

Michael Bleecker and I have been friends for a long time. In fact, we were friends before we came to the Village. We were doing Metro Bible study at Prestonwood for a year or so before I came here. He was actually the first hire here when I came on. We're really good friends. And when you start and the church is small and you don't have a lot of money, there are a lot of little things you do. We hired young, because young guys are cheap. We couldn't pay him, but we could give him a seat at the table. We could go, "Look, you get \$8 grand a year, but you're an elder." Because you know, that's attractive to guys. So when you start like that, everybody is a generalist and nobody has a specific job. It's like, "You do music, you do college and you do the parking team and you're also an administrator." But as the church grows, you become more specialized in what you do. So one of the things Bleecker used to do was edit down all the sermons down. So if I used foul language or something like that, he would cut it out so when someone e-mailed in, "I cannot believe you said that," we could send him the audio and go, "When did I say that?" So it was Bleecker's job to cover up my shadiness. So because he didn't have a lot else to do, he started creating a CD that he just called "The Best of CD." So anytime I messed up, anytime I slurred my words, anytime I mispronounced anything, he would take all of those clips and put them all on a CD and then he would hand them out to people as Christmas presents. So anytime I cap on him, there are some of you that are high mercy/high grace who are like, "Leave poor Bleecker alone." No. This is just and right before the Lord. He would even take things I've said out of context and put it on the disc as a stand-alone sentence. So I was teaching through Ecclesiastes, and the whole point of Ecclesiastes is Solomon is richer than you will ever be, has experienced more pleasure than you will ever experience, has owned more than you will ever own, has built more than you will ever build and his thing in all of it was, "It's inadequate." And through that whole series, one of the things I kept telling you was my fear for all of us was that you are never going to be rich enough to know that money is not going to solve it. You're never going to experience enough pleasure to run out of fantasies, but Solomon did. So he had not only wives but he had concubines. So one of the things I said in passing was something like, "Don't tell me about that. I've got 400 hookers at my house." So Bleecker takes that sentence, puts it on the Best of CD and it's just this stand-alone sentence of me saying, "Don't tell me about that. I've got 400 hookers at my house." He used to do this until Dell Steele, who was chairman of our elders, didn't think it was funny anymore, and then it kind of died out.

Now, the reason I tell you about that is because you're about to experience a version of that, only not in my sermon. In the season of Easter, the world takes this really strange thing where it tries to explain Jesus Christ. Just keep your eyes open. You're going to start seeing all sorts of specials about Jesus. You'll see "Jesus, out of Egypt," "Jesus, the Magician," "Jesus, the Wandering Prophet" or "Jesus, the \_\_\_\_\_. There are going to be all these efforts to explain Jesus Christ to us. And all of them are going to be a lot like the Best of CD, where things are ripped out of context, where you don't get the full story, where you don't get any questions answered, but if you just turn off your brain and just look at it, it starts to sound okay. The politically correct answer about Jesus is that He was a good teacher and a good moral man, that He just like Gandhi. The problem with that stance is actually the teachings of Jesus. So C.S. Lewis said it better than anyone else has been able to say it. He said, "Jesus Christ is either a liar, He's a lunatic, an absolute loon or He is who He said He was." He's the Lord. He can't be a good teacher because in His teaching He said stuff like, "I'm eternal. I've always been. I will always be. I cannot be killed." He's got these claims about His Godhood. So you can't say, "He's a good teacher, and we really enjoy His teachings," because He claims to be God in the flesh and claims if you don't believe in Him, you are going to die and you are going to be judged by what you've done with that belief in Him and then you will be either righteously and justly punished for that God-belittling, God-mocking lifestyle or you will be redeemed by His grace alone. So this is this weird little animal that happens where everyone wants to go, "He's such a great teacher," but

then if you bring up His teachings, all of a sudden they have all these problems with Him. But you can't call Him "loony" because we're politically correct. And you're in Dallas, so you can't go, "Jesus is crazy." You'll get killed. Somebody will kill you and stick an Ichthus on the back of your car. It will just go bad for you. You'll have all these little figurines bowing down to the cross on the back of your windshield.

Let's go Colossians 1. We're going to pick it up in verse 15. "He is the image, he being Jesus, of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is head of the body the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead that in everything he might be pre-eminent." Now we've covered all of that in our first 5 weeks from Colossians, so let's pick it up in verse 19. "For in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." So in Jesus Christ, all the fullness of God is made visible. It dwells in Him and it pleased the Lord to put His fullness in the Son. What I want to do in our time together is show you that the attributes given to God are also seen in God the Son, Jesus Christ.

Regardless of religion, God is seen as omnipotent. Nobody worships a God that just can't really do anything. In everyone's view, their God is all powerful. Now that's not true if you get into mythology where you've got war waging, but I'm not talking about mythology here. God is omnipotent; He's all powerful. So then the question is, "If the fullness of God is seen in Jesus Christ, can we watch there be a manifestation of unreal power in the person of Jesus Christ?" And the answer is yes, over and over again. In fact, if you could step outside of your church background and just read the New Testament, you would chew your nails because you would just be waiting for Jesus to snap and kill everyone. He constantly is exhibiting this power that He has, and yet people are taunting and mocking Him and you're just waiting for Him to snap and just vaporize everybody. But He never does. He shows perfect restraint according to the will of the Father. You've got Jesus calming the storm, you've got Him taking the boy's lunch and feeding the loaves and fish to feed anywhere from 12 to 20 thousand people. So these are acts of power that are beyond just human ability and human will. What you'll find some people saying is, "Okay Matt, I see that, but don't we see that with guys in the Old Testament. Don't we see that with guys also later on in the New Testament? Couldn't this just be the manifestation of God's power via the Holy Spirit?" The problem with that is that the Bible is going to accredit a lot of that power not to the Holy Spirit but to the Son.

Let me show you two instances, go to John 2:1. If you're really, really Baptist, don't get nervous here. I'm just reading the Bible. Breathe out and don't email me this week. I'm just reading the Bible. "On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does this have to do with me?' Now let me explain something culturally. If my mum came up to me and said, 'Hey Matt, go do something,' and I said to her, 'Woman . . .', it would go very very bad for me. She would probably put a pretty good beat down on me, then she would tell my dad later and it would get even worse. There wasn't "time out" when I was a kid. If you got to walk in that, then you just lived in a really favorable season of the Lord, because everyone could whip you when I was growing up. I mean, your teacher could beat you, your coach could beat you, the guy that taught you RAs at church could beat you. It was just free range on who could spank you. And no one was going to call and report that. They might, if they're having a tough day, try to get a shot in. It wasn't as if there was this culturally, "How horrible is this. . ." so I couldn't say to my mother, "Woman . . ." But culturally though, this is a sign of respect. It was a sign of respect to His mother. . . . Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had

drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine." So keep this in view. It starts with the bottles, and it ends with the boxes. In fact, we can get more detailed. It starts with bottles that are corked, it goes to bottles that screw off the top, and it ends in a blush wine that's in a box. That's kind of how it progressed in the New Testament wedding feasts. Now, we'll finish unpacking this. Verse 10, "...and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now. This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him."

So this does not, in this instance, give the credit of this miracle to the Holy Spirit, but to the Son. Jesus did this. Jesus accomplished this for Jesus' glory, and because of that, the disciples believed.

Okay, let me show you one other spot. Turn to Matthew 8. We're going to pick it up in verse 23. "And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." And he said to them, 'Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?'" So I love this thing that's happening here where they are mortified, afraid that they're about to die, and Jesus is asleep on a boat that's being tossed about in the sea. So they wake Him up and His response is. "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Now listen, "Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the seas, and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, 'What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?'" So one of the things you're watching in Jesus Christ is this unreal amount of power where the creative order obeys Him, where He is taking loaves of bread and multiplying them, taking fish and multiplying them. So you're seeing a great deal of power in the person, in the man, God in flesh, Jesus Christ. So, the "fullness of God pleased to dwell" We see it in the omnipotence.

Let me run through a couple more of these. We covered in detail four weeks ago the idea of the pre-existence of Jesus, or that He is eternal, that Jesus didn't just turn up on the scene on December 25th, year 0. That's not how it happened. He is pre-existent. He teaches that He is pre-existent. In John 8, He mentioned Abraham and says, "Before Abraham was, I am." He was calling Himself God, which is why the Jews picked up rocks and were prepared to kill Him. You're going to find in Revelation that He says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." It is the teaching of Christ Himself, and of the whole of Scripture, that Jesus Christ is eternal. He has always been, and He will always be. So, I don't think I need to say any more about that because we've covered that.

Now we get into some more difficult areas as we get into more of the attributes of God. The omniscience of God is the idea that God knows everything. God's not a white dude. He's not just hanging out in North America. God knows everything and the details of everything. So, we find out in Romans 11 that He knows everything at this macro level and He knows everything at this micro level. So He's aware of all of humanity, but also, if you remember Jesus' teaching, a bird doesn't fall out of the sky without Him knowing it. Isaiah would tell us that a man moves from this city to this city because the Lord wills it. He's not unaware. Now David marveled at this in the Psalms when he is lying down, looking up at the stars and says, "Who am I that You are mindful of me?" David doesn't even know anything about the stars, outside of that he's just laying down looking up at them. We know how vast the universe is, how mighty it is, how far it goes. We've got cameras in space taking photos of millions of light years away and showing us images that by the time we've seen them and looked at them have vastly changed. So we know the vastness of it, but it's David just looking up in a pasture going, "Who am I, that You are mindful of me?" This is the idea that God knows everything. He's aware of you, He's aware of me and He's aware of every person and everything on earth. He's aware of every cell in your body, every cell in my body, including the ones in my brain that have gone haywire. That has not caught God off-guard. My cancer has not shocked Him. He is not going, "Oh Me, what are We going to do?" That has not happened. He is perfectly aware, not caught off-guard. By the way, that's where we find our comfort, that's where we find our hope. Our steadfast ground

that we stand on is that God is omniscient and He knows all things. So we take it to Jesus and we're watching Jesus and you're watching Him operate on a level where you see Him knowing the thoughts of people. How nervous would you be, if you were a Pharisee, to be around Jesus? Over and over again, the New Testament says, "They were thinking. . ." and then Jesus would say, "Why are you wicked? Why do you think such dumb things?" He's rebuking people that didn't even say anything. This happens over and over. I would just pick a Psalm out and I would just be sitting there going, "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. . .The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. . ." I wouldn't be thinking about basketball, I wouldn't be thinking about football, I would be thinking about, "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. . .The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. . ." I wouldn't even be listening to Him teach, I would be that nervous that He'd be like, "Matt, seriously?" You've got Jesus constantly doing that.

Eric Mason preached last week. Phenomenal isn't he? Just for the record, one of the driving philosophies of how we do church here is we want to take a great deal of the money you give here and we want to give it away. Eric Mason is a beautiful example of that and the Epiphany Fellowship. You've been the primary benefactor of that church plant in a very difficult place that's now running five or six hundred. You've been the primary giver to the that church and the birth of that church. We're not going to hoard here. We don't find it biblical to hoard up or make you more comfortable than the suburbs have already made you. It's a strange thing to show over and over again out of the Scriptures that it's not about you. . .it's not about you, it's not about you, but then do things that say, "It actually is about me. Please validate my need for self-worth. Please come, please tell me I'm great. Here's a latte and a vibrating chair so you don't fall asleep during my long message." So we like to keep it simple here and give a lot of the funds away so that a guy like Eric Mason can go to a very difficult place where the bulk of his congregation tends to be college students, single moms and those kind of people. In our first years here at the Village, when we were mainly in our twenties, people were tithing but it was like, thirty bucks. Those college kids were giving all they had and it was just change. The offering weighed 70-80lbs and it was like, \$90. So, we remember that, and now that God has blessed us, we want to constantly bless others with that. It's a biblical idea.

Anyway, we found out in John 2:25 that it says that Jesus knew all men and needed no one to bear witness for Him. So when you introduce people, you tend to give disclaimers. "He's a good friend of mine. . .He's a good dude. . .We go way back." Jesus has no need of that. You don't need to bring a guy to Jesus and go, "He's legit. You can trust Him." Jesus doesn't need that from you. He needs no one to bear witness to any man. He knows the heart of every man. So you're seeing this kind of omniscient idea form in the man Jesus Christ. John 16 is going to tell us that from the beginning He knew the hearts of all and who would betray Him. So think about what this means. The entire time He's doing ministry, Jesus knows that Judas is the one and still continues to extend mercy to him, continues to let him be in that inner circle, washes his feet, all the while knowing he was going to be the one that betrayed. He also knew Peter was going to betray Him. Remember that great conversation with Peter where Peter, in all his glory, was like, "I will never betray You. Even if they killed me, I wouldn't betray You." Jesus was like, "Please, by tomorrow morning. Three times, Peter." "No way!" "Okay, I'm just God in the flesh, but whatever Peter." So you've got this constant love for them. He knows all things, yet He's gracious to Peter, even in that. You even see it in the restoration of Peter when Jesus begins ask him after the resurrection, "Do you love Me?" Peter goes, "You know I love You." And then Jesus goes, "Do you love Me?" And Peter answers, "You know I love You." And then the third time, Jesus asks, "Do you love Me?" Peter's response is, "Jesus, You know all things. You know that I love You." So Peter's understanding of who Jesus was, "Bro, you know my heart. You just called me out a couple of days ago. You know my heart, You know where I'm wicked, You know where I'm not. You know where I'm not lying, You know where I am. You've clearly shown that, as I've been humiliated over and over again, and that's going to get canonized so everyone gets to see that for the rest of eternity. . .but You know." And Jesus says, "Feed My sheep." And then He adds a little twist and says, "You're going to need to love Me, because you're going to die in a similar fashion to how I died. You're going to love Me in that agape love for the type of death I have coming for you." Nobody likes that text. Nobody likes to think about that, everybody thinks that Jesus is leading us all into money and

ease. But to Peter He's saying, "You're going to need to love Me, because it's going to end really badly for you." And it does. He's crucified upside-down, tradition tells us.

Here's another difficult one. God is omnipresent. He is at all places at once. Now we know from the earthly ministry of Jesus that that's not true. But remember Jesus teaches and the Scriptures attest to Jesus being eternal, having always been and will continue to be to the end of all things. So, in that 33 year break here, it's very clear that He's not all places at once. So, He's not here and in North America, and in China and in, not during His earthly reign. But if you'll think of the great commission where He says "Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded." What does He say then? "And lo, I will be with you always, even until the end of the ages." So He's sending them out, but He's going, "You're not going alone. I'm always going to be there."

There are some commentaries that like to bring up Matthew 18 where He says, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am also." It's a horrible argument for omnipresence because that means, if you're by yourself, is He not there? So that doesn't really work as an argument, although I read that a couple of times in commentaries this week, and I don't know how that helps us with omnipresence if you're like, "Where there's two or three of you? Yeah, but if you're by yourself in a car Jesus is like, 'Look man, I'm just with twos and threes. I can't be dividing Myself up with just you and your car or you and your bike or you and the woods hunting or you at your desk. But if you'd come together and make it easier on me I can be with you.'" So I don't think Matthew 18 is talking about that. I don't think that's what it's addressing. It's honestly addressing discipline, that where two or three people can confront another brother in love, that there Jesus is manifest in that, Jesus' care and concern for you, His mercy for you, is made manifest in people who would love you enough to engage you at that level.

Is He sovereign? We're going to see over and over again in the Scriptures that God is sovereign. "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases." So is Jesus sovereign? You're going to see quite a bit of the sovereignty of Jesus working itself out. You've got Jesus forgiving sins. I mean, can you imagine? "You're forgiven!" It caused quite a stir to watch Jesus in Mark chapter 2 just go, "Stand up. Your sins are forgiven." The other thing you'll notice when you watch Jesus teach is He doesn't tend to say, with Old Testament language "Thus saith the Lord." That's not the language He uses. He'll say "You have heard it said . . ." referencing those prophets, ". . .but I say . . ." So He doesn't say, "Thus saith the Lord;" He says, "Here's what I say," which is why they marveled at this teaching, because He taught them as One with authority. So Jesus doesn't come with, "Here's what God wants Me to say to you;" He's more going, "Here's what I say as God." This is very different.

So you're watching the sovereignty unfold in that. Turn over to Matthew 11, a great text that shows this. We'll pick it up in verse 25: "At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will." I would never want to encourage you and never do encourage you to be moron Christians, intellectually stupid when it comes to our faith. Have you ever watched a guy on TV try to unpack our faith and you're just like, "Oh, I literally just felt people leaving the church by the thousands"? And you can find them anywhere. Guys do documentaries all the time and find them anywhere. "You say something bad about my Jesus, and I'ma cut you!" But at the same time, I've done a lot of study in regards to apologetics and historicity of the Christian faith. And I've never, in an ongoing dialogue, won the intellectual argument and had them go, "You're right. I don't have a good solution for that. Lets pray." That's never happened to me, in regards to apologetics. I've never been able to go, "What you believe is sillier than what I believe," and I've never had someone go, "I see that, let me be saved."

So there's an act of the Holy Spirit that enlightens the heart and the mind to the things of God. This goes back to Romans 1, where He says that the wise, because they refused to worship and see the creator God, that "their foolish hearts were darkened." And so, one of the things you're going to see is that Paul says, "Despite my intellect, God saved me. Despite my brilliance, God saved me." You've got to get out of your head that God's most glorified in saving the sexiest, smartest, most brilliant people, because He doesn't tend to operate like that in the Bible. Read the Bible and pick out the guys that He's like, "That's My boy." I mean they're functionally illiterate a lot of the time. They don't tend to walk in a lot of intellectual power. They are fig tree farmers and fishermen. They are lower blue collar workers at best. Some of them, even in the text, struggle to be viewed as anything other than stumbling about. Peter is a great example. He doesn't even get it after Pentecost, which is something I always want to point out to you. Paul has to come back and rebuke the guy and had disciple him because Peter had fallen back into idiocy very quickly. So Paul has to rebuke him, because he's going, "You're just sitting with the Jews; you're not sitting with the Gentiles. You're showing favor to a people group when Jesus came to destroy the barriers between people groups and say there's no longer Jew, there's no longer Gentile, but we are all one in Christ."

So you'll find this over and over again. And once again in Matthew 11, He's unpacking, "Praise You, God, that You reveal this to simple people." And a bulk of us should say "Amen" to that. Now some of you just have real giant heads, just egg-headed fools that we all hated in school. You were the ones that went, "Oh that test killed me" and you got 109 on it. We disliked you then, we're praying through that now. But let me finish the text with my point. Look at verse 27. "All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." So, I'll break this down as simple as I can in regards to sovereignty. The Scriptures just said and Jesus just taught, "No one knows the Father that the Son has not, by His sovereign choice, taken them and introduced them to the Father." Do you see that He is sovereign over salvation? "No one knows the Father except that the Son introduced that man or woman to the Father." So you're going to see the sovereignty of God manifest in the man Jesus Christ.

In John 2:19-22, here's a statement made by Jesus that's actually going to be brought up again at His trial. He says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken." So Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and I'll build it again in three days." Now this is before the days of tilt-wall construction. These are the days when you can go on vacation and come back and there's a whole new shopping center in your neighborhood. This is just a different day; it's not that day. They had to have rocks cut at one location, animals bring those rocks to another location and then through a pretty extensive system of pulleys and levers they have to set those things up. Forty-six years it took them to build the temple and so they're going, "Please, You're not going to destroy this temple and then build it again in three days." But He's talking about His body. He's saying, "I'm immortal." That's the other attribute of God that we need to talk about. Jesus is saying, "I'm immortal. I can't be killed." This was brought up at His trial. If you remember, they say, "He threatened to destroy the temple." This was one of the accusations brought up at His trial, but He wasn't talking about the actual temple. Although, He was saying that the temple and that separation between God and man, "I am going to destroy that, but I'm going to rebuild it. There will be a new temple in its place. That temple is going to be the hearts of man where I dwell, where I freely dwell." So Jesus is doing all sorts of things in this claim. But He's immortal.

We see this in several other texts, in Hebrews 7:16 it says that Jesus has become a priest, not according to the "legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life." Now, we know that Jesus is killed. That is a historical fact. We can step outside of sacred Literature, we can look at it historically and the Roman government killed Jesus of Nazareth. They beat Him and stripped the skin off His back and drove nails through His

hands and His feet and His lungs flooded with fluid and blood. He almost drowned in His own blood, outright drowned in His own blood. And just to make sure they took a spear, ran it up under his ribcage, punctured the sack around his heart, through his lung and ripped the spear out and blood and water poured and He died. That's historical fact. That's why you're going to see all these specials on television in the next couple of weeks leading up to Easter. Because it is historical fact, which is why you're going to hear theories in the next couple of weeks that Jesus didn't really die, but that what happened was He just kind of slipped into a little coma and then three days later had the strength to move the stone and jog fourteen miles round trip in a day with some other disciples to another town and then come back. The irony of ironies concerning the resurrection is the secular mind goes, "He raised from the dead is such a stupid theory. You guys are so brain-dead for believing that. Here's what must have happened. A guy who was beaten so severely that another man had to carry His cross before they crucified Him, despite the fact that His hands and feet and nails driven right through them . . ." Listen, I've just broken a toe and needed crutches for a couple of weeks. But ". . . Jesus, having hung on the cross for six to seven hours, having a spear run underneath His ribcage, into His heart, has the power a couple of days later to run with, fourteen miles uphill, with two other disciples on the road to Emmaus and then run back to Jerusalem." This is the predominant theory among the secular mind to explain away the resurrection. I don't know that one is more absurd than the other, to be honest with you. So they start referencing World War II, when guys that got all shot up and crawled across the beach for four days, sucking on their own blood and eating roots and they were able to make it. But that's not this. Jesus walked. He didn't make it to the hospital. That's not what happens. He walks and is seen by hundreds and hundreds of people over a period of forty days before His ascent. In fact, by the time Corinthians is written, some 30 years after His ascension, Paul is still referencing hundreds of people who actually saw Him. So Paul is going, "You don't have to believe me there are still five hundred people alive that were there. Ask! See if I'm a liar. See if I'm a liar."

So you've got this God who is sovereign and immortal and powerful and it's all the fullness of it is in Jesus Christ. Now, here's the last one. Philippians 2. We're going to pick it up in verse 9. "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Now here's the biggest testimony to the fullness of God dwelling in Jesus Christ. If you'll read the Old Testament, you've got the grand narrative of Israel being formed through the line of Abraham, them going in to slavery, the big Passover happens, they bring them to Mt. Sinai, the covenant is made and the first commandment is, "I'm God Almighty. There is no other God before Me. You will not worship other gods." And then you've got hundreds, if not thousands, of years of Israel actually worshiping Baal, followed by God doing what? Judging them and either sending them into exile or just destroying them. You've got this constant thing of Israel worshiping another god besides God, making something other than God glorious and right and worshiping and God disciplining them for that, and the prophets pleading on behalf of the people for God not to wipe them off the face of the earth. And now all of a sudden you shift to the New Testament where you've got, "God has exalted Jesus and made Him worthy of worship." The primary tell that Jesus is God in the flesh is that God says, "Worship Him," despite the fact that all along He said, "You better not worship anybody else but Me." So, Jesus is "Me" in the flesh. That's why in Revelation, John gets this picture of all the angels and the heavenly creatures and they've all bowed down to Jesus and they're all worshiping Him saying, "Worthy are you. Worthy of worship. Worthy." They're worshiping the enthroned Son of God. So you've got this idea of Jesus as being worthy of worship as one of those examples of the fullness of God dwelling in the Son.

Now, I went through all that to get to this place. What does all of that mean? Well, starting next week and then Easter we're going to talk about this idea of reconciliation and what that is, that's the umbrella of what's going on here. But I wanted to point out two things in particular about the fullness of God dwelling in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ dwelling in us. So that will take us to Romans 8 first. If you don't love Romans 8, you should. I'll show you why. Like five words in, I'll show you why you should love Romans 8. Starting at verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who

are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." As your pastor, one of the things that I wanted to point out over and over again is that all humanity, regardless of what their spiritual belief system is, acknowledges that something has gone wrong with humanity. So there are those that go, "Education is the way to solve that." There are others that go, "Opportunity is the way to solve that." You've got all these ideas.

You've got Oprah, "Let's just be better people, let's just be whole." (Whatever that means.) You've got all these different ideas of what's gone wrong with humanity. Because you don't have to be a genius, you just need to have CNN to know that something has gone horribly wrong in humanity. Or, I've used this example since day one. Just go to Barnes and Noble. The largest section of books is Self-Help. So you don't need forty-two rows of self-help books if nothing's wrong with human beings. So we all acknowledge that something has gone wrong. The problem is that history will reveal that all the answers of how to go about solving that don't really work. So there's the idea of "Education solves that." Well, history proves, the present proves, that's not true. I'll give you little examples where you see this taking place. After 9/11 happened and the war on terror began, one of the shocking things that came out of that was, everybody thought these Arabs were out of poor backgrounds that didn't have a lot of opportunity, they were almost illiterate and they were kind of sucked up by this evil empire and forced to blow themselves up. The problem is that was they looked into it and it was actually very educated, middle class to upper middle class that usually came from wealthy homes. So even think to Christmas Day, the kid that flew over to the flight into Detroit and was going to blow up his underwear and bring down the plane, he's from Nigerian descent, extremely wealthy family, educated at the University of London. So this idea that if we could just educate, then we could restore the relationships between one another, we can restore the relationship between us and God, we can restore the relationship between us and the world. So we restore that with education or we restore that with opportunity or we restore that and reconcile that with all these different ideas. Well, over and over again we see that it's not how it happens.

Some of you have been in church long enough to know it doesn't happen with external moral religion either. There's nothing more exhausting than not having genuine affection for Jesus Christ and trying to obey all the rules. Some of you have spent your life checking off the boxes without any real love for Jesus Christ or understanding of what the gospel is, and it is exhausting. It's exhausting. So I got up early this morning, earlier than I wanted to, but the alarm went off and I got up and started looking over my notes. And my son, for whatever reason, has this weird sense where if somebody else gets up in the house he gets up. So if it's 2:00 in the morning and somebody's up, so he just kind of gets up and comes down. So he came down and I was eating, so he wanted one of these little bottles of yogurt, which to me are just gross. You just shouldn't drink yogurt through a straw. That's just my personal opinion, but he loves it. And so I got him one of those little yogurt things and I went back to looking over my notes. And he ran back in and he grabbed a rag and ran back into the living room. So I was just, "Buddy, are you alright?" And he was like "Um, when I was spinning. When I was spinning my yogurt fell over." I'm thinking he's either spinning a lot faster than the last time I saw him or he hit it and knocked it over. So he's in there, sweet little soul, cleaning up the mess that he made. So, I can't drive. One of the things about having a seizure is you get this little six month hiatus from driving. I've got to get chauffeured around constantly, which is awesome. So Josh comes up like we're in junior high, I grab my book bag and my lunch and head out. But as I walk past the coffee table, I see that the yogurt is just kind of smeared all over the coffee table. So bless his heart he tried to clean it, but he just made a bigger mess. And that's a ton of you. A ton of you have been in church your whole life and all you've done is heard the rules and then in trying to clean yourself up have just made a bigger and bigger and bigger mess. This text says Jesus came to set you free from that. That the problem with all of it is you. That's the problem with "This will solve it . . . this will solve it . . . this will solve it." There's no silver bullet to heal, to be made whole. There's a pursuit of Jesus Christ, a progressive sanctification that pulls us into the fullness of what He has for us until

He calls us home and perfects us in all things. And that's what this text is teaching, and Jesus comes and puts on flesh so that you can get His righteousness and so that He can take on your sin so that you could be right before God, not because you checked the boxes but because He's beautifully gracious.

Flip over to Hebrews 2. We'll pick it up in verse 14. "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." So you've Got Jesus, God in the flesh, putting on flesh. My wife read me a little quote a couple of weeks ago. I'm not sure what book she was reading it out of, but the quote was, "He knows it's scary to be us." So Jesus puts on flesh and He comes and He dwells among us and He becomes this empathetic, merciful high priest, which means He knows. If you'll study the Gospels this way you'll start seeing that Jesus has a lot in common with your tears and some of your pain. So, Jesus goes to the funeral of a good friend of His and He weeps. Anyone? Jesus' family dynamics get a little strained when His mother and brother show up and think He's crazy. Any family issues in here? Any family problems? If you're sitting with them you don't have to raise your hand. I'm with you. Anyone? He's betrayed by someone close to Him. Anyone? We could keep going. So Jesus can empathize with us when we suffer because He suffered. Jesus died. He physically died. He didn't slip into a coma. He knows what death is like. He's been there, which is why if we had the time to read the verses above this, it says that Jesus died so we didn't have to be afraid of death anymore. He conquered death. He came back. We don't have to be afraid of it anymore. We've been set free from that bondage because He conquered it. And on and on and on you could go through the life of Jesus Christ. He has this thing that God's asking him to do that in the end He doesn't really want to do. He goes to the garden He sweats, He pleads with the Lord, "Can you take this cup from me? If there's another way, can we go another way?" All the while, He knows that there is no other way. He goes to the cross, restrains power and doesn't defend Himself. All these things we get asked to do in the Scriptures. So we are not without mercy from Him, not without empathy from Him when we walk through it. I'm not naïve, I know we've come in here with all sorts of things going on. Some of us have very sick children, some of us are very sick ourselves and some of us are without a job. On and on I could go here. You don't have a high priest, you don't a Savior who is not empathetic toward your sorrow and pain. He's not in the heavens going, "I'm sovereign, deal with it." That's not who you're getting in the Scriptures. You've got a Savior that goes, "I know . . . I know," which is why the text earlier says, "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest." It's because He's not un-empathetic. He's not going, "Just deal with it. Read the text, read the Bible and you'll be fine." That's not what you find in our Savior. You find a very merciful, very empathetic high priest who went to the cross to reconcile us to God, bore flesh, stepped out of eternity into this and lived perfect for thirty-three years so that you would get righteousness. He took on your sin in the cross and made a way.

So I want you to hear this because I think your view of Jesus Christ will really work out how you live your life. And it's extremely important in the Bible Belt where some of you have religion but you have not been transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ at all. There are objective evidences to salvation, and very few people want to teach that because it makes everybody nervous. They're like, "That's works of the law." No, it's not works of the law. We don't do those things to be saved. We do those things because we are saved. There are objective evidences to salvation. There are evidences that your heart has been awakened to spiritual things. But what I've found is that most of us, although we wouldn't say it with our mouths, fall practically in that line of "Jesus is a good man and a good teacher." You have no fear in regards to obedience, you have no fear in regards to walking as He said to walk, because He's just grace and mercy and regardless of how you live, regardless of what you do, regardless of what you say. You live like there's going to be that day where He's like, "Come on in," despite the fact that Matthew 7 should just throw this terror into all of us, where He says, "Many of you are going to say to me on that day, 'Lord Lord' and I'm going to go 'Who are you again?' And you'll reply 'Did I not

cast out demons in Your name? Did I not do all sorts of miracles in Your name? Did I not prophesy in Your name?' 'Yeah, you did, and thank you for that, but depart from Me ye cursed for I don't know you. I don't know you.'" So you've got all these texts that interject this, "I need to wrestle with my heart...I need to do business with the Lord." But for some reason we're like, "I'm a good guy and Jesus was a good guy, and I'm trying my best to do what Jesus told me to do." But in the end there's not this Godhood of Jesus that you need to see, understand and at some level fear. It's not a fear that paralyzes you, but a fear that frees you. And so Jesus is not some effeminate, Jewish shepherd who stumbled onto some truths about how life works. He's the God of the universe tapping you into how He wired that universe to work and be. And it's in submission to Him that we find life. It's in faith put fully in what He did for us on the cross that we are freed from the weight of sin and death and grief. So this is my hope for you, that you would see that, that you would savor that, that you would understand that and that it would transform you.

Alright let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women. I thank You for an opportunity to have the Scriptures press us a little bit and reveal us a little bit, what's really going on in our hearts, what's really going on in our minds. We thank You that You came. We thank You, Jesus, that You obediently died. We thank You, Holy Spirit, that You introduce us to Jesus, who bestows glory upon the Father, who adopts us as sons of the Father. And so I thank You for a triune God who is not lacking in any way but rather invites us into His joy, invites us into His presence. I thank You that there is now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus because Christ Himself bore our sin and gave to us His righteousness. Thank You and praise You for that. My prayer is that people would understand and grasp it today. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."