

Life In God's Kingdom: "Governed by Humility"

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Preacher: Billy Nye

[0 : 00] When I was fresh out of college, I had the unique opportunity to go and teach English in Mexico for two years at a school down there.

It was a wonderful experience. It was a great post-college experience, and I'm really glad I did it. It shaped me and formed me in many ways. But it was also very challenging. It was not challenging at all because of the food.

The food was delicious. I never got sick once. It was delightful. It wasn't hard because of the people. Mexican people are unbelievably generous, wonderful, welcoming, warm people. It wasn't because of the people. It wasn't really because I was homesick either. I wasn't missing my family incredibly, and I wasn't married at that point. It was a great time in my life to be adventuring abroad.

But rather, what made that experience so difficult was feeling caught between two cultures. You see, along with my luggage that I was bringing with me to Mexico, I was also loaded up with 22 years worth of American Midwest cultural values and habits and customs and expectations and just ways of doing things that I thought were normal.

[1 : 16] I had to learn a new normal in this new culture, painstakingly and often mistakenly. I had to adjust my eating times, for example.

I had to learn how to eat a second breakfast at 10 o'clock, which wasn't so bad. I enjoyed that. I had to learn how to eat my big meal of the day at 3 o'clock, and I had to learn how to eat a snack for dinner at 9 o'clock.

That's just the way the culture works down there. I had to learn a whole set of communication differences. In Mexico, you don't say, you don't do this for, hang on a second, you do this. I had to learn that. I was like, what are they doing this for? It means, hang on a second. But last but not least, I had to learn to kiss ladies on the cheek as an everyday greeting that wasn't romantic. That was pretty weird for a white guy of Scandinavian heritage from the Bible Belt. In other words, I had to ditch my old way of doing things in my old culture and embrace a new culture, a new way of doing things.

[2 : 23] It was a hard transition. What happened to me in Mexico is basically what has to happen to Christians when they come into God's kingdom. When we transfer our citizenship from the kingdom of self to the kingdom of Jesus, we have to learn a whole new way of life.

And what we've been seeing in the past few chapters in Matthew is Jesus has been making it very clear what kind of king he is and what kind of kingdom he is establishing.

He is a king that has come not to be a victorious Messiah through military might, but through self-sacrifice. It is an upside down kingdom with upside down expectations.

And he calls us to imitate him in his upside down way of doing things. And what we're going to find out from our text in Matthew 18 today, we're going to read the first 14 verses, is that this new way of being in God's kingdom must be governed by one essential upside down kingdom value.

And that's humility. Humility must govern the lives of Jesus' privileged kingdom citizens.

[3 : 50] But don't take my word for it. As we read through the text today, I want you to be looking for clues of humility. You're only going to see the word humble show up once, but humility is all over this passage.

And so be looking for that as I read. Let's read the first 14 verses of chapter 18 in Matthew. This is God's word. At that time, the disciples came to Jesus saying, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.

But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

[4 : 53] Woe to the world for temptations to sin. For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes. And if your hand and your foot causes you to sin, cut it off, throw it away.

It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands and two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire. See that you do not despise one of these little ones.

For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?

And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

[6 : 14] So in this text, Jesus is our guide and he is, as our teacher, he is going to do three things to help us learn and live out this essential kingdom value of humility.

In verses one to four, he is going to introduce us to somebody. He is going to make an introduction. In verses five to ten, he is going to give a stern warning. And lastly, in verses ten through fourteen, he is going to tell a story.

So he is going to make an introduction, give us a warning, and tell a story. And we will see how that helps us learn and live out this kingdom humility that we are being called to. So let's jump in. Verses one to four, Jesus makes an introduction.

Jesus' disciples approach him. They ask him a question. Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? We shouldn't think that the disciples are doing some calm philosophical pondering as to the upper crust members of the kingdom of heaven.

Rather, they are arguing. We learn from Mark and Luke's account that this is a heated debate amongst themselves of who is the greatest. Now, you might be wondering, why are they doing that?

[7 : 25] Why are they thinking that? Well, notice Matthew is kind of pointing us back a little bit into the previous couple of chapters by saying, at that time, at the beginning in verse one. So if we kind of take on some of the dynamic that has been happening in chapters 16 and 17, we might get a clue as to why the disciples might be thinking this question.

There's been a few distinctions made among the twelve disciples in the past couple of chapters. Peter has kind of risen to prominence as a leader and a spokesperson.

Then Jesus invites only three of the twelve up on the mountain to see his glory, Peter, James, and John. And then when he gets back with them from the mountain, he rebukes the remaining nine who were trying to cast out a demon from a boy and they couldn't do it.

He rebukes them for the lack of faith. So there's kind of some distinctions that are happening among the twelve. And this might have been the reason that the disciples were arguing of who is the greatest.

Those who had been privileged with some leadership and some intimacy with Jesus might have gotten some swollen heads about it. And the others might have been feeling a little bit sore that they didn't get that kind of privilege.

[8 : 40] But regardless of why they were thinking that, Jesus answers their question, but he does it in a classic Jesus style. He makes an introduction. He says, you want to know who the greatest is?

Let me introduce you to him. And he grabs a little boy, a child, probably takes him by the shoulders, and he puts him in the middle of a bunch of grown men who ironically are arguing like children.

And he says, truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Let's draw our attention first to the word turn in verse 3. In the movie Planes, Trains, and Automobiles, there's a great scene where John Candy and Steve Martin are driving down the wrong direction on the interstate and they don't realize it.

Another car on the right side of the same way, but on the right side of the interstate, rolls down their window and yells at them, you're going the wrong way.

[9 : 52] And it takes them several minutes to realize this while semi-trucks are coming at them. Jesus is saying, you're going the wrong way. You're going the wrong way with this kind of thinking.

Positioning yourself to come out over against another one of your fellow kingdom citizens is not the way citizens of my kingdom think. The way you're going, not only will you not be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, you're not even going to get there.

And actually that verb in the original language is a passive verb. Be turned. Unless you are turned. Unless someone kind of grabs your head and turns you and helps you to see it, you're going the wrong way.

Jesus is doing that for them. That's what God does to us very often. But be turned and do what? What is this turning going to do?

Well, they need to turn and become like children. How does Jesus want his disciples to become like children? He's not being sentimental.

[11 : 03] He's not saying, children are innocent. You should be innocent. Because I'm sure if any of you have interacted with any children at any point of time, you know that they are not innocent. They are far from it. They're wonderful, but they're far from innocent.

If we can get in the head of these first century Jewish men and kind of understand what they thought about children, that might help us understand what he's saying. In the ancient world, and in the first century Jewish world, there was no exception, children were insignificant.

In our culture, we tend to elevate children. We tend to value them and treasure them and even kind of arrange our lives around them. Not so in the ancient world.

They were a little bit more of a burden than anything else. They were insignificant. They couldn't do anything. They couldn't contribute to society. They couldn't make war. They couldn't lead nations. They couldn't build families.

They couldn't get wealthy. They couldn't climb the social ladder. They were just small. Unimportant. And they knew it. Children were also dependent and helpless.

[12 : 13] Especially the younger they are. God has blessed my wife and I with three children. We got another one in the oven. And every time one of them is born, I'm amazed at how helpless they are.

Dressing a baby is really hard. They're wriggling around. You're trying to stick arms through holes of sleeves and it's really difficult. You have to do everything for them. They are totally dependent.

So by holding children up as a model of humility, Jesus is telling his disciples that until their perception of themselves has shrunk to the size of an insignificant dependent child, they would not even be able to get into the kingdom, let alone be the greatest in the kingdom.

So by introducing them to the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus is exposing how saturated his disciples were with the default thinking of the kingdom of self.

He's also doing that to us. He is exposing us through this of how saturated we can be with the kingdom of self kind of thinking.

[13 : 28] In the kingdom of self, I am profoundly concerned about where I stand in comparison to others. My role and my place are very important.

How I am seen and perceived by those around me. In the kingdom of self, it is a first priority that the self be recognized. In the kingdom of self, I am the one who advances the position of self.

And my relationships with others are tools or stepping stones to accomplish that advancement of self. This is where we live, isn't it?

I don't know about you, but I tend to wake up this way. But this is not the way of the kingdom of heaven. In the kingdom of heaven, we must become like little children.

If God has his way with us, if he turns us to see our smallness and our dependence and our insignificance, not worthlessness, but our smallness.

[14 : 37] Then all of a sudden, we start to live differently. In the kingdom of heaven, we recognize our need and our dependence on another. In the kingdom of heaven, we humbly acknowledge the reality that I'm actually pretty small.

That I'm needy. I'm broken. I'm full of failure. I need my nose wiped. I need my shoes tied. Like children. In the kingdom of heaven, self takes a back row seat to the one who meets the need of self.

The one who has invited us into his kingdom. Self doesn't disappear. We don't become nothing. But self retreats. And it acknowledges the primary reason for its existence, which is to love God and to love others.

Brothers and sisters, this is the heart of humility. It's recognizing God for who he is as creator and redeemer. And it's recognizing ourselves for who we are as creatures in need of sustaining and sinners in need of redeeming.

It's also an emptying of self, of self-importance, of swollen self-perception, so that we can be filled with love for God and love and concern for others.

[16:02] And this humility is a requirement to be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. Not perfect, but a form of this humility is required.

Jesus' kingdom is populated with people whose self-perception has shrunk and whose God perception has become much clearer and whose others' perception has been activated.

Before we move on to the next section, let's not let this call to humility kind of float in our ears and out. Jesus is saying that if we don't turn and become like little children, all of us, and we admit our smallness and our dependence and our insignificance, our inability to do anything about our eternal and spiritual condition, then we will wind up very far away from the kingdom of heaven.

We're going the wrong way. So ask yourself, am I exercising my right to self-rule instead of acknowledging my lowliness?

Are my attitudes and thoughts more characterized by my realizing my smallness and my dependence upon God? Or rather a bloated self-perception of myself as the center?

[17:24] Am I constantly concerned about my status in comparison to others? Let's let Jesus' call to humility beckon us to die to self-rule and to give up our right to ourself.

And there is life and joy that awaits those who do that. So with that introduction of the greatest citizen of the kingdom of heaven in our ears, let's give special attention to Jesus' stern warning in the next few verses.

I'm just going to give you the warning up front, and then we're going to unpack it. The warning Jesus gives in this next section, verses 5 through 10, is this. If humility doesn't govern your relationships with fellow kingdom citizens, you are flirting with eternal judgment.

So I want to read verse 5 and verse 10, kind of the opening and closing of this little section. And I want to bring into your mind two contrasting ways of treating fellow Christians.

Verse 5. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. Contrast that with verse 10.

[18:56] See to it that you do not despise one of these little ones. Receiving on the one hand, despising on the other.

So here, Jesus is bringing to our attention two ways of interacting with fellow kingdom citizens. And ultimately, these are kind of the only two ways.

There are different, there's a scale here, but either you are receiving and welcoming your fellow kingdom citizens with humble care, or you are despising them in pride.

You are rejecting them. That can be a passive rejecting, but a rejecting nonetheless. So let's unpack that a little bit. Well, in verses 5 through 6, we see a lot of language of whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.

But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin. Is Jesus talking about children here? What's going on? He's continuing his illustration from the previous section.

[20:03] He's saying all those who have become little children in humility are part of the kingdom of heaven. He's saying, he's talking about Christians here. He's saying Christians, fellow believers, are the little ones, the children.

So he's saying whoever receives one such fellow believer receives me. Whatever causes one of these little believers in me to sin, then woe to you.

So he's not talking about children. He's talking about Christians. And that's going to be the same through the rest of this passage. He's talking about Christians all the way through. It doesn't mean that children can't become Christians, but he's talking about Christians.

So Jesus is turning a corner. He's not only urging his followers to humble yourselves and become like children, but he's also saying make sure that humility bears fruit in humble care for all of your fellow little ones, all of your fellow believers.

So in verse 5, he paints a picture of the fruit of humility of receiving a fellow kingdom citizen in Jesus' name. The idea is of welcoming, of warmly embracing, of accepting, fully incorporating them

into the kingdom community, leaning toward them in love.

[21 : 23] And did you notice the basis for accepting them? Whoever receives one such child in my name. In other words, he's saying we don't just accept them because they're little ones.

We accept them because they are Jesus' little ones. We accept fellow believers because they're fellow believers in Jesus. And did you notice what happens when we do that?

When we warmly embrace fellow believers because they belong to Jesus? When we welcome them, we welcome Jesus. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.

Is that called a mind, Matthew chapter 25, when Jesus is saying the sheep are on one hand, the goats are on the other. The sheep are those who belong to Jesus.

The goats are those who have rejected Jesus. And he berates the goats for, he said, I was in prison. You didn't visit me. I was hungry and you didn't give me food to eat. I was thirsty.

[22 : 25] You didn't give me anything to drink. I was naked. You didn't clothe me. And like, when did we see you hungry and naked in prison? And when did we see you like that? And he said, the fact that you haven't done that to any of my brothers, of those who believe in me, you haven't done it to me.

And he commends the sheep for the opposite reason, that you saw me in prison and you visited me. I was hungry and you fed me, et cetera, et cetera. Like, Lord, we never saw you like this.

And he said, if you did it to my brothers, you did it to me. The way that we treat fellow kingdom citizens is a reflection of our love and devotion to their master and ours, or the lack thereof.

So this is a strong, strong argument about the way we ought to treat fellow kingdom citizens.

And the opposite is also true. Look at verse 10. See that command? See. That's a strong command. Beware. Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones.

[23 : 39] Don't treat your fellow believers with any attitude or action that is rooted in pride, in exalting self over them. He unpacks that in verse 6.

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

There's a scary pronouncement of judgment on those whose treatment of fellow believers is consistently characterized by proud rejection and not by humble care.

But maybe you notice the connection between rejecting and causing them to sin. So if we turn our back on a fellow believer actively or passively, then we're potentially causing them to sin.

How can that be? Well, have you ever been treated poorly by a fellow believer? I imagine that's probably happened to a few of you. It can tend to affect the way that you relate to God.

[24 : 50] If a fellow believer or a church rejects another believer in some way, whether passively or actively, treating them proudly and not warmly, it can cause them to leave the church, to stray from the truth, to wander around alone without any fellowship with other believers, without any spiritual health attending to them, it can cause them to sin toward discouragement, toward unbelief.

And in verse 7, Jesus emphasizes that unfortunately that's the way the world is. Temptation just happens in the world. There are stumbling blocks. There are causes to sin. But he says, woe to you if you're the cause of someone's cause to sin.

If you are the cause, woe to you. There are some strong words of judgment because Jesus is telling us that we are responsible in some way for the spiritual well-being of our fellow brothers and sisters.

And that stems from whether we are treating them humbly, lovingly, warmly, or we're giving them the cold shoulder. And the other, a more frightening reason for this judgment, not only were we potentially causing them to sin, we are rejecting Jesus.

Those who despise and reject Jesus' little ones out of pride, they're rejecting Jesus. Now, it doesn't mean we should have a victim mentality about this.

[26 : 31] If you've been hurt by a fellow believer, you shouldn't view this as kind of an excuse to say, I'm a victim. And you're responsible to respond to that humbly as well.

But this is a strong, strong warning that we ought to care for all of God's little ones that he puts in our path, especially on a Sunday morning, the way that we want to treat Jesus.

And that is why Jesus is so extreme with his warning to avoid this kind of pride in verses 8 and 9.

He's talking about chopping off hands and feet and plucking out eyes if that's causing you to sin.

He's saying, be vicious, be radical in your fight against pride and lack of warm care for your brothers and sisters.

Normally, when we hear this language of cutting off hands and feet, we associate with fighting the sin of lust, because that's what Jesus is talking about back in chapter 5. But here, he's saying, viciously deal with whatever is causing you to act in pride toward your brothers and sisters.

[27 : 39] Deal with that attitude viciously. Cut it off. Distance yourself from it. And run to humbly care for your brothers and sisters.

Now, here are two ways in which we can do this. There's multiple ways in which we can do this. But in James chapter 2, the apostle James just lambasts the church that he's writing to because they're showing favoritism.

They're showing partiality. They're showing a distinction between the higher class citizens in their mind, those who are rich, who look good, they're sophisticated, and they come into a Sunday morning meeting.

They're treated well. But those who don't look so good, those who aren't as attractive, they're treated poorly. If someone's outward appearance influences your heart to be partial toward them or against them, then that's a fruit of pride.

And it's harshly condemned by Jesus. You're flirting with eternal judgment by proudly rejecting one whom Jesus has welcomed. You're going the wrong way.

[28 : 52] If you recognize that in yourself, put it to death. Another way is a lot like this, but it's more subtle. And it's no less despising.

This might hit a little closer to home. Generally, I'm speaking very generally here, we tend to, as people, as social beings, we tend to categorize other people into two groups.

These people right here, they're like me. And we have stuff in common. And it's easy for me to be around them. Easy for me to talk to them. I naturally gravitate toward these kind of people.

And then these people over here, I don't have a lot in common with them. They kind of put me off a little bit, the way they talk, the way they dress. They're not like me.

They're harder for me to be with. They cost me more energy. I'm speaking very broadly, but for the most part, that tends to be true of us. It tends to be true of me. Let me give you a little diagnostic test for this.

[29 : 55] On a Sunday morning, any given Sunday morning, you walk into Christ the King Church. And from the moment you walk in to the moment you leave, 99.9% of your interactions, 99.9% of the Sundays you attend church are with the people in this category.

People that are like you. The people that you gravitate toward. People that make you feel good. People that are easy for you to be around. You might be in danger of passively, but nonetheless still despising the people in this category.

Who are your brothers and sisters, who Christ has welcomed and whose Christ has shed his blood for them. Do not despise even one of his little ones.

Even passively. So church, let's act radically here. Let's chop off hands and feet and pluck out eyes if we need to. To make sure that we, Christ the King Church, are a church that is defined by universal humble care for our brothers and sisters.

Now it doesn't mean that chopping off a hand here means that you can't talk to people that you like to be around. I'm not saying that. Praise God for those relationships. Continue your humble care in those relationships for those people.

[31 : 16] But it does mean that we need to actively pursue those people who cost us more energy to be around. It means that we need to consider inviting people that we wouldn't normally consider inviting over to lunch or for dinner.

It might mean that we make considerable effort to pray for people who are not like us. Who we don't have much in common with, but we know who are in need.

This should shape our Sunday morning gatherings. This should shape our conversations. This should shape our life groups. This should shape the way that we interact with one another throughout the week.

We need to seek out all of God's little ones that he has put in our path and seek their good. And guess what? If we do that, if we humbly care for every single little one, and we welcome them warmly, then we do it unto Jesus.

Jesus. So Jesus has introduced us to the greatest kingdom citizen, and he's given us a very stern warning of how we are, as humble kingdom citizens, to treat other humble kingdom citizens.

[32 : 33] And now he's about to tell us a story. And the point of this story is to illustrate God's fierce love for all of his little ones.

And that fierce love for all of his little ones should be the very thing that invigorates our kingdom humility and our humble care for others.

So let's look at verses 10 through 14. Jesus prefaces this story with an interesting statement at the end of verse 10. I'll get a running start here. See to it that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. Now scholars go back and forth as to exactly what Jesus means by the angels of these little ones. Either it can refer to angels whom God has assigned to care for his little ones, or it can refer to the spirits of dead Christians who have already died and are beholding the Father's glory in heaven. Scholars aren't sure exactly what to make of that phrase. But regardless of the interpretation, Jesus' point remains the same. It is that there is an intimate connection between these little ones and our Father in heaven.

[33 : 57] So if you take the guardian angel interpretation, Jesus is saying that the Father keeps close tabs on his little ones. He's always getting reports and giving instructions about them.

Or, if you take the spirits of dead Christians interpretation, the emphasis is on our eternal destination to be in intimate communion with our Heavenly Father, beholding his delicious glory forever.

So either way, Jesus is saying this, these aren't just my little ones, they are my Father's little ones, and he cares for them fiercely. And then comes the illustration of this fierce love in a beautiful mini parable in verses 12 through 14.

Jesus says, What do you think? If a man is a hundred sheep and one of them, just one, has gone astray, does he not leave the 99 on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the 99 that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

[35 : 07] I'm sure many of you have heard this parable before, but we've heard it probably more often from Luke's version of it. Jesus probably used this little story on multiple different occasions to illustrate the point, but with a different emphasis depending on the context.

In Luke, the emphasis is on a lost sheep that is a sinner who is brought into the kingdom for the first time, and there is much rejoicing in God's active pursuit of each sinner. But here in Matthew 18, the context is different.

The lost sheep in this context is a Christian who has gone astray. He's talking about little ones, kingdom little ones, Christians. And specifically, given the emphasis on humble Christian relationships and the warning against pride and causing other little ones to sin, this sheep could have possibly gone astray because of being caused to sin through poor treatment by other Christians.

Now this might hit home with some of you. This lost sheep might hit home either because you're hurting, because you've been dealt some wounds by fellow Christians, perhaps even caused to sin by fellow Christians, perhaps even gone astray because of the way Christians have treated you. Again, that doesn't mean you should have a victim mentality, but that's real. Or this might hit home because you're hearing the language of lost sheep and you're thinking, I think that's me.

[36 : 40] I'm just kind of wondering. I'm astray. I'm not in the fold. I think I belong to God. I think I've got faith, but I'm not where I should be. Well, let's notice this shepherd.

First, notice that he's counting the sheep. He's got 100. He realizes he has 99. He's not counting them because he can't sleep. He's counting them because he wants to know that his entire flock down to the last woolly tail is safe.

There's one missing. Notice he doesn't say, I got most of them. That was a rough trip across the mountains. You win some, you lose some. No biggie.

No, he goes. He searches. He leaves the 99, assumingly entrusting them to care of other shepherds, and he actively pursues the one, just one, that was led astray.

By the way, I'm not sure if you noticed, but the word one pops up in the original language five times throughout this passage. In verse five, one such child.

[37 : 45] Verse six, one of these little ones. Verse 10, one of these little ones. Verse 12, one of them goes astray. Verse 14, that one of these little ones should perish.

Do you see the emphasis on the individual sheep? God cares for individuals, especially his individuals that are his own.

Each individual believer, you are infinitely valuable to God. And if this is true, how dare we pridefully reject, neglect to welcome, or neglect to humbly care for any one of God's sheep that he would chase down if it's gone astray.

And on the flip side, we should never think, God doesn't care about me. I understand why we think that. I think that sometimes, but we should never think it if this is the heart of our Father.

Not only does he pursue the one, but when he finds the one, his joy over finding that one lost sheep is greater than his joy of knowing that the other 99 are safe.

[38 : 58] He doesn't want any of his own, not one, to perish. Our God is a pursuing, seeking, saving God. God's love for just one of his own is extremely fierce.

Your God's love for you, if you are one of his own, if you belong to Jesus, no matter how messy you are, no matter how awkward you are, no matter how dense, no matter how shame-ridden, your God pursues you.

You personally, you individually, because you're his. and his joy, when you return in repentance and faith, is over the moon.

What kind of God has that kind of unearned grace that would actively seek out a straying soul with that kind of intensity?

What kind of God is so full of holy love that when you mess with one of his own, his wrath burns hot? This kind of God ought to invigorate our kingdom humility, not because he demands it, but because when you're loved like that, you can't help but be humble.

[40 : 22] And because when you realize your fellow little ones are loved like that too, how dare you treat them with anything else but humility? You can't help but treat others with the same kind of loyal, tender care that your God has shown you.

You wouldn't dream of exalting yourself over against somebody else when you grasp the massive good that God has done to you through his son, Jesus. You're going to be eager to welcome the smelliest, awkwardest, messiest fellow believer that God puts in your path because God in Christ has welcomed and pursued someone like you.

Brothers and sisters, God's word stings sometimes. I've been stung this week preparing for this. It always stings when you realize that you're more sinful, you're more proud, you're more prone to being ruled by self than you realize.

If you're feeling that, that's a good thing. God uses his word like a surgeon's scalpel to cut out the cancer of pride and it hurts. But God's word does more than that.

It doesn't just hurt, it heals. He cuts us open, reveals our desperate need for him, but then he sews us back up with the sutures of the gospel.

[41 : 51] He shows us that he has not rejected people like us but he has warmly welcomed people like us through the gospel. The good news that Jesus was humble, that Jesus emptied himself out of humble care and that he came to find us.

And he pursued us all the way to the cross and back from the grave to make sure that we would be welcomed. And now we get to live out that beautiful story together by laying down our lives in humble care and warm welcome for every single little one that God puts in our path.

regardless of human differences, regardless of social status or class or skin color, white collar or blue collar, people like us, people not like us.

Because all of us who believe and trust in Jesus, we get to do this life together in the kingdom forever. So let's do this now.

Let's start now. After I pray and while the worship team is getting ready to lead us in a closing song, can I just encourage you to do some business with God? Let him deal with you by his spirit.

[43 : 16] Let him soften your heart toward him and toward your fellow brothers and sisters. If someone's been popping into your mind that you need to go and ask forgiveness for the way that you've treated them and pride, even if it was passive, if God's spirit's working on you, don't hesitate.

After service, go, obey, act in faith. If you've been hurt by a fellow Christian, if you've been tempted to sin or stray because of that, pastors and elders will be down here in front to pray with you.

Our Father's pursuing you. So let's act in faith and obedience to God's word. Let's be a body of little ones who realize that we're little ones and seek to imitate our Father's heart toward all of his little ones to the glory of Jesus.

Let's pray. Father, thank you that you have in grace pursued people like us.
You've grabbed our heads and turned our eyes to see our need for Jesus. for those who have not.
Pray for those who need to humble themselves before you.
[44 : 35] I pray, God, that you would do it. That you would gain entrance, that you give them
entrance into your kingdom. Pray that you would deal with us according to your word by your spirit.
Make us a body that warmly welcomes all of your little ones. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.