how human beings, there's every human being is like this. They've in a sense put a big X through God and his authority. And we've decided that we will have a crown that we put over our own heads.

And we will walk around as if we are little gods. Just continue in Romans chapter 3. Look at verse 23. And this sort of brings the matter home. Romans 3, 23. A simple verse, easy to memorize.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Now, what's the consequence? Kendra, if you could put up the third one. What's the consequence of us using our freedom to turn our back on God?

I'm no scientist. You all know that. I'm an arts guy. But if I was to have a table here as a demonstration, and I was to have six or seven or eight pieces of iron, and I was to pick up one of the pieces of iron and press it to another piece of iron, nothing would happen.

[10 : 49] If I picked up the piece that I'm holding, I pick it up, the iron just stays there. Iron doesn't connect to iron unless it's glued or welded or something. But if I was to take a very powerful magnet, and I was to reach down and put that magnet on a piece of iron, the magnet would pick up the piece of iron.

And then, I know enough science to know this, that if I was to then take the magnet holding the iron, and I was to touch a second piece of iron, the magnetism flows through the magnet into the iron, and in fact, it can pick up a second piece of iron.

Now, there's engineers here, and some of you folks, you could tell me, depending, I guess, on the quality of the iron and the power of the magnet, how many pieces of iron we could pick up. And every piece of iron would be picked up, all because that very first iron, piece of iron, is firmly connected to the magnet.

And what Christians believe is this, that when we human beings turned our back on God and we decided to be our own kings and our own gods, that's what's called sin.

It's called rebellion. It means that evil has entered into the world. And it's because of that that we have disunity, we have crime, that we, in a sense, are inwardly broken ourselves, and that we know within ourselves that things aren't just right within ourselves, and it's not right within the world, and it all flows, not because of God, but because we, as human beings, turned our backs on God and have decided to live on our own terms.

[12 : 18] And one of the consequences of that decision, beyond evil, is actually even the existence of death, because, and you imagine this piece of, you can imagine the magnet, you can imagine the iron, and if I was to take that first piece of iron and I was to pull it away from the magnet, what happens?

All of the iron falls apart. And so that when we turned our back on God and then evil enters into the world and death follows from that, as our soul lost its communion with God, then all of the breaking, including ultimately the breaking of our body from our soul, which is death, that was to enter into the world, and death is a sign of our rebellion against God.

And it's also a pointer to the possibility that we could spend, that that could be, in a sense, the final word about us, that on into eternity, that we would be, in a sense, under God's judgment, that brokenness and diminishment would be the final word about us under his judgment, that death would only be the beginning of the final word about us.

Now, friends, if that was on one level, there is nothing more real about the world than what I've just described. If there's one thing that is incontrovertibly true, is that there is death, that death seems to rule, that there is sin, and that no matter what type of perfect system has been developed, it doesn't seem to deal with these fundamental conditions, and that there are no perfect people.

And if all I was able to share with you, and even though I could show that it was empirically true, it would be the worst news in the world. But the Christian story is called the good news, not the bad news.

[14 : 02] It's the gospel, not depression. And the good news comes with this fourth slide, and that is, and by the way, in that earlier slide, we saw the little tiny crown over the person, and the person that was, the person was lying dead.

That was what I was trying to describe. In the fourth picture here, we see God's plan. And in God's plan, he sends his son Jesus to earth.

Throughout the years, God had sent different prophets to warn people to turn from their ways and to make a promise that someday one who would come from God who would be the mighty deliverer.

And Christians believe that God had this plan to send this mighty deliverer. And this person, Jesus, was one who was able to perform mighty miracles. And he was able to talk of God in intimate terms.

And he was able to clearly express what was right and wrong. And his teaching and his stories had great power. But ultimately, as we saw in the gospel text today, Jesus, and Jesus came, and he is the only person who's ever lived completely and utterly a perfect life.

[15 : 12] He lived under the kingly authority and rule of God. And he never sought his own tiny crown. He never sought to turn his back on God. But he lived a perfect life of obedience under God's kingly rule.

And in that context, he performed miracles. He did many, many mighty things. And yet, the very same man who could walk on water, who could feed thousands from a few loaves of bread, the very, very same man who could speak a word and call a dead man back to life, the very, very same man who could do all of these things, he died.

And we Christians believe that Jesus didn't die because of anything that he had done that was wrong. It wasn't because, you know, he was doing really, really good, and then one day he just sort of slipped up and powerful people were sort of able to jump on him and overwhelm him.

We Christians believe that Jesus, out of obedience to God and out of love for you and me, that he came to this earth not only to live a perfect life and not only to perform those miracles and not only to give mighty teachings, but he came to die.

He came to die upon the cross as our substitute. Some of you have heard this story before of a time in my life when substitution was made very real.

[16 : 27] I was the story of, I was in grade eight, and I was supposed to have done a French speech, and it was time to give our presentations, and I was completely, utterly unprepared, and I am terrible at French, was then and worse now, and one day the teacher said, well, before we're going to give these French speeches, it wouldn't be fair to go alphabetical or reverse alphabetical order like I do every other week.

There's 32 kids in the class. I'm going to put, I've put 32 pieces of paper in a hat, and each piece of paper has number one and number two, number three, 32 pieces, each with a different number from one to 32.

We'll pass the hat, and as you take a number out of the hat, that will be your order, and she said, is that a fair thing to do, and everybody in the class, including me, said that's completely, and utterly fair, and you know, I'm like those that watch that show, Deal, No Deal, and you're like, I'm thinking, what are the odds of something really bad happening, you know?

Four kids a day, I have only one odd in eight that I'm going to have to do anything today. I can, you know, I was completely, utterly uncomfortable, and as the hat came to me, and I took the number out of the hat to my horror, I had number one, and I had been really carefree and smiling and laughing, but now I knew that my doom was upon me and that there was absolutely nothing that I was going to be able to do because I was unprepared and unskilled at French, and I had been presumptuous, just assuming that I had one or two more nights to work on this thing, I had done nothing.

And so the teacher says with a nice, bright, you know, teacherly type of, like as if we're doing something really fun and exciting, okay, who's next? Who's number one?

[18 : 15] And I had to put my hand up and I said, I am number one. And she said very brightly and enthusiastically like good teachers are, well, George, you come on up to the class and give us your speech. And I had to say, I can't do my speech.

I have not done anything to prepare. I can't do it. And she said, George, just come up and at least try. And I say, I can't even try. And I am just, I was completely and utterly flummoxed and defeated by this.

And so the teacher said, well, George, we all agreed that this is the fair way to go. You agreed that this was the fair way to go. And I have to either give you zero unless there's somebody in the room who would be willing to trade their number with your number.

And they took number one. And she said, is there anybody in the class like this? And Ricky, of blessed memory, who had number 16, said, I am willing to come and give George my number 16 and he can take my number.

I will give him my number 16 and I will take his number one. And he walked across the class and dropped 16 on my desk. And he went up to the front and he did the speech. He was my substitute.

[19 : 26] He traded places with me. And the wonderful good news of the gospel is the gospel doesn't deny that there is evil. It doesn't deny that there is death. In fact, it says that we human beings should wake up to the reality of death and the reality of evil and the impossibility for us to lift ourselves up by our bootstraps or impossibility of changing ourselves and we should understand that what this points to is that we need a savior.

And at the heart of that saving work, there has to be substitution. We don't need another example. Like how many of us need to see another unbelievably fit person telling us how we can lose weight and look like them?

Like we don't need another example, you know? And on top of that, they're just fantastically perfect. They can cook. They can fix things. They never do anything wrong. We don't need another example.

We need a savior who is a substitute. And Christians believe that Jesus came, lived perfectly under God's kingly rule and authority. and never broke fellowship with God and that Jesus came not only to do that but more importantly that he came to die upon the cross and that he came and in his death he says to George and he says to each one of us, he says, I am willing to trade places with you and I will take your place and suffer the consequences of all your actions and all your rebellion and you can take my place of unbroken fellowship with God.

It's what the Bible teaches. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21. 2 Corinthians 5 and it's on page 990 sorry, it's 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians 5 verse 21 and it's on page 1002 the very last verse.

[21 : 32] 2 Corinthians 5 521 on page 1002 for God made him that's Jesus who knew no sin to be sin for us in other words to trade places with us that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

It's this wonderful news of of of of exchange of substitution. Please put up the next slide. And and and the good news continues.

You see, we Christians believe that not only did Jesus die upon the cross and taste all there is and and die in a sense bearing my punishment and my sin that it wasn't an accident.

It wasn't as if the bad Romans or the bad religious people somehow were able to overwhelm Jesus but Jesus willingly entered into this out of love for you and me willing to be our substitute willing to trade places with us and Jesus after tasting everything there is to taste of death with nothing left over on the third day he emerged on the far side of death because he had never sinned death could ultimately not hold him or swallow him and on the third day he arose he arrived or rose on the far side of death having defeated sin having defeated death which is a sign of sin and we also believe all hostile spiritual powers anything which separates us from God is defeated by the person of Jesus and he rose from the dead and he sits at God's right hand it's why you see we don't talk about him as an historical person we don't talk about him like we might have talked about Napoleon or we might even talk about a holy person like Augustine or Saint

Teresa of Avila we don't talk about God as Jesus as if he's in the past we know that he's alive and Jesus invites us to share in his triumph he invites us to share in his triumph and he can hear us when we speak and we Christians believe that one day he will return and the work of salvation which he had begun by allowing our souls to be reconnected to God and yet we still see things which aren't right in the world and the work of salvation which he has begun by allowing our souls to be connected to God that God himself through the Holy Spirit would actually make his home within mortals like you and me that one day Jesus will return and fix the entire created order and in the meantime he invites us to share in his triumph and learn to live under the kingly rule of God not now purely from our own strength but with God himself the Holy Spirit actually living in us let's look at a passage of scripture which talks about this and it's

[24 : 27] Hebrews chapter 9 Hebrews chapter 9 and verses the sort of the second half of 26 right up till the end of the chapter just two and a half verses page 1040 and Hebrews 9 26 B so to speak and so it's beginning at the third line which says this but now once at the end of the ages Jesus has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself and as it is appointed for men to die once but after this the judgment so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many to those who eagerly wait for him he will appear a second time apart from sin for salvation Kendra if you could put up the final one so friends today we have a choice before us and this is illustrated by these two dot dot drawings on my right on the left hand side as you look at this you see the state of human beings apart from

Christ and a little tiny crown over our heads and we go through life and we go through world saying we're going to live as if God does not exist and I want his job and on the right hand side is the person who has made the choice to leave the left hand side and move to the right hand side to live under the kingly rule of Jesus trusting Jesus as savior and learning to allow him to be the Lord and the gospel message is that no matter what your state of affairs is on the left hand Jesus will never cast you out and it is it would make God I mean the Bible says that the angels throw a party in heaven when any person decides to move from the left hand side there to the right and you know what there is no better time than today to listen to the words and heed the words of

John 3 16 for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son to the end that all that believe in him shall not perish but have eternal life there is no better time than right now to move from the left side to the right side and how do you do that remember I said to you earlier on that my life was different at 3 55 p.m.

the 15th of May 1981 than it was at 4 0 5 p.m. May 15 1981 and the difference was five simple words which I said to my wife Louise will you marry me and sometimes a few words make all the difference in the world and it you know it's it's as if right now God through his son Jesus Christ is standing at the at the very very in a sense he's standing in front of you and he's knocking on the door to your heart and the door to your life and he's saying you know I would like to come in and make this offer of being your substitute of being your savior I would like you to enter into my triumph and Jesus stands and he knocks and he knocks and he knocks and it's up to us to open the door and allow him to come in and the way we open the door of our hearts and allow him to come in is to say a simple prayer to God that involves three very very simple concepts which we're all familiar with sorry thank you and please anybody who understand anybody who has all of the power that they need to ask

Jesus to move from the left to the right hand side of that picture and so there's no better time than today to say to God something like this father I am sorry that I have been living my life as if I am my own God or father I am sorry that I have been living my life apart from you and then to say to him father thank you that you had a plan that could save me thank you that you sent your son Jesus to be my savior and then say please Jesus come into my life and be my savior make your home within me and help me to learn to live under your authority to say sorry thank you and please very few words it can be your own words your own way of saying sorry your own way of saying thank you your own way of saying please but I can tell you right now that no one who says that to

[29 : 35] God will he say no to you and there is no better time than right now to do that could you please stand there's nothing magic I'm going to I'm going to move over to the side here there's there's nothing magic about leaving your pew and there's nothing like this I just know that sometimes it's really helpful for people maybe you're not sure whether you've ever done this before maybe you just really feel compelled in your heart that you would like to have some public way of acknowledging that you would like to now come to Christ and I'm going to allow a few seconds and if you would like to pray that prayer I invite you to come up to the front and I'm not going to do anything to embarrass you other than the fact that I invite you to come to the front and I will say the prayer slowly and you are free to repeat the words after me and there's no better time than today to give your life to Christ and so I'm just going to have a few moments of silence if you'd like to come forward you can if you're not sure if you can come forward you're free to remain in your seats and say the prayer from there but it can be very powerful to come forward lid hij

Wherever you're standing, if this is the prayer of your heart, just repeat silently the words after me.

He said, you can use your own words, but if you're not sure about your own words, you can just borrow mine and make them your own. Father, I am sorry that I have lived apart from you, turned my back on you.

Thank you, Father, that you love me. Thank you for sending Jesus.

Thank you for sending a Savior. Please, Jesus, come to me. Come into my life.

[32 : 40] Be my Savior. Be my Lord. Thank you that you will never leave. Pour your Holy Spirit upon me today.

In Jesus' name, amen. Father, I thank you for the gift of your Son and the working of your Holy Spirit.

May your Holy Spirit fall afresh upon each of us. Those of us who have given our lives to Christ, may your Holy Spirit fall afresh upon us and draw us ever closer to yourself. And those fathers still seeking after you, may your Holy Spirit move and work within them to draw them closer to yourself.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[34 : 02] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.