

Matthew 27:11-26

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[0 : 00] Thank you for joining us. It's my privilege to work through this text with you. It's been a powerful text in my heart this week, and more, for it is in him that humanity has hope.

And we get to look through that today, and I pray that you would just amaze us all by the truth and power in your word. Amen. And thanks, in today's text, we come face to face with the ugliness of idolatry.

And idolatry, it always leads its participants in the rejection of Christ. This is why it's so ugly. And we have to understand, in our rejection, we participate in the ugly events that happened that led up to Jesus' crucifixion.

So that's the kind of main idea. We're going to look at this idea of idolatry and how that leads us to reject Christ. Idolatry might not be a familiar term, if it isn't to you. I probably culturally have this picture of a little idol, probably from Survivor, where they're trying to win a prize or something, right? Idolatry in the Bible is much deeper than that. Idolatry has this idea of something that controls you, something that drives your motivation. And with this more robust idea, we see that idolatry is making something more important than God.

[1 : 46] Idolatry happens when we set our hearts to gain something, anything other than Christ. We were made to worship God, but in sin, humanity is always putting things before the true God and making them and not God the objects of our aspirations.

So in today's text, we'll be confronted with the ugly results of human idolatry. And if God should allow, we will see that any idolatrous seed, no matter how big or small in our own hearts, is just as ugly as the idolatries of the characters in this story.

And that according to the Bible, it also has the same effect, the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. So we'll see that idolatry can take on different forms, but they all lead to the same end.

Out of a desire for power, the religious leaders in this text willfully plot against Jesus. Out of desire for personal security, Pilate reluctantly turns Jesus in to be crucified.

And out of a desire for freedom and national pride, the crowd demands Jesus' death. And out of a desire for this or that, we too actively reject Jesus to pursue that which we want.

[2 : 58] This is a sad truth about all humanity. We place value on people and things and ideas of this world rather than on Jesus, the Messiah. By nature, all people are like the people in today's story.

All are equally guilty and all are struck and all are stuck in our love for gods of this world. And so as we consider today's text, please don't assume that this text is only about people back then because that would be missing the point.

Today's text details humanity's rejection of Christ. The characters in this story are representative characters. They're a representative sample of the broken human condition.

Every human being is guilty of rejecting Christ and every human being is implicated in his death. It's a sobering text and a sobering thought, but one that does not end in sad rejection.

For Christ, who is rich in mercy, does not reject the humanity that rejected him. Instead, he maintains his resolve. In the midst of rejection, he walks boldly and humbly to the cross where he will endure the full weight of God's wrath against all human idolatry.

[4 : 04] But before we get to Christ, humanity's righteous representative, we will first look at the three unrighteous human representatives that we see in today's text. First, we're going to look at the religious leaders.

All throughout the book of Matthew, we've tracked the religious leaders and their opposition to Christ. Yet now, in these final hours of Jesus' life, we watch as they execute their game plan.

Their end game is calculated and it is brutal. Its aim is the death of Christ. But as we watch all of this unfold, we have to grapple with the question, why? Why would those who should be most informed, most expectant, and most accepting of Christ be the ones who are most aggressive in opposing him?

Well, our text answers this why question. If you look down to verse 18, Pilate, the Roman governor, easily discerns the motives of these religious leaders. It says, for he, Pilate, knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.

They were envious of Jesus. They were envious of his influence, his authority, his wisdom, his power. They were used to being the ones that were esteemed by the Jewish people. They were the cultural leaders.

[5 : 18] They had influence, affluence, and power. But now, all these people were flocking to Jesus. They were praising him and they were calling him the Messiah. Their dwindling influence was hard enough to handle, but what made things even worse is that Jesus actively spoke out against them.

He pointed out their flawed leadership, exposed their self-centeredness, and warned people of the dangers of following after unrighteous leaders. And so, it was clear to them.

It was going to be Jesus or them. It could not be both. They could not remain in power as long as Jesus had influence. They had tried tripping him up, discrediting him, and slandering him.

They even accused him of getting his power from Satan. But these methods were unsuccessful, and so they devised a plan to have him killed. You see, it was down to a simple choice, Jesus or power.

And they chose power, for that is what they truly worshipped. That was their true God. Yes, they claimed to follow and love God, but in reality, God to them was just a means to get what they really wanted, power, influence, and affluence.

[6 : 25] And so, when they were faced with the truth that God in the person of Jesus wasn't actually all that interested in their own power, they were forced to make a choice. Serve Christ and give up their own agenda or reject Christ and pursue the agenda of their own power and influence.

In this, the rejection of Christ was not passive, but it was active and it was willful. They knew scriptures, they knew the prophecies, they saw the signs and the wonders, they recognized Jesus' power and his wisdom, they discerned his authority, but they chose to suppress these truths because the truth of Christ could not coincide with their own agenda.

And they did as Romans 1 teaches, that they, in their unrighteousness, suppressed the truth. For what could be known about God was plain to them because God had shown it to them. Now, it is crazy.

It is crazy for us to consider the power that idolatry holds on the human heart. These men had the ability to discern truth, but because they didn't want it, they suppressed what they knew to be true so that they could hold on to their idolatrous aspirations.

These religious leaders should have been the ones who were most knowledgeable and excited about the coming Messiah, but when he arrived, he didn't seek their agenda like they had assumed. And so they were forced to suppress and reject him.

[7 : 48] This teaches us a powerful lesson about the human heart, that we are primarily servants of desire rather than servants of truth. To say this another way, we are more driven by what we want than by what is true.

And our tendency to suppress what is true in order to pursue what we want will lead to all sorts of ugly places. Maybe the use of this term power seems distant to you.

You think power is a problem for those in Washington, but not for you. But is not our incessant desire to control our circumstances the same thing? To the religious leaders, Jesus was an unwanted loose end in their self-oriented world.

He was not controllable. He was messing up their plans and they didn't like it, so they sought to eliminate him. And unfortunately, we're often not any different. We want our life to work out in a certain way.

We want control of our environment. And when someone or something presses in and messes up our wonderful plans, we get grumpy and seek to eliminate that which threatens our plans. And often what threatens our plans is other people.

[8 : 56] So we manipulate, we push away, we seek to, we blow people off and we blow up and maintain, sorry, and often what threatens our plans are other people.

And so we manipulate, we push them away, we shut people out or we blow up at people in order to maintain control of our own environment. And in our desire for control, we suppress the truth and we rage against the God who actually controls all things.

We blind ourselves to the fact that God works through the big and little situations of our life to accomplish his will and to make us holy. And so we fight and we complain about people and circumstances not realizing that the one we're actually fighting against is the God who controls all things.

And this is the same path the religious leaders walked. They didn't want to submit to God. They didn't want to be under his control and so they rejected Christ. And when we fight in unrighteous ways to maintain our own control, we too are rejecting Christ's rule in our life.

And we must remember and we must see that our idol of control contributed just as much to Christ's death, his need to die on the cross as did the religious leaders of this day.

[10:09] So now we'll move on to Pilate. We'll look at what motivates Pilate. And as we see and as we look at this, we'll see that Pilate, he's also driven by idolatry, though he gives into it a little more reluctantly.

So as if that's any better, right? For context, Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea. As governor, Pilate's main responsibility was for the maintenance of law and order.

And for this task, Rome had given him authority as the supreme judge of the land. With this authority, he had the right to determine, declare somebody guilty and deserving a death penalty or somebody innocent deserving to be set free.

The Jewish leaders had brought Jesus before Pilate demanding that he be executed. Their main charge against Jesus was that Jesus claimed to be king of the Jews. Now, this might not seem like a big deal to us, but if you're Rome, there's only one true king in their mindset and he sits in Rome. So any other claims of kingship was an assault against the Roman rule. And for this, Pilate would have had to take it seriously. So he hears the entirety of the opposition's accusations against Jesus.

[11:27] He listens to all of their complaints, all that they had to say, and then he turns to Jesus. He turns to Jesus and gives Jesus a chance to defend himself. But instead of defending himself, Jesus remains silent.

Now, typically, this would have been seen in that era as an admission of guilt, right? Jesus' silence. But that's not how the text shows us. Pilate, instead of assuming Jesus is guilty, is amazed at Jesus.

He looks at him and he's amazed. This is what the text tells us. Um, furthermore, at some point in the midst of this trial, Pilate's wife sent him word saying, have nothing to do with this righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.

Additionally, the text tells us that Pilate sees through the religious leader's accusations. He recognizes that they were motivated not by evidence, but by envy. So in these three instances, the text alludes to Pilate's amazement at Christ, his innocence, and the ulterior motives of his accusers. So the case should be closed, right? Pilate has supreme authority as judge of the land and he believes Jesus to be innocent. This should be a done deal, but it is not.

[12:45] Why? Why is it not a done deal? Because Pilate is motivated by something other than justice. He, like the religious leaders, was driven by something other than truth.

Pilate, believing Jesus to be innocent, then tries to negotiate. He thinks, maybe if I can, maybe I can maintain public relations with the Jewish leaders and manage to release Jesus. So he pursues a political solution.

He consents to taking Jesus in as a prisoner only because he's anticipating that he will be able to release him later. During this yearly feast, Pilate would customarily release one, customarily release one prisoner according to the wishes of the people.

So Pilate brings Jesus before the crowd. His plan was to present Jesus along with the notorious Barabbas because surely the crowd would choose Jesus' release. Pilate must have thought, if I stand Jesus up next to this infamous prisoner, Barabbas, any person in their right mind would choose to release Jesus.

And this may have been a fine plan, but what Pilate didn't realize is that he had inadvertently bumped into one of the idols of the people. Incited by the religious leaders in pursuit of their own idol, the crowd vehemently chooses Barabbas over Jesus.

[14:01] Pilate, in disbelief, begins to argue against the crowd. Why? What evil has this man done? But they shouted all the more, let him be crucified. So Pilate, when he saw that he was

gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and he washed his hands before the crowd and said, I am innocent of this man's blood.

See to it yourself. Now, many of us today were familiar with this story, but have you ever stopped to ask why Pilate turned Jesus over to be crucified, though he believed him to be innocent?

Well, it was because of idolatry. Pilate loved something more than justice. Though he was amazed with Jesus, his amazement was held in check by his idol. What was his idol?

It was his job. It was his position as governor. It was his duty to maintain peace and order in his Roman province. And with this job came notoriety, power, and wealth.

Pilate, see, he was all about protecting Jesus until he realized that protecting Jesus would actually put his job at risk, his livelihood at risk. The religious leaders had cornered him and now the crowds were turning on him and Pilate was stuck.

[15:09] If he released Jesus, he would be accused of supporting one who had made a claimship, a kingship claim against Rome and also for stirring up a riot. Both outcomes were bad news for one task for maintaining both peace and Roman rule.

And so Pilate caves. He was forced to make a choice, release Jesus and risk accusation and uprising or send Jesus to the cross and secure his own future.

Pilate chose his future over Jesus. Why? Because when push came to shove, Pilate bowed down in service to his true God of personal security, thus directly contributing to the execution of Christ.

And if we're honest, Pilate is a pretty good, pretty good, a pretty accurate representation of fallen humanity. Pilate was more interested in what was best for him than the plight of an innocent man. He cared more about his own security than the truth of Jesus' innocence. He cared more about himself than about Jesus. And we have no shortage of earthly leaders today who walk this same path of self-interest.

[16:18] At any time a person in power cares more about his own interests than truth, injustice will reign. This is true in politics, it's true in the workplace, and it's even true in our own homes.

Any earthly leader from the president to a church elder to a frontline supervisor to a mother at home who care more about themselves than those under their care will create a system of injustice because what truly drives their leadership is their own desires and the needs of the people under them are subordinate to those desires.

Yet it is not only leaders who struggle with this self-interest bias. All people desire personal security and when this desire rules our hearts, our eyes will be blinded to the needs of others and the injustices around us.

In a desire for comfort, we ignore the bitter needs of others. We coldly look past those who are hurting because what we want is comfort, predictability, not inconvenience or potential hurt.

Our desire for comfort forces us to suppress God's command to visit the orphans and the widows in their affliction and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. For comfort, because comfort and helping those in need is always at odds with each other.

[17:36] Love of comfort always makes us more like the world than unlike the world. This desire for comfort opens the door to all sorts of worldly pleasures designed and marketed to trick us into seeking satisfaction in this life only through Christ.

But when we set our desires on comfort in this life, we are rejecting Christ. We are effectively saying, you, your way, what you offer are not good enough for me.

I hear your words. I know that they're true. But what I really want is this momentary comfort. And in all of this, we proved to be just like Pilate, more interested in serving self than in serving truth or in trusting Christ.

This love of self-interest over and above Christ is the very sin that led Christ to the cross. Though we weren't there in person, we were there in spirit, unified with Pilate in his greater concern for himself than with Christ.

And in this, we become participants in the death of Christ. Okay, so now let's look at the crowd. We remember that a few days ago, this same crowd were putting their coats and palm branches down on the ground, praising Jesus, saying, Hosanna to the son of David as he entered Jerusalem for Passover.

[18:56] And now, only days later, they are shouting, crucify him, crucify him, crucify him. What happened? Well, idolatry happened.

So what was the crowd's idol? This one is a little less obvious and it requires some cultural understanding. Our text today in Matthew refers to Barabbas as a notorious prisoner. Mark describes him as one who committed murder in the insurrection. Luke describes Barabbas as a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection started in the city, and for murder. John refers to him simply as a robber. But what's important to see is that in the minds of the Jewish people, in the minds of this crowd, Barabbas was first and foremost an insurrectionist. He was one who openly opposed Rome. He was a Robin Hood type figure, opposing, harassing, and stealing from Rome. In our day and age, we might celebrate him as one who's sticking it to the man.

[19 : 54] To Pilate, Barabbas would have been a worthless terrorist, but to many in the crowd, Barabbas would have been a hero. So Pilate unknowingly places Jesus, the true Messiah, up against another messianic type figure in Barabbas.

Both were offering a type of salvation. Both were offering a path to a kingdom. Barabbas' was through conquest. Jesus' was through humble submission. Barabbas' was through human strength, and Jesus' was through weakness.

Barabbas' was through insurrection against Rome, and Jesus' through submission to Rome. Barabbas' was through human tactics, and Jesus' was in complete obedience to the Father. Knowing the hearts of the people, the religious leaders set out to persuade the crowd against Jesus.

Matthew doesn't tell us exactly the means by which the religious leaders used to stir up the crowds, but it's not hard to imagine. They probably use the same tactics they had throughout the entire book of Matthew.

They probably, they would have called into, they would have called his origins into question, twisted his teaching, called him a blasphemer against God, which in the Jewish context was like a chief sin. [21 : 11] Additionally, they would have persuaded the crowds that Barabbas was the kind of freedom fighter that would lead this nation in an uprising, finally overthrowing Rome. You see, the Jewish people were being occupied by a foreign government, right?

And they had all their freedoms taken away, and what the Jewish people in their national pride, they wanted their own freedom. They wanted their city back, they wanted their country back, they wanted their prominence back, right? And so, so the religious leaders were probably pointing to Barabbas, saying he is the type of person that can finally stir up enough dissension to overthrow Rome.

The religious leaders probably mocked how Jesus had consistently preached peace, mercy, and forgiveness, even towards their enemies. They would say, and look where that's gotten him. He is about to be crucified by our Roman enemy. Is this the kind of Messiah you really want to follow? Is this how you want to end up? The governor had given them only two options, and at the moment, the religious leaders had done enough to turn them against Jesus, and in ignorance, the crowd sets their hope away from Christ and on Barabbas.

Filled by a desire for freedom and the restoration of national pride, the crowd falls prey to the religious leaders' deception, and they become pawns in their evil plan. Jesus! They chose, um, entrapped, though they were deceived, these people, this crowd, was not without responsibility.

[22 : 46] They were entrapped by their idolatrous desires, and because of this, they willingly discard Jesus. They choose to send him to his death in exchange for a murdering, thieving insurrectionist, who they hope will be able to deliver to them the kingdom that they want.

This Messiah they want is Barabbas and not Jesus. So with escalating clamor, they demand that Barabbas be released and that Jesus be crucified.

We'll read this text again. Barabbas, and Pilate said to them, then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? And they said, let him be crucified. And he said, why?

What evil has he done? But they shouted all the more, let him be crucified. So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and he washed his hands before the crowd saying, I am innocent of this man's blood.

See to it yourselves. And all the people answered, his blood be on us and upon our children. Some have called this the darkest text in all of scripture. The people without evidence and without any good reason collectively, turn on Jesus.

[23 : 53] Some have called this the darkest text in all of scripture. The people without evidence and without any good reason collectively turn on Jesus. Jesus had taken on human weakness to

come and serve them.

He had healed them. He had comforted them. He had taught them and he had cared for them. He embodied true love and purity, compassion and power, goodness and strength. He had not sought to profit off of them or to use them.

Rather, he had served and he had fed them. And in spite of all of this, humanity engages in the greatest betrayal in human history. In a most blatant act of unjustified defiance, humanity exchanges Jesus for a murderer.

And then they chant him to his death. The religious leaders in the crowd shout with one unified and deafening voice, crucify him, crucify him, crucify him. And this, in this astounding turn of events, humanity rejects their creator and their savior.

They turn on the God who had made them and the Christ who had come to save them. They responded to Pilate's attempted demonstration of innocence with a unified admission of guilt, his blood beyond us and on our children.

[25 : 06] Pilate tries to wash himself, wash himself clean and transfer the guilt to the crowd. But unfortunately for him, guilt does not work this way. The crowd's greater sin does not give him a moral out.

He too stands to guilty and he knows this. So he attempts to suppress this feeling of guilt through a public show of hand washing. The crowd, motivated by their thirst for blood, gladly accepts the guilt of Jesus' death and they even project this guilt upon their children.

And this, thus demonstrating that they will do and say just about anything to rid themselves of this Jesus. And as we look at this scene and we consider its ugliness, we must ask ourselves, where do we stand in this story?

What side, whose side, were we on? Were we standing in solidarity with Christ, the victim of this great crime, the greatest crime in human history?

Or were we with the religious leaders and their love for power, with Pilate and his concern for comfort and security, or with the crowds and their desire for personal freedom? I do not know where your heart is today, but I would ask you to look back at your week.

[26 : 17] Have you been more concerned with the kingdom of Christ or the kingdom of self? Have you been seeking satisfaction in the things of this world or finding your satisfaction in Christ?

Did you pursue the God of your own comfort or the true God of the Bible? Did you spend more time following human leaders? You set in your hope and attention on politics, COVID research, or economic projections?

Or did you set your hopes in Christ? To the extent that you prioritized any of these things over Christ, you stood with this ancient Jewish crowd and participated in the reproach of the cross. But, but, thankfully, this story does not end in human failure, nor is it the main point. You, my friend, you're not the main character, nor was Pilate, the religious leaders, or the crowd.

Instead, this story is about Christ. Though he was vocally quiet in this particular text, his actions were shouting a greater and a louder word. In his actions, we see Jesus uprooting and flipping upside down the idols of each of the characters in this story.

[27 : 27] The religious leaders wanted power, so much so that they're willing to do evil things in order to obtain it. Jesus, on the other hand, is shown to be in complete control even unto his death.

Remember two weeks ago when we looked at Jesus' trial before Caiaphas and the Jewish leaders? The council unsuccessfully brought false witness after false witness in order to testify against Jesus and to prove him of wrong.

But they were failing miserably at this. In the midst of their failures, the high priest cries out in exasperation, I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. And to this question, Jesus responds, you have said so, but I tell you, from now on, you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

I don't have time to go into this now, but please go back and read Daniel 7 to better understand Jesus' allusions to the Son of Man. But in short, these were fighting words. Jesus was clearly claiming to be the Messiah, the one who was given all authority and an everlasting dominion, the one to whom all the people of the earth would serve.

This was the ammunition the Jewish leaders needed to accuse and convict Christ. This provided all the evidence they needed, both to accuse him of blasphemy, which was against Jewish law, and of insurrection, which was against Roman law.

[28 : 46] And the point is this, that though the religious leaders were fighting for power, Jesus was holding all power. He was in complete control. They couldn't even have convicted him without his help.

The same is true in today's story. Jesus could have easily defended himself and proven himself innocent before Pilate, but instead he chooses silence.

He chooses to relinquish his power so that he might go to the cross and die for all those who love power over righteousness. Likewise, Jesus upends Pilate's idol.

Pilate chooses self-security over justice. Jesus, on the other hand, willingly gives up his own personal security to welcome in the suffering of the cross. And this is so that he might bring apart true justice and also provide eternal security for those who trust in him.

Finally, the crowd, they want freedom from Rome, but Jesus submits to Rome and suffers under Rome so that he might bring true freedom to people, freedom from sin and freedom from death.

[29 : 51] If we look at Acts 2, we get to see the conclusion to this wonderful and terrible story. Acts 2 takes place after Jesus' death, after Jesus' resurrection, after the Great Commission, and after the disciples had been given the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 2, we see some amazing things. Here, Peter proclaims him to us, saying, Men of Israel and men and women of Shoreline, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.

As you yourselves know, this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God has raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Now, Peter, in giving this talk, is talking to the same crowd that had crucified Jesus weeks earlier.

This is the same crowd that had shouted, crucify him, crucify him, his guilt be on our hands.

And to these people, Peter boldly says, you are guilty of his death. Though you saw the mighty works that God had done through him, you crucified him. You were responsible for his death.

[31 : 11] But, but what you didn't realize in that all of this, that all of this happened according to God's definite plan, yes, you are guilty. Yes, you did kill him, but God allowed it and he chose it so that you might, so that he might raise Jesus up and prove his innocence and prove his power over sin and death.

Peter continues, let the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

Now, when they, the crowd heard this, they were cut to the heart and they said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do? And Peter said to them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

For the promise, for this promise is for you and for your children and for all those who are far off, everyone whom the Lord God calls to himself.

Just think about that for a second. This promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off. What powerful words, what amazing grace. This crowd who weeks earlier had projected their guilt onto their children and crucified Christ are now being offered both forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit to both them and their children.

[32 : 38] In this, Jesus is saying, yes, this guilt is on you and your children but what you were asking for was something that you was too great for you or your children to bear.

Holy wrath against your idolatry so that I might free you from that guilt, forgive you for all your sins and give you my spirit. My friends here, anybody listening today, we must remember that Jesus did not simply die for the sins of the people on that day.

No, he died for the sins of all humanity for all of time. I hope you today recognize your face in the midst of this ancient crowd. I hope you see that you were unified with them in their sinful rejection of Christ for you, just like them, have chosen other gods over Christ and thus contributed to the reproach of the cross.

For unless you see yourself as guilty in this story, you will not be able to accept his offer of forgiveness. And please consider the offer of Christ.

He died for your sin. Now, if you're here today and you don't know Christ and you don't know his forgiveness, I ask that you please consider his calling.

[33 : 54] Consider his offer. He died for your sins and he offers you forgiveness. Consider the actions that you have participated in for which you have incurred internal guilt. The things for which you're ashamed of.

the things that you hope nobody ever finds out about. Now, picture those things being nailed upon Jesus on the cross. There they died with him and when he arose, he arose without them and he is offering you and everybody who turns to him this kind of forgiveness and this kind of cleanness. And for all who are here, everybody, remember this. Please note that this world will try to distract you with all kinds of wants and desires. It will promise you power, security, comfort, and freedom. But it cannot deliver on these things. Look at the religious leaders. They crucified Christ to get power and they probably got it for a couple of days until Jesus rose from the dead and his power was given to the church.

And in their pursuit of own power, their power required them to then start persecuting the church who now opposed their place of leadership. And so the pursuit of power is in this life.

[35 : 03] Power will always have competitors. Control will always be threatened. And though you might obtain it for a little while, you might get some temporary relief from the control you've gotten.

You will spend the rest of your life fighting to maintain this little control that you have. And then you die and all power is lost. Consider also Pilot. Where did his desire for security get him?

Well, it allowed him to maintain his role of governor, keep a steady income and live luxuriously. But what has that investment in his personal security gotten himself 2,000 years later?

Not much. Should he have turned to Christ, he would have found himself secure in God's care even until this day. But if he spent the rest of his days pursuing his own security, then he got his reward.

A comfortable earthly life in the exchange for the eternal condemnation of choosing comfort over Christ. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but he forfeits his soul?

[36 : 02] And for you, your idol of comfort leads to the same place. Momentary reward in this life at the expense of reward in eternity. Finally, let's consider what the unrepentant crowd gets.

Well, they eventually get the revolution they wanted. In AD 66, a rebel Jewish faction, not led by Barabbas, by the way, incited riots in Jerusalem, eventually leading to the temporary overthrow of Rome and the installment of a provisional Judean government.

This lasted for about four years. In AD 70, Rome came back with a vengeance. For four months, the Roman army encamped outside the city, cutting off all supplies, effectively weakening and starving the people.

Once weakened, the Roman army easily marched into the city, ransacked it, destroyed the temple, and reestablished Roman rule. Again, this illustrates the brevity and instability of human idols.

The freedom that the crowd wanted and exchanged Jesus for is the same freedom that led to their destruction and the loss of their city. And so it is with all idols.

[37 : 09] They promise a lot to idolatry you are every day. We are people motivated more by what we want than by what is true. And every time we pursue an idol at the expense of Christ, we walk the same dark path as the characters in this story.

Instead, I hope that through this text you have been made more aware of the idols in your hearts, the things that control you and motivate you and cause you to do this or that rather than Christ.

And I pray that, and I hope that you will start then comparing the offer of these idols to the offer of Christ. I hope that through this text you have seen him as beautiful and as powerful and as kind as gracious to a people that rejected him and pushed him away and crucified him.

He came back to give them grace and he came back to give them all the security and all the power and all the freedom in a way that is much better and much greater and eternal.

And so I hope that through this text you are both opened, your eyes are opened to see your sin so you can repent of it so that you can turn to Christ, that you can come to him and that you will see the better gift that he offers and that you will walk to him as a person and be filled with his power and filled with his love.

[38 : 26] So I don't know if this has been confusing. I've talked a lot about idolatry. I hope it's not confusing. Maybe it is confusing to you or maybe you get the concept but you're having trouble placing it in your life.

Here's a couple things to consider, just some practical things. Consider the things that truly control you. Ask yourself, what is it that motivates me? What is it that causes me to sin?

What is it that causes me to turn away from what I know is right? Those kind of things are idols. They're motivating factors in your life. Ask yourself the following question.

Life only has meaning if and whatever you fill in with that if is likely something that has a controlling stake in your heart. If I just had blank, I'd be happy.

Consider the places your mind wanders when you have some downtime. Keep watch over those if only thoughts in your head for each one of these things will lead you straight towards one of your counterfeit gods.

[39 : 29] Today's text should motivate you to consider and repent of these heart idols for each idol will lead to the same destructive place, the usurping of Jesus. Each idol vies for complete control.

Each idol if left unchecked will lead down a path of destruction. They will wend you weak and ineffective for the cause of Christ. They will result in spiritual complacency. They will make you prayerless, anxious, and impassionate about the gospel.

They will cause you to be an ineffective witness. It has been said that the human heart is an idol factory. We are constantly tempted to set our hope on this or that earthly thing.

Recognize that of yourself and bring these idols before Christ. compare him to all that he offers and repent. Repent of the exchanges that you make for simple earthly things in exchange for the God of all glory in the person of Christ.

Turn to him and trust him. He is better than that thing your flesh longs for. I'll pray. Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, though we, humanity, have exchanged you for silly, stupid, temporal things, you chose to remain with us.

[40 : 42] You chose to come to us. You chose not to reject us and you chose to die and to suffer for our sins so that you might bring us into the life and the hope that we so long for and that we so desperately fight for in the temporal things of this life.

I pray that you would enable your people to see clearly the world that you've created, to be changed by this gospel of Christ so that we can put away these momentary joys and desires and truly serve you and truly bring you glory and be your people on mission for your glory.

Amen.