

My message today is going to be a little bit different. So out of the gate, I want to just unpack for you what the difference is going to be. Usually when I preach, I have a text and I drill down into that text. It's more of an expositional type of preaching where I am unpacking John 15:1-5 for instance. This morning I'm doing a cross-section. I'm doing more of a theological, biblical theology approach to a topic. So it's really a cross-section of Scripture. So I'm not going to be drilling down into one particular text, but instead I'm going to be looking at several different texts and trying to get above and see what God is saying all across the Bible as it pertains to a certain topic. In light of that, we're going to be flying through a bunch of Scripture.

So let me pray, and then we'll jump into it. "Father, I do thank You for the opportunity to unpack Your Word this morning. I thank You for what You've done, even in my own heart as I have thought on these things for quite a while now. I'm excited. I'm not anxious, but I am eager to see what You have for us. I pray, Holy Spirit, and recognize that I don't have the ability to do what needs to happen this morning. I'm not clever enough, good enough, strong enough or powerful enough to craft words that are going to change people's hearts. But I know that that is what You do, so I'm asking You to do that this morning, as we all have different hurts, different hangups, different joys, different frustrations. I cannot, God, speak to each one, but You can. So Holy Spirit, I know that there is not one in here who is in here by accident this morning. I ask that You would minister personally to their hearts and that they would hear what needs to be heard. And Father, I pray that I would speak what needs to be spoken. I ask all of this in Christ's name. Amen."

I graduated from Texas A&M in 2001. After my time there, I knew that I was headed off into ministry. I didn't quite know what that was going to look like, but I knew that God had called me into ministry. So I decided I was going to take the year off between college and seminary and go to Hong Kong to do mission work for 4-6 months. So I was excited about that. My college roommate and I had prayed through this together. We were going to go together. Natalie, my girlfriend at the time, was finishing up school at the time, so this was the perfect opportunity for us to go. He actually heads over there while I'm waiting for my visa.

My visa arrives on Tuesday afternoon on September 11. As you know, the world changed on that day. My world changed that day, particularly as it related to this opportunity in Hong Kong. The door just got closed. They sent my roommate back home and said that they were taking no more Americans over there. Everything just really shut down for me that semester in Fall 2001. I had no backup plan. I had no job lined up. I wasn't supposed to be living at home, and now I'm living at home. So all of these things had taken a really weird and odd turn for me where I was eager to go do a work and now that work had been removed from me. I wasn't in seminary yet, but I was going to go to seminary. I knew that God had called me to ministry, but I wasn't doing ministry per se. I didn't have a job. I was now living at home. I had a girlfriend whom I loved, but I wasn't engaged. So I was really in this odd year, which maybe is common for those of us who graduate college are recognizing that it's not college anymore, I'm not full-on into my career yet and I'm not sure what this looks like. It was a real difficult time for me.

My dad asked me, "Since you're living in the house, why don't you paint the house?" I said, "Okay, I can do that." I've never painted a house before in my life, so he let me practice on his. So I painted a house. I called a buddy and said, "Hey, do you want to help me paint a house?" So he and I spent hours on ladders painting my house and learning this

trade. Shortly after that, I get a phone call from someone who says, "Hey, I hear you paint houses. Would you like to paint my house?" And so painting houses is how God provided for me.

So what God did for me in this season was really strip away so many different things. He stripped away ministry as I was understanding it. He stripped away jobs as I understood them. I didn't have seminary, I wasn't with Natalie and I was now living at home, which was not like what I anticipated. God was really just moving all of these things to the periphery. I was left alone on a ladder with a buddy and a paint brush and nothing to do but talk and think about the things of God.

I had no idea, through the difficulty of that year, what He was about to teach me. He was laying out for me the beginning of what would be a profound truth in my heart. God was really getting my heart primed and ready. He was tilling up the soil and was about to plant in me some really deep roots that are true about who I am in Him. As I found all of these things to the wayside, as school was no longer in front of me, as I was no longer seeing as a student, as I was not a pastor, as my girlfriend was not near me, as I'm living at home, all of these weird little things came together and left me alone with this, "Josh, you are Mine. Is that not enough?"

And God began to profoundly and deeply encourage my heart in this truth: I am His. I am His, not because of what I do, not because of who I am, not because of who I will be or the potential that may or may not be in me, not because of what I have done. I am His because He chose me and adopted me as a son. And the reason the Father has affection, love and care for me is because of His Son and because of what His Son has done. It was just absolutely life-changing.

So I want to take you Philippians 3. In Philippians 3, the apostle Paul is going to say some things that I completely resonated with in this season. This was a time when this particular chapter and this particular paragraph really just leapt off the page and spoke to my heart in profound ways. I felt like the apostle Paul was saying everything that was in my heart.

Starting in verse 3: "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."

"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you."

The apostle Paul is looking back at his life and laying out his pedigree. He's going to say, "I was born an Israelite. I was circumcised on the eighth day. I'm from the tribe of Benjamin. I'm a Hebrew of Hebrews." He's laying it out there. "If anyone has reason to put confidence in themselves, it's me. If anyone has reason to think that their life should gain

the affection and favor of God, it's me. Why? Because of all these things. I was zealous for His name. I persecuted the church. Unto the Law, I am blameless. I have kept it flawlessly," is what Paul is saying. "I have done everything that I am to do. I am the man that I am to be."

And as Paul puts on a platform all of his accomplishments, all of his work and all of his merits, he's going to say, "I thought for the longest time that this is how I gained favor. I thought for the longest time that this is how I earn the affection, the approval and attention of God. I thought that this is how my righteousness would gain me entrance into the kingdom of Heaven. All of it, as I push it all forward and put it on display in this trophy case, amounts to filthy rags. It means nothing. It's trash. It's rubbish. In fact, it's loss. It's a hindrance. It's not at all what God is interested in."

And look at what he says. He says, "There's a flip here, because now I understand that Christ has given me His righteousness. It's a righteousness that doesn't come from the Law, but it's a righteousness that Christ has given to me. It is alien to me and foreign to me. It is not from me. It was reckoned upon me, given to me by someone who actually earned it and merited it. And that One and only that One, namely Jesus Christ, has bestowed it upon me. And in light of that, my heart's affection, my mind's attention is focused in turn on this one thing: that I may know Him. In the power of His resurrection, I want to share in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death."

And you see in Paul all of this desire, all of these new ambitions, passions and affections that have welled up in him. You know that he's a changed man. In fact, he says, "All that was before is rubbish. I count it as loss, as hindrance. It is for naught. But now that I have been given the righteousness of Christ, everything has turned and everything becomes different." You see Paul write this in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Paul is saying that his ambitions have been absolutely raptured by the Savior Jesus.

And then in verse 12 he says, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." So Paul begins to introduce this tension in his life. It's a tension that not only Paul experienced, but it's a tension that I dare say we all experience. There's this tension for those of us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have placed our trust in Him as Savior, where you have these holy ambitions, you have these desires, you have these longings that are godly, righteous and holy, you have these desires where you are willing to lay down your life and share in His sufferings and you long to be conformed to the image of the Son. You're willing to endure, you want to persevere, you want to be godly and you want to grow in Christlikeness, but then you recognize that the flesh is still there. The phone from yesterday still rings, and your heart longs to pick it up. The old self still calls. There's this tension in you, and there's this war in you that you haven't been made perfect, that you're not complete yet, that all is not right yet in you and that you're this mixed bag of affection, ambition, emotion and of righteousness. There is a part of us that longs for it, and there's a part of us that is so apathetic and lazy to it. There's just this war.

So what is going on there? What is that? I really want to get to the base of what it is all about, which is our identity. When I'm talking about identity, I'm talking about what is fundamental to us and what is at the base of who we are. It is not image. It is not what we project. It is not what we want others to think we are. It's not what I want you to think I'm like as I project an image of who you think Josh Patterson is. It is who I am. At the very core, at the very foundation, at the very ground level, it's the essence of who you and I are. The question that we're going to deal with this morning is: What is our identity?

In order for us to understand identity, we have to understand the gospel narrative, how our identity began. When I talk about the gospel story, I'm talking about creation, fall, redemption and the consummation. This is the arc that sits

over all of Scripture, that God has done something in creation, something happens in the fall, something happens in redemption and something is going to happen in consummation.

You and I find ourselves in this series called redemption, but to understand identity, we need to go back to creation. Genesis 1:26-27, profound verses, say this: "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Verse 31, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."

Right out of the gate, in the creation of humanity, the identity of humanity at the point of creation is this – image bearer. The first mom and dad, the Adam and Eve, the first parents of humanity were endowed with this great and glorious gift. They were image bearers. Do you know what that meant? It was undefiled. They walked with the Lord. They related with the Lord in perfect harmony with one another and with Him. The great thing about image bearers is that aspect of identity has continued on until this day. You and I continue to bear the mark and image of God in the essence of who we are. It is fundamental to our identity.

Here's what this means and here's why it's profound. It means that the Christian understanding of people is that everybody matters. The reason that everybody matters is because everybody has been endowed with God's image in them. Perhaps marred, scarred and gnarled, but everybody matters. The powerful and the powerless, the exploited, the smart and the dumb, the rich and the poor, the black and the white, everybody has inherent dignity and inherent worth. You just need to know as you look over the mass of humanity of 6+ billion people that there is not a one of them who God does not look down on and love. There is not one of them in all of this world who have ever lived who does not have worth and dignity. It is not based on capability, it is not based on ability, it is not based on potential and it is not based on what they do or cannot do; it is based on the fact that they are. And because they are, they have an endowed and ascribed worth by the Creator God who made them.

And that's why the Christian should be the first to run in to help the oppressed. That's why the Christian should be the first to go in and call for justice for those who are being exploited. Why? Not for political gain, not for a tax write-off, but because they matter. There is no caste system in Christianity. There are people, and people matter to Him. So in Genesis 1, at the baseline and foundation of identity you see this – image bearer.

Unfortunately, the image of God that we carry in ourselves was marred and scarred because of Genesis 3. So you have creation and now fall. In the fall of Genesis 3, Adam and Eve are tempted by the serpent, sin enters into the world and fractures the image. God comes and calls to them, "Where are you?" He then curses the woman, curses the man, curses the serpent and curses the ground. All of creation now sits under the curse as this image is now fractured. And now fundamental, baseline identity is no longer image bearer alone. It is a gnarled and twisted concoction of image bearer and sinner. Sin has entered into our nature. It is not extrinsic to us; it is intrinsic to us. It is nature in us. It is who we are at our baseline and foundation.

You see Genesis 3 how sin begins to spiral. In Genesis 6, God says, "They have done evil beyond My imagination. I'm going to destroy the world." And God has been making a way and provision for sin since Genesis 3. But where you and I find ourselves now is a twisting carnage of the fall. Yes still image bearers, but now scarred, perverted, twisted and different. Now we find the tension that humanity is both the brilliance of creation as being the image bearers of God and the brutal beasts who have rebelled.

It was humanity who built the Pyramids, the Colosseum, the Taj Mahal, the Great Wall of China, painted the Mona Lisa, sculpted the Pieta, wrote Handel's Messiah and The Marriage of Figaro, wrote the Odyssey, Romeo and Juliet and War and Peace, invented the telephone, the telescope, the light bulb and the computer, developed the Pythagorean Theorem, the Theory of Spacial Relativity ($E = mc^2$), discovered penicillin, vaccinations, abolished slavery and sought equity for all. That's humanity in its brilliance. On the flip side of the same coin, it's the same humanity who killed more than 6 million fellow humans in the Holocaust, who enslaved one another because of different skin color, flew planes into buildings, crusaded in the name of religion, brainwashed children to become child soldiers, built a world-wide industry around sex trafficking and we could go on and on. Now the fundamental baseline identity that all of humanity is enslaved to is intention. Yes an image bearer and yes a sinner.

The theologian Daniel Migliore summarizes it like this. "We human beings are a mystery to ourselves. We are rational and irrational, civilized and savage, capable of deep friendship and murderous hostility, free and in bondage, the pinnacle of creation and its greatest danger. We are Rembrandt and Hitler, Mozart and Stalin, Antigone and Lady Macbeth, Ruth and Jezebel." "What a work of art is man!" says Shakespeare.

Blaise Pascal, a French philosopher/mathematician in the 17th century, wrote, "What a figment of the imagination human beings are! What a novelty, what monsters! Chaotic, contradictory, prodigious, judging everything, mindless worm of the earth, storehouse of truth, cesspool of uncertainty and error, glory and reject of the universe. Who will unravel this tangle?" And he goes on to say, "Man's greatness and wretchedness are so evident that the true religion must necessarily teach us that there is in man some great principle of greatness and some great principle of wretchedness. It must then give us a reason for these astonishing contradictions."

So the tension of humanity since the fall is that of glory and garbage. As Pascal said, it's the glory and the refuse or reject of the universe. And the Scriptures are replete with examples of this. So in creation – image bearers, walking with the Lord in perfect harmony. In the fall sin enters the world and we're still image bearers but scarred and broken. And twisted up with that is the reality of sin in our nature and our hearts.

Creation, fall and redemption. Since the fall, literally in Genesis 3, God gives what is called the protoevangelion, the first gospel. He preached and proclaimed in Genesis 3 that, although the serpent had come and will bruise the heel, the serpent's head will be crushed. So God Himself is prophesying, "In this moment, I will make a way to make this right." And from that moment on (and really before the foundation of the world), He has been preparing and unfolding redemptive history.

All through the Old Testament, you've got the Law of Moses and you've got this long awaited day for when the Messiah will come and set His people free. Jesus enters the scene through the birth of the virgin Mary. He becomes a sinless, perfect child who grows and lives a sinless, perfect life. Not only did Jesus never sin, but He always obeyed. All of His affections, all of His ambitions were righteous and holy before His Father. He lives this life so that He might die this death on your behalf.

He is brought in, tried and eventually crucified. He is hung on a cross as a substitute. He hangs there in your place. He is condemned on your and my behalf. He hangs there as a substitute, as a propitiation where He has born the wrath of God so that you don't have to. This is what's happening on the cross. This is what's going on there. Sin is not swept under the rug or looked over. Sin is always dealt with. It's just that God has dealt with sin in His Son for you and for me. So on the cross, as Jesus hangs and breathes His last, He dies a perfect sacrifice for sin in order to make a way for sinners to be reconciled to God, for our greatest need to be met, for our greatest problem to be solved. It's solved in the Savior.

He's resurrected three days later to life, and He is raised victorious over sin, death and hell. He preaches to His disciples and to the 500, He ascends to the Father's right hand and He awaits that word for when that day will come when He will come back and finally make all things right. And that is consummation. That is the new heavens and the new earth. That is glory. That is when God will come down and make His home with His people.

But we find ourselves right square in the middle of the cross. We find ourselves in the tension of Philippians 3 where Paul says, "Yes, all of this is mine in Christ, but no, it is not completely mine yet. Yes, it has been purchased. Yes, it has been bought. Yes, positionally I am free, pure, right and blameless. When the Father sees me, He sees His Son. There is therefore no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. But the flesh is still here. My flesh is still strong. Sin is still around me. Sin is still enticing."

So there is this struggle. Who am I? What is my identity now? Who is the believer? Let me encourage you with this. In Christ, I am the salt of the earth, the light of the world and a child of God. In Christ, I am part of the true vine, a channel of Christ's life and a friend of God, chosen and appointed to bear fruit. In Christ, I am resurrected to a new life, a slave of righteousness enslaved to God and a son of God. In Christ, I am a joint heir with Christ sharing in His inheritance and the dwelling place of God. In Christ, I am united to the Lord and a member of Christ's body. In Christ, I am what I am by God's grace. In Christ, I am a new creation reconciled to God and the seed of Abraham. In Christ, I am a saint. In Christ, I am an heir of God since I am a son of God. I am blessed with every spiritual blessing. In Christ, I am God's workmanship, made to do good works. I am a fellow citizen of God's family and a prisoner of Christ. I am righteous and holy, a citizen of heaven and hidden with Christ in God. In Christ, I am the expression of the life of Christ. I am chosen of God, holy and dearly loved and a child of light, not of darkness. In Christ, I am an heir to eternal life, a holy partaker of the heavenly calling and one of God's living stones. In Christ, I am a member of a chosen race, a holy nation of priests. In Christ, I am an alien and stranger to the world in which I live. In Christ, I am an enemy of the devil. In Christ, I am born of God, and the devil cannot touch me. In Christ, I am participating in the divine nature. That is mine in Christ now and not yet.

That's where I find myself. And for the believer it's important to be reminded of who I am apart from Christ. Apart from Christ, I am separated from God. Apart from Christ, I am under the wrath of God. Apart from Christ, I am a slave to sin and I am in bondage to Satan. Apart from Christ, I am blind to the truth and an enemy of God. Apart from Christ, I am guilty and condemned, dead in my sins, filthy and stained. Apart from Christ, I am hard-hearted and fall short of the glory of God. I am a law-breaker and not a child of God. Apart from Christ, I am deceived. Apart from Christ, I am wicked and evil. Apart from Christ, I am not good.

John Calvin writes this in his Institutes. "We must now see in what way we become possessed of the blessings which God has bestowed on his only-begotten Son. . . And the first thing to be attended to is, that so long as we are without Christ and separated from him, nothing which he suffered and did for the salvation of the human race is of the least benefit to us. . . the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually binds us to himself."

So who am I in Christ? I am all of those things that I just read. Who am I apart from Christ? I am all of those things that I just read. So for believers, to understand who you are is to look at the cross and the cross begins to speak to you now in this moment of where you find yourself in redemptive history of who you are in Christ. As you look at the cross, as the cross becomes the center point of your attention and affection, the cross says this to you, "You have a desperate need. You are a sinner. You need a Savior." You look at the cross and you are reminded of this fact, "Because of the cross, I have been given righteousness. Because of the cross, my sins have been forgiven, my penalty has been paid and I am a child of God."

Unfortunately in the reformed community, you will hear more often the truth that you are a sinner and a wretch. Because of the doctrine of total depravity, you will hear it preached over and over again. Let me say that it is a true, good and right doctrine, but it is just not the complete story. As you look at the cross, you get the full picture and you get the complete story.

Yes you are a sinner, yes there is a need, yes my heart is desperately wicked, yes it's deceitful above all things, yes this is true about me and yes this is true about Him. He has died a perfect death. He is my sacrifice. He is my substitute. He is my righteousness. I am hidden with Christ in God. I am covered and cloaked in His righteousness. His blood has forgiven me and purified me from all sins. As I look at the cross, I am seen as a son of the King. I'm a coheir with Christ. The cross begins to identify my identity. Yes I am in desperate need, but in the cross, He has met my most desperate need. So there is tension that remains, but that tension is kept in this line, tight and secure. At the center of it is the cross.

So the question for us today is this. Where do you find yourself? What do you need to be reminded of this morning? As you look at the cross, as you think of Jesus, who He is and what He has done, what do you need to be reminded of today? Because the cross is going to say some things to me and to you. You need to be serious about hearing what Jesus is saying over our lives today.

For some of us who walked in here, we have walked in like the apostle Paul, wearing a cloak of self-righteousness. We walk in here thinking that, because we have done this, this and this, because we tithe regularly, because we show up here week in and week out, because we serve in this ministry, because your marriage is really strong and healthy, because your kids are well behaved and obedient, somehow all of that merits me salvation. You would be a fool of fools to leave here thinking that is right. The apostle Paul has said if you push all of that together, all of your own merits, all of your good deeds and they amount to filthy rags. It's trash. It's waste. It's not even nothing. It would be better if nothing were there. It's something and that something is disgusting.

So as you look at the cross this morning, maybe the cross is saying to you that you need to lay down your disgust. This self-righteousness that you have walked in, whether it's religiosity, the pride of success or that you do this and that, whatever it might be, you would be a fool to think that will earn you the favor and affection of God.

Just a couple weeks ago in game 5 of the World Series, Matt was invited to do the chapel service for the St. Louis Cardinals. He invited me to go with him. So we went around 3:30 on game day and got to go in the St. Louis Cardinals locker room, which was a great experience. There were a lot of really solid believers on that team. We go back to a little area, and there were about 15 guys who came in for the chapel service. Albert Pujols, Lance Berkman, David Freese, Matt Holliday, Adam Wainwright and all these other guys were there. Those guys have a strong and vibrant faith. They love the Lord Jesus, which was just so encouraging. Some of them were new believers who just came to faith within the past year.

So Matt opens up the Scriptures to 1 Corinthians 15 and begins to unpack the gospel. Towards the end, he says, "Don't for a second believe the lie and think that you're awesome. Because you're not awesome. Guys, you throw a ball." He says, "I'm not saying that baseball is stupid, because you go out there and you throw a ball for the glory of God. But if you think for a second that your huge contracts, that your notoriety, that the city of fans who support you in exaltation of your great name, if you buy into that lie, you're a fool. You have not been given what you've been given for you, but that you might use it as a platform for Him. So the dollars that you have, the influence that you have, use them for the glory of God and the building of His kingdom. You're not awesome. You are a pawn in His hand, and He has given you a great opportunity. You're a turtle on a fencepost. If you walk buy a turtle on a fencepost, you know that thee turtle didn't get

there on his own and that somebody picked it up and put it there. That's you. You didn't for a second say to God, 'You know what? I want to be this, God.' You were given this."

So how many of us have come in here with this same idea that, because of what you do, because of what you do, because of your accomplishments and accolades, that somehow you have earned the favor, attention and affection of God? How many of you think that somehow you are worthy? The cross this morning is saying to you, "You're not!" The reason the cross is there is to scream at you, "You are not!" If you go back to Genesis 3, at the baseline foundation of who you are is wretched and sinful. You need to let the cross do its work in you today. Because Jesus hung there for a reason – to pay the price for your unrighteousness and my unrighteousness. So what do you need to hear this morning?

But the cross is also saying something else. The cross is also saying that my life is hidden with Christ in God, that I'm a son and I'm an heir. There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The cross is now saying I'm more than a conqueror; I'm victorious. Who could bring a charge against God's elect? That's what the cross is saying. So hear what the cross is saying to you today, because there are some of you who came in here and you are so profoundly aware of your filth, your brokenness, that your life is a wreck and that there are just a litany of reasons and excuses that you can point to to give evidence to the fact that you are broken, busted and battered. So this is what the cross is saying to you this morning. It's saying, "You are a child of God. You are free. You are forgiven. You are redeemed. You matter. You are a coheir with Jesus. This good work in your life that He has begun, He will bring it to completion. You can run out of shame, out of darkness and run to Him, because He is your Abba or Daddy." He loves you and cares for you." That's what the cross is saying to you this morning.

So some of you need to get up off of the ground and be built up by the cross. Some of you need to be absolutely shattered and torn down in light of it. Some of you have been told your whole life, "You're beautiful. . .you're beautiful. . .you're amazing. . .you're amazing. . ." And the cross is saying to you this morning, "You are broken and busted." For some of you, throughout your whole life, you know nothing but being broken and busted. And the cross is building you up this morning saying, "You are beautiful in Christ. You are lovely in Him. You are good through the cross of Jesus Christ." Hear the truth this morning.

So when the cross takes its righteous place in the center of this tension, as the cross begins to speak to our hearts and we hear it, as we're putting to death these things and putting on these new things, the response is worship. The response is a changed heart that understands my desperate need and that He has met my desperate need. The response is a heart that understands what is sitting over all of this is grace and that He has done this. So as you look at the cross, you realize it's really not about you; it's about Him and what He has done on your behalf. This is about Jesus. And because it's about Jesus, our response is to turn up and begin to worship Him for who He is and what He has done. Our response is to recognize that He has done a great work for you. And the response is to lay down our lives. Like the apostle Paul says, "I want to know Him in the power of His resurrection and to share in the likeness of His death and sufferings, that somehow I might gain Him.

So let's pray to that end. "Father, I bless Your name. I thank You for the opportunity to think about the profound truth of the cross of Your Son this morning, the profound truth that the cross is saying to the church this morning of, 'Yes, you are a broken, battered and bruised people. Yes church, you are in desperate need.' And the cross, in the very same breath is saying, 'Yes church, you are sons and daughters. Yes, you are a good and righteous, holy and blameless people. Yes church, you are My beloved. You are My inheritance. You are Mine. As I love My Son, I love You. I care for you, church.' So Father, I pray that You would minister to hearts in here, because I know hearts are in all different places today. Some this morning have that beautiful tension of recognizing both, and grace has visited them. Some this morning, Holy Spirit,

need to be reminded of the fact that they're broken and that they're building their life on their own righteousness. All that that means is it's going to crumble, fall and will not stand in the end. Some are painfully and keenly aware that they are not righteous and are wallowing in the depression, self-pity and self-loathing of shame and guilt. And You have said, 'Rise up. You are free and forgiven.' So do a good work in our hearts. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen."

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