

# Acts 14:8-20 "Rethinking Our Story"

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Preacher: Fikkert

[0:00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Amen. We're delighted to have Brian and Jill Fikkert with us this weekend. Thank you all for joining us. And we learned last night within the first 30 seconds of Dr. Fikkert's message that he is both taller and funnier than our normal pastor.

And that hurt my feelings a little bit. I thought one was less obvious than the other. But we're delighted that he's back from Chattanooga, where he is a professor at Covenant College, the founder and director of the Chalmers Center there.

And he loves God's church and God's word as we do. And so he's coming to open God's word for us this morning, and we're eager to hear from him. Thank you, Dr. Fikkert, for being here.

Thank you, brother. Thank you. Well, good morning.

[1:12] I bring your greetings from Covenant College, which is the college of this denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America. I'm a professor there. I'm also the founder and president of something called the Chalmers Center.

We are a church-equipping organization. We seek to equip the church to minister in words and in deeds to people who are poor, both in the United States and around the world. And it's just a joy to be with you folks today.

I am a professor, so I have to start off with a quiz for you. You do have the outline, I believe, of my talk in your bulletin. And there's two opening questions. I would really like you to write down your answers to these two questions very briefly.

The first is this. Why did Jesus come to earth? Why did Jesus... These are easy ones. Why did Jesus come to earth? And secondly, what is the gospel?

Why did Jesus come to earth? And what is the gospel? Why did Jesus come to earth? Why did Jesus come to earth? And what is the gospel? As you're finishing that up, let me just give a little bit of introduction before we look at today's reading.

[2:40] As we think about pursuing the Great Commission in the 21st century, whether at home or abroad, we are immediately confronted with the issue of poverty.

You see, the center of Christianity has shifted from the West to the majority world of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. And within those continents, the gospel is growing and spreading most rapidly amongst the poorest people in those places.

As historian Philip Jenkins has noted, the typical Christian in the 21st century is not an American business person attending a megachurch in a U.S. suburb. Rather, the typical Christian in the 21st century is a poor woman living in a slum in Sao Paulo, Brazil, or a poor woman living in a village in rural Nigeria.

And closer to home, we are confronted with poverty right outside our doors. A recent study has suggested that the poverty rate in Huntsville is about 18%, but there are actually some neighborhoods just outside of the city center where the poverty rate is actually as high as 66%. Huntsville is the 14th, sorry, Madison County is the 14th worst county in the country in terms of upward mobility.

[3:55] In other words, if one does the things that one does to pursue the American dream, get an education, try to find work, your capacity for achieving the goal of the American dream in Madison County is the 14th worst in the country.

Now, coexisting with these poor people, both at home and abroad, are the rest of us who are amongst the richest people ever to walk the face of planet Earth.

Now, how should the Church of Jesus Christ respond to these disparities as we try to pursue the Great Commission? What should we do? Well, I don't believe that we can get a comprehensive answer to that question from today's passage, but I do believe that today's passage, when interpreted in light of all of Scripture, does shed some light for us on how we should pursue the Great Commission in the face of poverty at home and abroad.

The passage we're about to read describes Paul and Barnabas, who are really the first missionaries, as they seek to bring the gospel into the town of Lystra, which is essentially, it's Gentile territory, they're essentially bringing the gospel to an unreached people group. So Acts chapter 14, verses 8 through 20, Acts chapter 14, verses 8 through 20 is our reading today. Again, Paul and Barnabas pursuing the Great Commission, bringing the gospel to an unreached unreached people group.

[ 5 : 32 ] It says this, in Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed, and called out, stand up on your feet.

At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in Lyconian language, the gods have come down to us in human form. Barnabas they called Zeus, Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates, because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes. They rushed into the crowd shouting, friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way.

[ 6 : 42 ] Yet he has not left himself without testimony. He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons. He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.

Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them. Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking that he was dead.

But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up, went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. This is the word of the Lord.

Let us just ask the Lord's blessing on us this morning. Almighty God, these are not just words on a page. These are your words to your people.

Words of life, words of truth, words that are meant for wholeness, words that are meant to call us unto yourself, to bring us into your presence, words that are meant to make us flourish.

[ 7 : 44 ] We pray that you be with us today. Help us to hear what you are saying to us in your word. Holy Spirit, we ask that you would show up, that you would bring the transformation that all of us need to our hearts and our minds and our bodies and our actions.

We pray that you would do something with us today. Through your word, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. As Paul and Barnabas bring the gospel to this unreached people group, the first thing that they do is they encounter this man who's crippled, crippled from birth.

And commentators are agreed that almost certainly this man would have been a beggar. He would have been unable to work due to the fact that he was lame. And so he's the kind of person who would have sat there in the marketplace with his hands outstretched, hoping that somebody would put food into his hands so that he could survive.

Now what do the first missionaries do when they encounter this crippled man, this man who is poor, this beggar, if you will? Well, the first thing we notice is that they heal him.

They restore him so that he's able to function again. He would have been able to work again. Now why do they do this? Why would missionaries heal a crippled man?

[ 8 : 59 ] Isn't the task of the church solely to preach? Isn't it the case that addressing the man's physical needs will divert the church and its missionaries from their task of fulfilling the Great Commission?

I would submit to you that the answer to this question is no. I would submit to you the answer to those questions are no. And the reason has to do with the two questions I asked you at the start of

this talk.

Why did Jesus come to earth? And what is the gospel? And in order to understand the answers to those questions, we have to back up way back, way back to the very, very beginning and understand this passage in light of all of God's grand story.

You see, the story begins in the garden, right? God creates a good world, and in the beginning, he calls it all good, and he appoints human beings to be in charge of his creation.

And he makes these human beings in his image. And because he is a creator, they reflect his image when they engage in creative activity.

[10:08] In other words, work is part of what it means to be human. We are wired for work. Work is not just a necessary evil. Work is part of how we fulfill our calling as image bearers.

And God sets it up in the garden in such a way that as a result of our work, we'll be able to eat. We'll be able to sustain ourselves through our work. Now, of course, what happens is the fall, right?

The fall happens, and Adam and Eve sinned against God. One of the very first things that we see happening is that work is cursed. Adam is told thorns will infest the ground.

It won't bear fruit the way that it was supposed to. Eve is told there will be pains and childbearing. One of the root causes of poverty is that moment.

That moment of the fall, work is undermined. And a loss of sustaining work is at the essence of poverty. But right there in the garden, God promises to send a savior.

[11:11] He promises to Eve that through her offspring, one will come who will crush the serpent's head. And as the Old Testament unfolds, we learn more and more of what this promise means.

Abraham is told that through his seed, all people on earth will be blessed. And then the scriptures unfold a little bit more. We get to the book of Isaiah.

And we find out in Isaiah that this one who is promised, the one who is coming, will be a king who will usher in a kingdom. Isaiah chapter 9, verses 6 through 7, a passage we often read at Christmas.

Talking about this coming king, talking about his coming kingdom, we read this. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. And the government will be on his shoulders, and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

That word peace is very important in this passage. Of the greatness of his government and of peace, there will be no end. Note that this kingdom will expand over the whole earth, bringing justice and righteousness and peace as far as the curse is found.

[12:28] Now folks, this word peace doesn't just mean the absence of war. It's actually in Hebrew the word shalom. It means comprehensive happiness, completeness, health, prosperity, restoration of all things to the way they are supposed to be.

It's what we're all longing for. And as Isaiah unfolds, we read that in particular, he will bring this peace, this shalom to the poor.

Isaiah chapter 61, verses 1 and 2, a passage that foretells the coming of this king and his kingdom. We read this, the spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners. To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The year of the Lord's favor is referring to the year of Jubilee. Every 50 years in Old Testament Israel, land was to be restored to the original landowners. Debts were to be forgiven.

[13:41] There was a moment of restoration for all in the land, including the poor. Once again, the poor people would be restored to what we are made to be.

People who can work and support ourselves through that work. Look, the kingdom is introduced in economic terms. I'm an economist. The kingdom is introduced in economic terms.

It is a kingdom that will restore human beings to image-bearing people who can work and support themselves through their own work. Now, I need you to move forward to about 700 years.

700 years from the time of the prophet of Isaiah. Isaiah. Jesus is about to launch his earthly ministry. He's just been tempted in the desert, and he goes to a synagogue, and in that synagogue, the Jews are worshipping, and they're longing because they knew that there was a promised Messiah.

They knew that there was a king who was coming, and they were longing for that king. They were longing for that kingdom, but the Romans were writing the show. And hope was probably in short

supply.

[14:58] And in that synagogue, Jesus, the son of the carpenter, stands up, and a scroll is handed to him from the book of Isaiah, and he opens it to the passage that we just read.

In Luke chapter 4, we read that Jesus opens up, and he reads that passage from Isaiah, the one that we just read, and he closes with this. today, today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. A shiver must have run up and down the spines of the people in the synagogue that day, because what Jesus is saying is that promised king and that promised kingdom is at hand, and he is that king.

He is the king of kings and lord of lords. He is the one who's going to make all things new. He is the one who's bringing healing for the lame, for the blind, and for the leper. That's who he is. Indeed, the good news of the kingdom of God was Jesus' primary message.

We read in Luke chapter 4, verse 43, Jesus says, I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.

[16:15] Jesus' message was the kingdom of God. I asked you at the start, why did Jesus come to earth, and what is the gospel? Now, if you're like most Christians in America, you answer those questions in the following way.

Why did Jesus come to earth? He came to earth to die on the cross to save me from my sins. What is the gospel? The gospel is the good news that if I repent of my sins and trust in Jesus, my soul can go to heaven when I die.

Those are good answers. They're true answers. Hallelujah. My sins are nailed to the cross and I bear them no more. I'm a sinner. I need a savior.

And Jesus solves that problem for me because I have a legal problem before a righteous and holy God. But folks, when we reduce the message of Jesus Christ and his work to that, it creates problems.

Because there's a fuller story, and it's the story of the kingdom of God, which was Jesus' primary story. And see, without that story, we end up in weird places.

[17:24] Let me give you an example. I'm a Presbyterian pastor's kid. I grew up in this kind of setting. My father was an Orthodox Presbyterian pastor.

That means that in the space of Presbyterianism, I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews. The OPC are like the Hasidic Jews of Presbyterianism.

I can out-Orthodox all of you. And being a pastor's kid, I was told that whenever the church doors were open, I had to be there.

Mom would say to me, don't you want to set a good example for your peers? Well, believing that the salvation of an entire generation rested on my shoulders, every time the church doors were open, I was there.

My therapist says that in 30 or 40 years, I might get over all of this. Now, I was subjected to many, many horrible experiences, playing your banjo at the age of three in front of the entire congregation, those kinds of things.

[18:34] But the lowest rung, the worst experience that I could have ever imagined was singing in the junior choir when I was 12 years old. Because I didn't feel like singing in the junior choir.

I had to wear this robe. And it wasn't, it was kind of creepy. And to make matters worse, my older sister was the choir director.

But there was one thing that made it the worst thing possible. I somehow believed that for all eternity, I was going to be singing in the junior choir, floating around like a ghost on clouds with a diaper on and a harp in my hands.

And quite frankly, that wasn't a very compelling vision. And the vision of me floating around in clouds with a harp is not a very compelling vision for you either.

It wasn't a very compelling vision. You know, I didn't want to go to hell, but to be honest with you, this only sounded marginally better. It's not a particularly compelling vision.

[19:48] It's a disembodied vision. It's a ghost-like existence vision. It didn't give me a reason to want to get out of bed on Monday morning because my soul was secure in heaven.

That didn't sound that great, but it was better than the other place. But what was I supposed to do on Monday morning? It wasn't a particularly compelling story. And I would submit to you, it's not a particularly compelling story on its own for little children picking garbage out of dumps in Manila.

It's not a particularly compelling story for little girls being sold into brothels in Sao Paulo, Brazil. And it's not a particularly compelling story for little boys and little girls who are attending schools in Huntsville, Alabama that are not going to prepare them to live in this world.

We need a fuller story. We need a fuller story and the story we need is the story of Jesus Christ. We need the good news of the gospel.

And the good news of the gospel is the good news of the kingdom of God. It's the good news that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. That he's making all things new. That he cares about my soul, he cares about my body, he cares about the city, he cares about grass and trees and cows, he cares about our schools, he cares about every square inch of his creation, he cared about it enough to die for it.

[ 21 : 11 ] That's the good news of the gospel. And it's the good news that you and I need to embrace and it's the good news for the low income people in this city. It provides real hope, real purpose, both for this life and the next.

We need to rethink our story and we need to rethink how we're telling that story. You see, Jesus declares the good news of his kingdom verbally, but he also does it with deeds.

Imagine how silly it would have been if Jesus had walked around with his hands in his pockets. He saw lepers and he saw the lame and he saw the blind and he said to them, I'm king of kings and lord of lords.

I'm using all the authority and power that I have in heaven and earth to usher in a new kingdom, a new heaven, a new creation where all is made whole, where shalom abounds. I can do it all, but I'm not going to bother showing you, just trust me.

He puts his hands in his pockets. Who would have believed him? His message was crazy enough to begin with. Who would have possibly believed that the son of the carpenter could do this kind of thing?

[ 22 : 24 ] So what does Jesus do? He preaches the kingdom and he shows the kingdom. He pulls his hands out of his pockets. He touches the lame. He touches the blind. He touches the leper.

He preaches the kingdom and he shows the kingdom. I need you to notice something. Notice that all of Jesus' miracles were restorative. He didn't just show off.

He didn't just say, hey, watch this, and like take somebody's head and wrap it around and make it fly off or something. He didn't just make the moon run around, the sun.

He didn't just show off. Because Jesus was trying to communicate a particular message. He was trying to communicate that the new heavens and new earth were dawning in him.

You see, in Jesus, death and resurrection, he is the start of the new creation. His body is the first thing in the new creation. He's ushering in this place where Shalom abounds.

[ 23 : 26 ] And in that place where Shalom abounds, there's restoration. There's healing. The poor are restored to people who can work and support themselves through their work.

They're restored to image-bearing. They're restored to all that it means to be human. What Jesus is doing in his miracles is giving a sneak preview of the coming attractions. For those of you under the age of 30, he was creating trailers.

When Jesus heals, he's creating a trailer, a sneak preview of what it'll be like when his kingdom comes in its fullness. And in that kingdom, there is restoration.

There is healing. There is the returning to full image-bearing. And Jesus continues his mission through his church.

Luke chapter 9, verses 1 through 2, it says this, when Jesus had called the twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach.

[ 24 : 35 ] Look at the message. The kingdom of God. That's the message. He sends out his followers to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Jesus preaches the kingdom of God in words and in deeds, and his church is to continue his mission by preaching the kingdom of God in words and in deeds through deeds of restoration.

And folks, back to our passage in Acts, this is what Paul and Barnabas were doing. They'd been sent out by Jesus Christ to preach the kingdom and to show the kingdom, and that's what Paul and Barnabas are doing when they encounter the crippled man.

They heal him because it's the commission that God had given to them. But the deeds were not enough.

You see, Paul and Barnabas also used words to communicate the kingdom of God. I would submit to you that in this passage, Paul and Barnabas' words ministered to three different groups of people.

[ 25 : 43 ] First of all, the words ministered to the crippled man himself. We read in the passage that he had been listening to Paul and Barnabas' preaching, and Paul saw they had faith to be healed.

We know from elsewhere in Scripture that words are necessary to draw people into saving faith. Deeds are not enough. Romans chapter 10, verse 17, says this, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

Christ. Yes, the kingdom is bringing healing as far as the curse is found, but it is only those who repent of their sins and trust in the king who get to enter into that kingdom and experience its full benefits.

We have many people today, we have many people today who are passionate about social justice. that's a good thing. We have many people today who are passionate for the kingdom to come, and that's a good thing.

[ 26 : 59 ] But they want the king, the kingdom, without the king. They want the goodies without submitting to King Jesus in faith and repentance.

If you want the kingdom, you have to bow your knee to the king. This shows up all the time in poverty alleviation work.

Everybody who's ever worked in the space of poverty alleviation knows a famous quote that's been attributed to Francis of Assisi. Nobody actually knows if he said it, but it's every community development worker's favorite quote.

And it goes like this. Preach the gospel. Use words if you must. Now what that's trying to get at is precious, but it's fundamentally wrong.

Because we always must. We always must. You cannot enter into the kingdom without faith in the king.

[ 28 : 02 ] And you can't have saving faith in the king without the words about who he is. Second, the words ministered to the people who were watching the miracle.

You see, folks, without words, people will interpret deeds through their own worldview, through their own presuppositions about how the world works.

We see this happening in the passage. Look at what happened. They healed the crippled man and immediately the people think that Paul and Barnabas are gods.

Now there's a reason for this. There was a folklore in this part of the world that at a previous era, the gods had come down in human form.

And because the people in that area had not been very hospitable, the gods had wiped out all of their homes. And so there's actually a sense here of franticness, of we're being given a second chance to show hospitality.

[ 29 : 11 ] And that's why this priest is so frantic. He said, oh, I've only got one job to do. I've got to do it. So he's running out there with the reeds and the bulls to make sure that they show hospitality to the gods because he doesn't want the people's homes to be wiped out as they were in the past.

Now notice what Paul and Barnabas do in light of this. Do they close their mouths and say, well, we don't want to be offensive here to anybody?

Do they say, well, we're kind of postmodern and what's true for us might not be true for you and we don't want to impose our worldview on you? That's not what happens.

What Paul and Barnabas do is they're frantic. They tear their clothes. It's actually a symbol of great distress. They are very concerned that people understand what's actually going on here.

And look what they do. They narrate the miracle but then they narrate God's working in all of creation. They narrate the general functioning of the universe and they say, it's God who created the heavens, the earth, and the sea.

[ 30 : 26 ] It's God who sends you rain. It's God who makes your crops grow. It's God who gives you food. It's God who gives you joy. In essence, what Paul and Barnabas are doing is they're trying to replace a pagan worldview with the worldview of the kingdom of God that all of creation is created, sustained, and being redeemed by Jesus Christ alone.

and third, and this might be less obvious, I believe the words are actually ministering to Paul and Barnabas themselves.

You see, we are always tempted. We are always tempted to take credit for God's work. Folks, in the space of poverty alleviation, this is a constant temptation because every non-profit ministry has to raise money and so there's a temptation to jockey and to compete with other ministries because we're all on our way to the same donors.

We're running to the same donors. We're bumping into each other on the way there and we've got to say that we did something. So these are my poor people. You didn't fix them. I fixed them. We need to take credit for the success to get more money.

And then many of us have egos. I have one. I want to have a sense of meaning and purpose in my life that I accomplish something. And so the temptation is always to take credit for God's work and God doesn't take this sin lightly.

[ 32 : 08 ] Indeed, Paul and Barnabas' very lives may have been at risk at this moment. Not just from the people but from God Almighty.

You see, in just a few chapters earlier in Acts chapter 12 King Herod stands up and gives a public address and the audience called him a god.

And look what the Bible says. Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God an angel of the Lord struck him down and he was eaten by worms and died.

God is the king and he wants the praise. Paul and Barnabas' very lives and certainly their spiritual health were at stake.

They needed to narrate that Jesus is the king. Now what does this have to do with Southwood Presbyterian Church? What does this have to do with you folks?

[ 33 : 21 ] Four points and they're going to go fast if you're getting antsy. Just hang in there. First, you must continue Jesus' mission of declaring and demonstrating good news for the poor.

Folks, the Bible says that you are the body and the bride and the very fullness of Jesus Christ. It's in Ephesians. This means when the world looks at you, when the poor look at you, you're supposed to look like Jesus, the one who declares and demonstrates his kingdom.

In this light, folks, care for the poor, care for this city isn't just kind of icing on the cake. It's not just kind of a nice thing to do. It's actually central to what it means to be the people of God.

Indeed, throughout the Old and New Testaments we are told that one of the primary evidences of saving faith is our willingness to care for the poor. 1 John 3, verses 17-18.

If anyone has material possessions, and we do, if anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

[ 34 : 36 ] Dear children, let us love not with words or speech but with actions and in truth. People of God, you are the richest people ever to walk the face of the earth.

If this command is to anybody, it's to you. You must act. You must do something. But what you do really matters. Good intentions are not enough.

And that's the second point. Our ministries amongst the poor must be restorative. They have a purpose.

They're trying to give a sneak preview of the coming attraction of Christ and His kingdom when people are restored to full image bearers. The deeds have to match the words, which means that our ministries must restore people to what God has made them to be.

Image bearers who can work and enjoy the fruits of their work. That may sound obvious to you, but I would submit to you that a very large number of Christian ministries around the world aren't doing that.

[ 35 : 42 ] we run in with solutions that quite frankly create dependencies, that undermine dignity, that don't restore people as image bearers.

I have something to tell you. It's a dirty little secret. The Chalmers Center works with churches all over the world, and the hardest places, the hardest places to bring the good news of Christ's restoration are places where the American church has been a lot.

Because the American church runs around the world hurling around resources, creating all kinds of dependencies, and so when you walk into a community and say, we're here to help restore you to image bearer, and they're like, why?

I can go across the street and get goodies for free. It's demeaning. It undermines image bearing. It is not the gospel of the kingdom. It's the gospel of us feeling good about ourselves and what we're doing.

Third, we must design our ministries so from top to bottom there is a verbal narration of who Jesus is so that at the end of the day people are worshiping the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

[ 37 : 01 ] that's harder to pull off than you might think. You see, when it's us bringing in the malaria nets, when it's us bringing in the food, when it's us bringing in all the goodies, the temptation for people is to start to put their faith in us.

And so we've got to design our ministries in such a way that we act like Paul and Barnabas. It's not us. It's not about us. It's about King Jesus who's healing us. He provides the malaria nets. He provides the wells. He provides the clean water. He provides the sun. He provides everything. It's all about him. It's not about you and it's not about me. It's very difficult to do this, especially if you take sources of money that don't allow you to do it.

Christian ministries all across this country are taking funds from sources that will not allow you to narrate the gospel truth.

And then finally, we must repent of our own worldview. You see, it wasn't just the people that Paul and Barnabas were ministering to that have a fallen worldview.

[ 38 : 21 ] You and I have a fallen worldview too. You've got to listen carefully because we've got to end here quickly. Western Christianity has tended to focus on the legal aspects of Christ's work.

Christ dies on the cross to save me from my sins. My soul goes to heaven when I die. That's it. And as a result, we don't have a story of Monday through Saturday.

He solves our sin problem on Sunday mornings we worship him. We don't have a story Monday through Saturday. Most of us have reverted to deism. Most of us believe that functionally the world operates like a machine.

And brothers and sisters who I love with all my heart, the backgrounds of most of the people in this congregation lend themselves to this.

You're scientists. You're scientists. And you've been inculcated in a worldview that says the world functions on its own like a closed machine.

[ 39 : 26 ] And Christ, if he exists, simply heals our sin problems. He has nothing to do with Monday through Saturday. But that's not the gospel. The gospel is that he's the king, that he holds the atoms in place, that he makes the chemical formulas work the same time over and over and over again because he's a covenant keeping God.

That's him holding the atoms in place. But you see, if Jesus is in king of Monday through Saturday, then who is?

I would submit to you that the issue that most of us are facing in the West is this. We believe that our own knowledge, our own know-how, our own science, our own technology, our own wealth are things that we created on our own because we don't understand the gospel of the kingdom of God. We don't understand that it's all a gift from him. And you know what happens from that? We get really arrogant. We get really arrogant. And when you're arrogant, you crush poor people because poor people are typically suffering from a marred identity, a sense of inferiority, a sense of not fully human.

And we rush in and we take over to fix them and we confirm in them what they're already feeling. I'm less than human. I can't do anything. I would submit to you that the wealthiest people in the world are the least capable people of helping the poor around the world.

[ 40 : 57 ] The wealthiest people in the world are the least capable of helping poor people around the world. Because poor people don't need our stuff. They don't need us telling them how smart we are.

What they need is King Jesus. So I would call us to repentance this morning. Repentance of the arrogance and the pride that are dripping all over Western civilization.

But folks, here's the thing. We can't get over our pride on our own. We're helpless to overcome our pride. So what I'm telling you is that the first step in poverty alleviation is for us to reach out our hands like beggars and to say to King Jesus, please come heal me.

Folks, in this light, poverty alleviation isn't so much about us putting food in the hands of a beggar, although sometimes that's helpful. It's more like this.

It's more like grabbing the hand of a beggar and saying, I'm broken and you're broken. I'm hungry and you're hungry.

[ 42 : 13 ] Let us go feed on King Jesus together. Let us pray. King Jesus, forgive us.

Forgive us when we think it's all about ourselves. Forgive me when I think it's all about me. King Jesus, you are the creator and the sustainer and the reconciler of all things. it's all about you. We can do nothing without you. You tell us in your word that apart from you we can do absolutely nothing. And so Lord, we come to you today like beggars. We come to you with outstretched hands asking you to heal us. Heal us from our materialism. Heal us from our pride. May we fall at the foot of the cross. And we fall at the foot of the cross. And may you heal our deepest needs. And then may you use us to heal others. [ 43 : 25 ] It's in your name alone that we pray. Amen. For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](http://southwood.org).