

It's All About Jesus

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[0:00] It's New Year's resolutions time. Hey, it's not easy to shed some pounds. It's not easy to change your eating habits. It's not easy to change your spending habits.

You know what? It's just not easy being a human being. Do I have an amen? Amen. You know what else is not easy? Being a wholehearted follower of Jesus Christ.

Daily dying to yourself so that you can daily live for Christ in more and more areas of your life.

Each and every day of your life. It's not easy being a follower of Jesus, but here's the result. When you're following Jesus day in and day out, daily dying so that you can daily live for Him, you become more like Christ in your character.

You're conformed to Jesus' character. You become like Him. And not only that, as you're looking to die to yourself in order to live for Christ day in and day out, you begin to obey more and more of His commands in more and more areas of your life.

[1:16] And you know what the result of all that is? God's name gets praised. His name is hallowed.

It means to be made much of. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not easy, but it's absolutely worth it because God's name is hallowed.

And that's not just being a disciple. Being a disciple who is making disciples of Jesus Christ is absolutely worth it too because not only do you see God hallowed in your life, you start seeing God hallowed in other people's lives.

God's praise spreading across the earth. God's praise. This morning, this first Sunday of 2019, we're going to delay getting back into the book of Revelation.

We're going to focus on a number of passages from the Gospel of Matthew because I want to focus you on what matters most. Maybe better said, on who matters most.

[2:25] because it's all about Jesus. You want to say that with me? It's all about Jesus. Over the last year, year and a half, the elders of our church, we've been sensing a need to focus our church on being disciples of Jesus Christ who are making disciples of Jesus Christ.

That's who we are and that's what we do. And think about it. In our current cultural context, that's not easy. Now, there was a time in our country when calling people to forsake their sin repentance in order to follow Jesus, well, that was a little easier.

People spoke the same language. We live in a culture of Christianity, so it's a little more easy to talk about these things, but that age is by and large passing away.

We live in a different America than 20 years ago, don't we? We do. And as it gets more challenging to be a follower of Jesus, and it will, you know what you're going to need more and more?

Encouragement. Encouragement. You're going to need courage to follow Jesus all the days of your life. You're going to need to be courageous and stepping out in faith to do what's right in the Lord's eyes, especially when it gets contested.

[4:00] Now, the kind of encouragement I'm talking about is not the building up of one's self-esteem. There's other places you can look for that. The kind of courage I'm talking about is the building of perseverance in a Christian's heart to persevere through challenge and suffering to endure to the end.

Courage to overcome temptations and tribulations that come on account of being identified with Jesus Christ. It's all about Jesus.

So my aim this morning is to put courage into your hearts to live wholeheartedly for Jesus, regardless of the cultural circumstances, for the rest of your life.

Here's how I'm going to do that. We're going to look through the Gospel of Matthew. We're going to be stopping off at a couple different areas, but there are three lines of encouragement I want to put right into your heart.

First one is this. Jesus is real, and it's real all the time. It's all true. Jesus is real. You're going to find some encouragement there.

[5:15] And the second line of encouragement is Jesus is worth it all. He's worth it all. He's the treasure. You're going to find some encouragement there. And finally, Jesus is with us in it all.

There is a promise to hold on tight to. It's going to give courage to you. Are you ready for some encouragement? Let's dive in.

Jesus is real. It's all true. Apparently, Vince Lombardi, at the beginning of every football season, and I'm not saying I'm a Packers fan, but Vince Lombardi, at the beginning of every football season, he'd gather the Packers together, and he'd hold up a football at the beginning of practice, the very first practice of the year, and he'd say, this is a football.

This is what this is all about. It's all about Jesus. We're coming out of the Christmas season, and if Christmas teaches us anything, it's that the second person of the Trinity took on real human flesh. He had real eyelashes, and he had real fingernails, and he had real detached earlobes, because we know only godly people have detached earlobes. Bad joke.

[6:38] Bad joke. He really took on flesh. Matthew 1.23, he is Emmanuel, God with us.

Fully God, fully man. Fulfillment of Isaiah 7.14. It's true. The second person of the Trinity who eternally existed at a particular point in time took on flesh.

It's really true. And he really lived a perfectly righteous life in God's eyes. All 33 years of his life, every moment of every day, nothing but pleasing God.

Never sinned once. He did what none of us could do. He lived a perfect life. And he really did die willingly out of love for sinners as a substitute on the cross.

He really did die. Real cross, real nails, real blood, accomplishing a real salvation. And not only did he die on the cross and was buried, he was really raised on the third day.

[7:53] And he actually appeared to 500 people as eyewitnesses following his resurrection according to 1 Corinthians 15. He really was raised from the dead and he really ascended on the clouds to the right hand of the Father where he is right now.

He really is alive now. Right now. Listening in. And right now, he is truly building his church all across the globe.

I just got done finished reading a book and in this book, there was just kind of some stats given of God, the work, the church planting work around the world right now. It was so encouraging to hear how Aslan is on the move building his church in some of the hardest nations on earth.

He really is at work. He really is alive. And he really is going to come back. That day is set in the Father's calendar.

And despite what some people may think, we're actually one day closer to that day. One Christmas closer. One New Year's closer.

[9:11] The window is getting smaller to the return of Jesus Christ. And when he really does come back on that real day, he will really judge the living and the dead.

He will separate them as sheep from the goats. Matthew 25. He is the judge. And he separates the unrighteous from the righteous.

And the unrighteous, he will cast into eternal torment. Hell is real. And for those of us whom he has saved by his mercy and his grace, we will really dwell with him forever.

In his presence, we will see his earlobes. We'll know if they're detached or undetached. We'll be with him in pristine, sinless glory of the new heavens and the new earth.

There are no threats there. There are no tears there. There's nothing but perfect peace there. Jesus is real. It's all true. It's all true.

[10:24] We're not making this stuff up. And what you need to know is that it's all, it's all about Jesus, but they're just not propositional truths to believe about Jesus.

Just to check off in some theology book. These are truths looking to have impact on sinners' lives. They're truths on mission because Jesus is on a mission.

It's in the name, Jesus, Matthew 1, 21. He came to save us from our sins. Jesus literally means Yahweh saves. He has come to save us.

It's all true. It's all about Jesus. And not only these truths about Jesus are true, Jesus affirmed this whole book.

Genesis chapter 1. God really did create the heavens and the earth with just words out of nothing. Genesis 1 is true.

[11:30] Genesis 2 is true. God really did create one biological man and one biological woman, named them Adam and Eve, to be joined together for life in the holy state of matrimony, to be fruitful, multiply, subdue the earth as his representatives.

It's all true. Genesis 2 is true. Genesis 3 is true. Adam and Eve really did disobey God in the garden, resulting in their expulsion from the garden and our inherited sinful nature.

Romans chapter 5. Thanks, Adam. Thanks, Eve. All human beings are really sinful rebels in God's sight from birth.

It's true. And you know what's amazing? God really saw it before it all happened. Before the foundation of the world, God saw it all.

And before the foundation of the world, He set into motion a plan for the fullness of time to rescue sinners from their sin that's centered on this person of Jesus Christ.

[12:45] It's all about Jesus. I know you know this, but you've got to hear it again. Our deepest problem today is not the political gridlock of Washington, D.C.

over a border wall. That's not our greatest problem. Our greatest problem is not the undiagnosed health issue that is currently somewhere in your body or somewhere in your spouse's body or somewhere in your child's body or somewhere in your parent's body.

That's a problem. It's not our greatest problem. Our greatest problem is not the rising interest rates in the delicate global economy. That's not our biggest problem.

Our biggest problem is not access to affordable health care. It's a problem. It's not our biggest problem. Racial injustice is not our biggest problem.

It's systemic in our culture. Yes, it's not our biggest problem. The greatest problem of all humanity is not outside of us.

[13:53] It's resident in us. Deep within every human heart is an inherited sinful nature.

And just like a baby in the arms of his mother who arches his back, we arch our backs in the hands of a loving, providential creator.

We exchange God for idols. We deny him and take his place.

Our deepest problem is our own sinfulness internally. That's our greatest problem.

all the other problems that I named, you can trace those all the way back to the garden. It's all true.

[14:57] It's all real. So here's what this means. Our greatest problem personally and in your families and in our city and nation, it's spiritual in nature.

It's rebellion against God. And therefore, the solution is not economic. It's not educational. It's gospel. Spiritual.

Your greatest need is to be made right with a holy God. And the only way that you can be made right with a holy God is through the blood of Jesus Christ who died on the cross. A real cross with real nails shedding real blood accomplishing a real salvation.

He's our prince of peace who sacrificed himself for us. It's all about Jesus. It's all about Jesus.

So when you start to come into the biblical understanding of what the greatest problem is and what is God's only solution for that, it should have the effect of prioritizing your life.

[16:09] So Jesus is not a pastime. Jesus is not a hobby. Jesus is not an eventually thing I'm going to get to.

He is the Lord of lords and King of kings and he's worthy of every breath of your life. Every square inch in light of who he is and what he's done. It means we're not playing church.

We're on mission to bring gospel to sinners. We're not making this thing up as we go along. We're not trying to make the Bible fit our preferences.

But we're standing on God's word. No better yet, we're coming under God's word. We're not trying to twist this to make it fit our culture. We're not trying to fill people's time in order to be productive citizens.

We're organizing to make disciples of the nations. We're not observing in the stands what the living Christ is doing and building his church.

[17:18] We have been commissioned by the living Christ to engage the world in order to make disciples for the glory of his name. It's all true.

It's all real. We are Christ's plan to make disciples in this city.

So we don't gather Sunday by Sunday to be entertained. We don't gather in order to evaluate. We gather together to be equipped and empowered and encouraged and envisioned so that we are scattered to make disciples of the nations.

It's all true. Jesus is real. This isn't make-believe. Is this putting a little courage in your heart?

To remember that it's true? I'm going to say Jesus is real and I want you to say it's all true. Jesus is real.

[18:34] It's the case. The second line of encouragement that I want to put courage into your heart is that Jesus is worth it all.

And what I mean by he is worth it all is what Jesus means by worth it all. Dying to yourself day in and day out in order to live wholeheartedly for Jesus day in and day out.

Jesus is worth giving your all for. And not just you giving your all for. Jesus is worth calling others to die to themselves so that they too can give their all for Christ.

Have you realized yet the radical cost of becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ? Have you come to terms with that yourself yet?

Becoming a Christian is not like joining Costco. It's not like getting on Spotify. Spotify. It's not signing up at the Y.

[19:48] It's not getting the latest E letter from whoever. Becoming a follower of Jesus is costly.

Listen to Jesus' words in Matthew 16, 24 and 25. If anyone, if anyone, age, gender, ethnicity, tax bracket, educational level, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Die to yourself. For whoever would save his life for his sake will lose it. but whoever loses his life for my sake, Jesus says, will find it.

Life is in Jesus. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it this way in The Cost of Discipleship, when Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.

Jesus is real. And the cost to follow him is real. So the real question is, not so much is it true, is he worth it?

[21:10] That's the question. Is Jesus worth dying to yourself day after day so he can be exalted in your life?

Jesus answered this question with a one verse parable in Matthew chapter 13. It may be my favorite parable and not just because it's short.

In Matthew 13, 44, Jesus says this. He's talking about what it means for someone to experience salvation, the salvation that's found in God alone.

He calls it the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

What is the hidden treasure? The hidden treasure is the salvation purchased by Jesus' blood. It is treasure. And what is this joy of selling all that he had?

[22:23] That's repentance. The joy of dying to yourself so that you can acquire what only God can give you.

And Jesus says, salvation is treasure for the soul. Joy. The joy of knowing that Christ's blood paid in full the penalty for all your sins forever.

Joy. The joy in knowing that Jesus' blood made peace between you with God so much so that Paul can say in Romans 8, there's nothing that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. There's no challenge, no threat big enough. Joy. Joy in the power by the Holy Spirit to say no to sinful desires and to walk in purity.

There's joy in obedience. Joy. Joy in having power from God's Spirit to resist the schemes of the devil. The devil can't move a hair on your head without the Father's okay.

[23:33] Joy in experiencing the presence of God to comfort you now. Joy in the selfless serving of other people without agenda.

It's no longer what can you do for me now. Jesus was right on when he says it's better to give than to receive. Joy in purpose.

A purpose that is bigger than your life. When you become a Christian and a follower of Jesus you cease to exist for yourself.

You never really did to begin with. but he purchased you by his blood for him. And he died that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

For him. So when your purpose is marked by treasure joy in Jesus you know what flag you raise every morning?

[24:38] Four words hallowed be your name. It's all about his glory now. And there's joy in that.

A joy that nobody can rob you of. Because this treasure is secure. Is Jesus worth it? He's worth it. The call to die to yourself to follow Jesus is real just as Jesus is real just as the joy of finding this treasure is real. He's worth it.

Here's why that matters. The culture's changing. We'll suffer more for being a follower of Jesus.

This past week I was talking to a sister from the church and we were sharing stories about trying to engage our family members about the gospel over the holidays and I had to confess I just failed in some areas.

But what she said was so encouraging. She's sought to share the gospel with one particular family member and that family member keeps on pushing her away. She's not being obnoxious.

[25:50] She's just being faithful. But she's experiencing a kind of suffering for Jesus. She wants her family member to know the treasure.

treasure. And this family member doesn't want anything to do with it. It creates some social discomfort, some awkward moments, but when you measure it against the treasure hidden in the field, it's worth it.

It's worth it. being a disciple of Jesus Christ is absolutely worth it. And calling others to count the cost to follow Jesus is worth it too because we know the treasure.

I'm going to say Jesus is real. And I want you to say and he's worth it all. Jesus is real.

I hope this is putting some courage in your heart. It's all about Jesus. The last line of encouragement is he is with us in it all.

[27:14] he is with us in it all. Last week I was supposed to take my son to school at 7.15 in the morning and I totally lost track of time and I gave him my word that I'd bring him to school and I essentially broke my word, broke my promise.

I had to apologize to him. Have you ever forgotten a promise? You ever make a promise and then forget it? A forgotten promise is as good as a failed promise.

You'll know something wonderful. Jesus never forgets his promises and Jesus always keeps his promises. He always keeps his promises.

Do you remember the promise he made in the Great Commission? you might be like I don't even remember the Great Commission let alone the promise in it. The Great Commission Jesus speaks. It's at the end of the book of Matthew, Matthew 28. Jesus has been raised from the dead and he commissions all his disciples for all time with the greatest of all tasks.

[28:35] Listen to this. All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that he commanded even the command to die to yourself and follow him.

And then comes the promise. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. It's where the gospel ends.

Behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. This promise is designed to put courage into a disciple's heart to know that Jesus is with us in it all.

This promise is a promise of the ongoing presence of the risen Christ. Why would we need a promise like that? Why would Jesus promise to us that he would be with us?

Well, this promise, great promise, is tied to the greatness of the task, the great commission. And what makes the great commission so great is not just its scale, all nations.

[30:03] It's not just duration to the end of the age. It's not just the one speaking it, the great I am, the Lord of lords and king of kings. It's the great depth of our problem.

Have you ever thought about what Jesus is requiring us to do? Make disciples of Jesus Christ who obey all that he has commanded? To obey requires a willingness to obey.

To obey requires a wanting to obey. obey. How do you do that? How do you make someone want something?

Gospel ministry. Let me just tell you what gospel ministry is not. Fulfilling the great commission is not making mean people nice and nice people nicer. That's not ministry.

Gospel ministry is calling sinners who've exchanged God for a lie to die to themselves in repentance in order to live wholeheartedly for Christ by faith in every area of their life, every day of their life, for the rest of their life.

[31:23] It's huge. How do you take someone living for sin and make them live for Christ? Are you feeling the depth of this?

This is impossible, humanly speaking. The great commission is a great impossibility for us. The kind of change we're talking about doesn't come about from human effort or human ingenuity, human genetics or economics or education, certainly not politics.

The great commission is a great impossibility if Christ is not among us. the only power capable of taking a sinful dead heart set on self-worship and transforming that heart into a spiritually alive heart towards God who worships and obeys His commandments.

The only power capable of doing that is God's power, divine power. power. And what the Bible says is that power of God has been made known in a message.

The gospel. For I'm not ashamed of the gospel. For it is God's power unto salvation for all who believe.

[32:49] faith. It's God's power on display.

The gospel is the message of Jesus. And in Jesus is the power to change, to save. He makes the impossible possible.

Nobody in this room, in our city, or on this planet, can save themselves or change themselves in the way that God requires. Because sin is so deep, it takes a miraculous, powerful work of God to save and change sinners.

Another way to say it is this. There are no DIY projects in the kingdom of heaven. God's love to do it. Do it yourselfers. Only by God's grace.

Here's what that means. If you are a follower of Jesus, if you put your faith in Jesus Christ, if you took that bread and you drank that cup today and you're like, Jesus, there's no way I would have been acceptable to you apart from you.

[34:09] I know where you've saved me from. If that's you, do you know what you are? You are a walking miracle of God's gracious power is what you are.

God's done a work in you that no one else can do through the blood of Jesus. You're a miracle walking. You're a trophy of his grace.

You're the delight of his heart now. And it's all because of Jesus. It's all about Jesus. the great commission is a great impossibility apart from the power of God.

That's why Jesus has promised to be with us. We need Jesus with us. He alone is able to bring about the change that he requires.

He is our power source. He's the vine, we're the branches. The book of Acts helps us realize that Christ's presence is currently being mediated to us through the indwelling Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity.

[35:21] The Holy Spirit indwells each of us at the moment of conversion, empowering us to do what's impossible for the glory of God.

Christ with us through the Holy Spirit seeking to accomplish his great task of fulfilling the great commission. You know the conclusion is? We're in over our heads.

We're in way over our heads. But not Jesus. Not the triune God. Emmanuel is here and he is with us and he's promised to be with us until the end of the age as we seek to do what he's called us to do and make disciples of the nations.

That's why he promised to be with us. To fill the earth with his praises. Behold I'm coming, I'm with you always to the end of the age.

I hope that puts a little courage in your heart. In light of who Jesus is, he's real, it's all true.

[36:37] In light of that Jesus is worth it all, he's the treasure and in light of Jesus being with us, what a promise. How do you respond?

Should we get a sign up list out? Open up your check books? Pull out the calendars? Let's get her done. When you realize the scale of this, the response is to pray.

Is to humble yourself before our God. I had four ways that we could pray. I'm just going to do two in response.

in light of who Jesus is, it's real, it's all true, worth it all, with us in it all.

There's unfinished work to do in light of that. First, pray up the name. Pray up the name.

[37:52] Matthew 6, 9, and 10. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done.

Pray up the name. And we don't need to limit it to the Father's name. It's the name of the triune God. We can call on our triune God to pray up the name.

Oh God, would you be exalted in my life, in my marriage, in my parenting, in my home, in neighborhood, in my city, in church, in my nation, and around the world.

Pray up the name. Hallowed be your name. In light of all that he has done, let's pray up his name so that the praises of his name will reach to the ends of the earth as the water covers the sea.

Pray up the name, and then secondly, as a response, pray down the power. power. Acts 2, verse 31, the early church is being roughed up and persecuted.

[39:02] They gather together and they pray for boldness. And the Spirit of God fills them, shakes the room that they're in, and they are emboldened for ministry.

Pray down the Spirit. Pray down the power. Ask God to fill us afresh, to empower us to walk in purity, to empower us to stand against the devil, to empower us to proclaim boldly the person of Jesus who is the only hope for people in this lost world.

Pray up the name, pray down the power. What a great response to the Great Commission. Jesus is real, Jesus is worth it all, and Jesus is with us in it all.

Take courage. Christ the King Church, we got Jesus' work to do. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we do want your name exalted in our city.

Would your name be hallowed? Would you be made much of in our lives, in our thoughts, in our desires, in our purchases, in how we spend our time?

[40:36] Lord Jesus, would you be exalted? Would you be hallowed? Hallowed be your name, Father. Father, would you pour out your spirit upon us, your people, so that we can live lives that are radical in the world's sight, so that we can live lives that validate the message we proclaim.

Lord Jesus, thank you for reminding us this morning that following you is not in vain. It's not an exercise in futility. It's the right thing to do.

You are worth it all. Be exalted now. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.