

Getting Started

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[0:00] I hope you brought popcorn. Hey, Diane, could you reach back and kill the lights?! Just so everybody can bathe in the beauty of these pictures.! Just knock them all down. Who cares?

! Just take them all. All right, here we go. Here we go. Let's start with this. My wife and I began by waiting for the clicker to work again. Did you turn it off? No, it's on.

You click on it. Just click on it once. There we go. We started with a trip up to Rainy Creek.

It was great. The fish would not bite. Then we went on this amazing journey to the flaming geyser. Wah, wah, wah.

You want to talk about incredible disappointment? It talks about this geyser shooting flames, I don't know, 30 feet into the air, and it's this little bubble.

[1:06] Anyways. The geyser was 20 years old. 120 years old? So we thought the geyser was in 1990. Yeah. The geyser was in the woods. During the sabbatical, I did over 450 miles of walking.

This happens to be on the above the... Where's the... Iron Goat Trail. Yeah, where the train disaster was. We also went to Orlando, Florida, and went to Universal Studios.

Where, where, where? My wife drank a beer, a butter beer, which is a cream soda with a little nutmeg and foam on top.

And man, it was so hot. That thing tasted so good. Oh, but yeah, we don't... And then, and then, I got to have perhaps the perfect moment of my whole, I don't know, forever.

That's me on the very front row of the VelociCoaster. Walked right up there. They let me sit in it. It was the best roller coaster I have ever been on.

[2:19] It holds you with nothing but a lap belt. And about half the ride, your derriere is not on the seat. And you're just suspended by this little lap.

Fantastic. My wife said she could hear me coming a quarter mile away, woo-hooing. It was... What is that on there? Yeah, yeah. Oh, you like it, don't you? Oh, it was great.

It was fantastic. And many of the rides were kind of terrible. But that one was just glorious. While we were at, in Orlando, we came across this plinth right here.

And I, from, I don't know, 100 feet away ago, I know exactly what that is. And I walked over there and I was 100% right. It is a slab taken from the Berlin Wall.

Why is that important? Because as a society today, we are flirting. We are not flirting. Many people are running full tilt into socialism with a complete ignorance of what happened.

[3:27] And this is sitting right outside the Hard Rock Cafe. And it's, it's, yeah, in the midst of our trip, I was just, I mean, sat there just brokenhearted over what's happening in our nation.

We also got to see our son Bryce. This was a very uncomfortable, non-comfortable moment.

Because you see these guys in the back way back here?

He ran with a group of, with a squad of his buddies from there to where he is now with the rifles pointed at the people in the stands. I didn't like that at all.

I was really, really, and I know they're just a demonstration squad and they're trying. Anyways, that was really cool to see him as, and you guys got to see him, didn't you? He showed up.

Looks good, doesn't he? Really good. When we got back, there was a bear who ate my honey and my bees. And if I'd have been home, I'd have killed him, but I wasn't home.

[4:29] So, there's my wife contemplating the mistakes she made 30-some-odd years ago. And this is where I spent a vast majority of my time.

Look familiar? Thank you so much. In all honesty, I made a big ask. I asked if I could spend a week in their cabin up on Lake Wenatchee.

And they said, oh, no, go spend as much time as you want up there. I tried to give the keys back.

He said, no, go, go, really, seriously. This probably had nothing to do with the fact that there was

absolutely no hot water.

But I fixed that. There's hot water there now. But you can see here, that was wonderful.

While I was there, I got to see the fires burning. Really good. And I also got to see the airplanes that flew around a couple of days to put them out. That was really nice. Yep. During my sabbatical, I read a bunch.

[5:39] I read Celebration of Discipline by Foster. What Got You Here Won't Get You There. Fantastic book on leadership and personal evaluation of who and where you are.

Renovation of the Heart by Dallas Willard. And Fairness is Overrated. They're not read from cover to cover books. They're more read this chapter and ruminate. Read this chapter and ruminate.

And so I'm still working through those two. And then a really surprising book. The Negotiator, Trump, the Temple, and the Clock by Dr. Jim Wright, Kelly's brother.

Actually, it was a really, really good read, which is surprising because he's an absolute great guy.

No, he's a good guy. But he and I are as about opposite as you can get.

He is all techno nerd all the way. And I'm like, I got grease under my fingernails and I'm thrilled. And so, but it was a great, great book. And we've got it.

[6:46] If you want to read it, go for it. I also spent just a little bit of time reading the Word of God.

As in, I read it cover to cover, front to back, all the way through.

Most days I would spend hours in the morning and then go for a couple hour walk and then come back and read it in the afternoon and go for another walk. Did I mention I did over 450 miles?

But I really had a nice blessing of having time to just read the Word of God. And there was a couple of passages in there that just, but we'll get to that.

I think there was something else I was going to say. Oh, yeah. That's my buddy, Tim Rice. He is a former Secret Service agent and he's also a former paratrooper that he and I used to jump out of the same airplanes.

I hadn't seen him in decades. He was on the presidential and vice presidential detail. He, he, what? Go ahead.

[7:58] Yeah, he, I would go visit Tim after he got out of the military and he introduced me to this strange woman. She got in the car and she won't get out. It's been 30 years. 30 plus years.

No. Yeah, he did introduce Kelly and I. And he, he didn't marry her, so I did. And I won that one big time. I want, I really, really wanted to make a point of introducing him because while we're sitting in his house, I saw something in the yard.

And I mean, it was like. And I look out there and I saw the biggest grasshopper you have ever seen in your life. Like five inch grasshopper.

And I'm like, Tim, what was that? And he's going to bang, bang, bang. And he's killed it because they just killed it anyways. But I wanted to make certain I, I showed you that because it's going to be part of what we read today in the gospel of Mark.

And if you've got your Bible, I encourage you to open it up to Mark chapter one. Mrs. James, would you do me the honor of turning on a light or two?

[9:04] Thanks. Do I need new shoes? No, the same sandals. They made it there and back. It's awesome. But no, it was great.

But we're going to read the first 15 verses in the gospel of Mark. And as we get ready, this is the key idea for today's message. God offers the hope of salvation to all who turn to him.

Okay. Salvation is there for anybody that turns to God. Just briefly introduction. Mark, it's very possibly the earliest of all the gospels written in the mid 50s.

It was written by John Mark. He wasn't an apostle, but he was a companion of Paul. You know, that guy who wrote a little bit of the New Testament and Barnabas. And he spent an awful lot of time with the apostle Peter.

In fact, he was basically the official recorder. The gospel of Mark is what he wrote after spending time with Peter. He's not an eyewitness. He didn't hang out with Jesus, but he hung out with Peter.

[10:18] And this is what he wrote. And he's got a very active style containing stories that are typical, like, well, there was a whole bunch of these types of stories or iconic, which is like, dude, you've got to hear this story.

Okay. So he ranges back and forth, but he's very active, very active. In fact, the key word as he gets started is immediately. You know, he was walking down the street and immediately he was doing that.

He was walking down and immediately he was doing that. You'll see it. It'll come up as we read. So if you've got your Bibles open to Mark, the gospel of Mark chapter one, let's read the first 15 verses this morning.

John appeared.

And proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

[11:51] Now, John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. You're seeing that big grasshopper.

And he preached saying, after me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

I have baptized you with water. But he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the spirit descending on him like a dove.

And a voice came from heaven. You are my beloved son. With you, I am well pleased. The spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

[12:57] And he was in the wilderness 40 days being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals and the angels were ministering to him. Now, after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.

So you saw why I wanted to make certain we had that big grasshopper. You see that it's active, immediately comes up on multiple times. No, I didn't try and eat it.

I killed it. But there's three words that come up in this passage that are vital. And we're going to spend our time on them.

Number one is the word gospel. Number two is confession. And number three is repentance. And so we're going to take a look at gospel, confession, and repentance today.

Okay. Gospel. Basic meaning. If you were just picking up a random ancient Greek tablet with writing on it and could speak and read ancient Greek and you read the word gospel, it means good news.

[14:31] Now, good news is, let's be honest. There are days when it's really good news for rain. Right? The farmer loves to have rain in time.

You know, he spends less money on watering. You know, I love to have rain. But the bride, does she like to have rain on her wedding day? Probably not.

You know, the farmer's over here going, rain, rain. And she's going over here, sunshine. You know, good news for one isn't necessarily good news for the other. Like, sports teams.

If your team wins, but what does that mean for the other guy? Well, good news, right? You know, not all good news is good news for everybody.

But this is a specific type of good news. This is a good news that says, though all are sinners, and though the penalty of sin is bad, God has provided a way of forgiveness.

[15:39] That's good news. That's good news. Romans chapter 3, verse 23. How many people are sinners? All. Even the great and glorious Mrs. James.

And, according to Romans 6, 23, what is the penalty of sin? All are sinners. Death. It's like, all are sinners, and the penalty of sin is bad.

But the gospel is that God has provided a way of forgiveness. A way to avoid that penalty. The gospel of Jesus is for anybody and anybody and all who want to receive it.

If we go back to Genesis chapter 12, verse 3, this is important. Because, like I said, you know, rain is good for the farmer at some time.

But, I mean, if you're trying to harvest your cherries, do you want rain then? No, because it damages him and leaves him bad, right? But take a look at what it says about the good news of Jesus in Genesis chapter 12, verse 3.

[16:47] Well, I'll pick it up in verse 1. In you, all the families.

All the families of the world shall be blessed. In you, all the families. This isn't a maybe.

This isn't a, well, you know, it's good for some people. This gospel is good for everybody. Because it's open to all. John 3, 16.

A little King James here. Whosoever, believe it on him, shall not perish but have. It's for everybody. It's a good news for anybody.

So, it's not what is the gospel.

[18:07] The gospel is being saved from the wrath of God. The gospel is being forgiven for your sins. The gospel is that God has provided a way for sinners to get saved.

That's not the question. The question is, how do you participate? Right? If it's a great thing, I want some of it.

And the question is, how do we participate? Well, I'm glad the question was asked. Because now we're going to talk about confession. Confession, confession. In the Greek, confession means to agree, to admit, or to promise.

Confession, confession. The idea is, when you confess something, you're stating, this is, you know, and whatever it is. Like, that is a pew. That's a chair.

Chair is not a pew. A pew is not a chair. You know, they're different. And we confess it. We say this is what it is. We agree. During the sabbatical, one of the things that God made really apparent to me is that my sense of humor is not a good sense of humor.

[19:24] And I need to work more on being friendly instead of trying to be funny. And so I'm really working on that, trying to be friendly, not funny. But, because right now I'd normally say something about how evil mushrooms are and, you know, confess that that's evil and that hot sauce is good.

But two people can look at something. And one person can say, it's red.

And the other can say, no, it's orange. And they can have an argument. And to confess is to say, no, it is.

And to agree. When we confess as believers, what we do is we take a look at God's word. And we acknowledge what God's word says about us.

In Mark, the meaning of confession is to acknowledge the truth of being a sinner. One who stands in jeopardy of God's wrath and His judgment. We look at God's word and it says that God is holy and that we are not.

[20:37] And confession is agreeing with that. It's when we stop deluding ourselves and we agree with God.

And we declare, I am a sinner. That's what confession means. And confession is incredibly important.

It may be one of the most important aspects. Of course it is. Because of this. Without confession. Without acknowledging your sinfulness.

Without acknowledging the fact that you have offended the holy, powerful, almighty. Who stands ready to judge you and cast you into eternal damnation because of your sin.

Without making that acknowledgement. Why would you ever want to get saved? I mean, if you're not guilty. If you're not worried about it. If you're in denial.

[21:53] Who cares about getting saved? But when you come to that point in time where you look at your sin and you go, God's right. I'm a sinner. And I'm in jeopardy. That's when the desire for salvation kicks in.

And you're like, dude, I need to do something about this. Which brings us to repentance. My friends, both the gospel and truth exists.

It's just the way it is. There is right and wrong. God exists. You can live in denial of it all you want. But that's not going to change it.

I used to be a baseball umpire. Kid would slide in and I'd call him out because he got tagged out. And the coach would come out and just scream and hollering. And coach, you can say whatever you want.

The kid's out. Doesn't matter. I called him out. He's out. But you. Coach, he's still out. When you get done yelling, he's going to be out.

[23:10] When you go to the dugout, he's going with you because he's out. You can have all the hissy feet and you can show me whatever you want. I called him out. And that normally, you know, they finally went off.

And that's how it is in our life. That's how it is in our society. A lot of people want to deny truth. A lot of people want to exist apart from the reality of God.

And they can walk around with their fingers in their ears going la la la la la la. I have one person I talk to quite regularly. He doesn't believe in God. He believes in aliens.

You know? Aliens help the Egyptians build the pyramids. I'm just like, man, I love you, but you are wrong. Right? And you can be as wrong as you want.

That's not going to change what truth is. That's why we have to confess and acknowledge what truth is so that we can get to repentance, which is a purposeful change of mind, a change of direction of your life.

[24 : 21] It is conversion. You see, repentance is the next step after confession.

When you come to that point in time where you see this is truth, and it changes your heart so that you do something different, that's what repentance is all about.

Not that long ago, I was pushing, I was going for 280 pounds. Hadn't quite got there yet, but I was working at it. I was going for it.

And I just realized I'm bad. And for me, I was way, way out of shape.

And so I made some life changes. I didn't go bio-Zempic. I didn't go get the shot or the pill or, you know, didn't have my wife put chains on the cupboards.

[25 : 37] I confessed that I was no longer a 20-year-old collegiate athlete, but rather I was a middle-aged, okay, getting beyond that, seriously overweight individual who could no longer run a marathon.

And so I stopped eating as much. And I'm now under 240 pounds, okay, which is, see, that's confession.

You are not a college athlete caliber individual anymore. And repentance is not eating everything, which I like to do, okay? In our life, confession is there is a God, there is a holy justice standard, and I have failed it, and therefore I am guilty, and I am in danger of being judged.

That's confession. Repentance is I'm now going to live for the Lord. The thing is we as believers can do that too because we as believers sometimes do the wrong thing, don't we?

We need to confess that. We need to repent and do the right thing. Confession and repentance. Repentance is a purposeful change of mind, a direction of life.

[27 : 01] It's really interesting. I haven't spent a lot of time on this. I've just been talking about the Bible. I haven't been pointing us to the Bible. I'm not going to say I've been slightly rusty in my preaching skills, but I'm getting back into it.

If you're still in the Gospel of Mark, take a look at chapter 1, verse 1. See that key word gospel in there?

This is the Gospel of Mark, right? Then we're going to go down a little bit further when it talks about John, verse 4. John appeared baptizing in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance and forgiveness of sins.

Let's see, verse 5. All the country of Judea and Jerusalem were going out to him, were being baptized, confessing their sins. See, what happened was the people realized what they were doing was wrong, and so what did they do?

They changed their behavior. That's why they got baptized. They acknowledged what they were doing wrong, and the first thing is he had to confess. I need. Next thing is they had to act like it.

[28 : 07] And that's why we have chapter 1, verse 4. He was preaching a baptism of repentance.

And look at verse 15. Because in verse 15, it's Jesus, and it says, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the Gospel. But I have a question for you.

Why would anybody choose repentance? Anybody got an idea? Why would somebody choose to repent? Guilt?

They feel bad they want to change? They feel bad they want to change? Because they're convicted? Let me tell you why they don't choose repentance.

You guys were all correct, by the way. You're all heading in the right direction. People don't choose repentance because it makes their life easier. In 1 Corinthians 15, verse 19, it says, if in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

[29 : 36] Living for Jesus isn't always easy. Can I get an amen? Living for Jesus means saying no to the selfish desires. It means going to church on Sunday morning.

It means tithing. It means giving gifts. It means sacrifice. It means helping others. Being a Christian is not always easy, and especially in the world today. How do people outside the church often respond?

Nothing but love and happiness, right? No. No. If you want to be the most persecuted person in the world, be a Christian.

It's the only religion that it's okay to persecute. If in Christ we have hope in this world only, we are of all people to be most pitied.

People don't confess and repent because they want a good life. But they want all the changes that come with it.

[30:41] When we turn to Jesus Christ, it changes our identity. We go from being a sinner to being a saint.

Who we are changes. Jesus, the God who created everything, the God who took on humanity and lived a sacrificial life and died on a cross for our sins, he goes from being our adversary to being our advocate.

Just think of that. As a non-believer, God is your adversary. But as a believer, he becomes our advocate. Our destiny goes from being hell-bound to being heaven-bound.

And our hope, our hope goes from being restricted to this life to an eternal hope secured by God for us.

turning to God changes everything that is important. We talked about this before the service started.

[32:00] She's leaving because she's got to go. It's not that she, anything like that, all right? Have a great one. We'll see you in a week or so. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But you know what? Christ was raised from the dead. And he is the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep.

What does that mean? That means that Jesus Christ came, lived, and died and rose again. And we who believe in him have been promised that we will join him.

It's not for this life only that we live. It's for the life to come. Which leaves us with this.

The question, the challenge that each person has to deal with. Joshua was the leader of the nation of Israel.

[33:11] And towards the end of his life, he was an old man. He was 40 years older than everybody else. Did you know that? Because he was a young man and God killed an entire generation and he was 40 years older.

All right. And he said this at the end of his life. If it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve. Whether the God of your fathers served in the region beyond the river or the God of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And that's the challenge each of us has to face today. Who are we going to serve?

We don't have idols that we bow down and pray to. Not in this nation. But are we going to serve this idol? Are we going to put ourselves first?

Or are we going to serve him first? Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for loving us enough to send your son.

[34:23] Lord, thank you for not judging us instantly as we deserve, but giving us time to understand and learn the truth so that we can confess it, so that we can think the thoughts that we are supposed to think.

And once we learn right from wrong, Lord, you give us a chance to repent and turn to you. Dear God, I thank you and I give you praise.

And as we go through this week, I ask this. Lord, that you help us to see things the way you see them.

And Lord, that our lives would be used to serve you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to wrap it up with how great that is.

Lord, my God, when I in awesome...