

What I want to do today is let the Word of God kind of lay across us as a diagnostic of what has gone wrong with us. Everybody knows that something has gone wrong with you, with me and with humanity in general. Now, the camps and streams of what has gone wrong are all over the map, but there is not a lot of argument that something has gone wrong and that we simply can't fix what's wrong with us.

So in 2011, the promises of the Enlightenment look absurd. There will not be a system of government, there will not be a level of education and there will not be a sharing of wealth that will cure the human ills. We know this to be true. Regardless of how wise the system of government, how good the level of education or how the wealth is distributed, greed, malice, murder and hate still exist.

The Enlightenment promised that if we could free ourselves from what is unseeable, if we would free ourselves from things like faith and stick to fact, if we would free ourselves from the transcendent and get only hands-on data, then all that mankind struggles with, specifically in regards to oppression and injustice would melt away.

Let me just ask a simple question. How well is that working for us? It seems to me that we've just learned how to kill people groups faster. We just have better weapons for the trade now. We certainly have not gotten rid of greed. We have certainly not protected ourselves even in a democratic republic from all sorts of catastrophes.

So I think we need to go to the Word and let the Word tell us what's wrong with us. Because trying to fix a sickness when you don't know what sickness is doesn't work well. If your doctor is experimenting on you, you're in trouble. "I don't know. Let's try this." No one wants to be there. So it's important to know what's wrong, because by knowing what's wrong, we've got help for what might be able to cure us.

So I'm going to just read you some verses. Psalm 14:3 says, "They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one." Now our culture does not believe this. Even those in our culture who are not good and it's clear they are not good believe that they are good. The reason this could happen is because we can put some moron next to us and go, "No, I'm good. Look at this moron. I'm not saying there's not bad, but I'm clearly saying that I'm not it." We can compare ourselves to some moron that we know, and that makes us feel better about us.

But as I've contended for a long time, you should be able to find someone who you're better than. If you can't, you're probably in prison. This should not be a difficult exercise. "Well I don't do this, and they do this. See? I'm good!" No, you're just comparing yourself with the wrong thing. I'm right at 6'5". If I'm comparing myself to someone who's 5'8", I am tall. But if I'm comparing myself to some of the professional athletes in the NBA, I'm like a guard. I am a small, powerless man.

So it all comes back to how you're comparing yourself and what you're comparing yourself to. And matched up against the holiness of God, you are foul and filthy. That's what it means here when it says there's none who are good, none who are righteous.

Psalm 143:2 says, "Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you." Now this is an interesting text for our culture, because our culture loves the law, justice and judgment. We love it. How many television shows are built around detectives, courtrooms or lawyers? All the ones that aren't about doctors. We so love judges and justice that we literally have shows that are about judges. Take Judge Judy. You're watching her sit there and pronounce judgment on a situation as entertainment. That's crazy.

Now what David is saying in this psalm is that God, who is a just Judge, if He judged us, we would all be found guilty. So in this psalm, David is saying, "Don't judge us, because no one would be found righteous." It doesn't make God wrong or hateful for judging; it's the fact that we're guilty.

Let me read a few more. Proverbs 20:9, "Who can say, 'I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin?'" That's a statement, not a question. There's not someone raising his hand going, "Ooh ohh! I did that!"

Romans 1:18-3:20 is literally the dismantling of every excuse a man or woman could give about why they are good and not intrinsically broken. Let me give you just a couple of those. Romans 3:9-12, "What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.'" If that's not a Merry Christmas text, I don't know what is. In this text here's what you're seeing. You, I and everyone have one singular thing in common. It is not our color, it is not our background and it is not our socioeconomic grid. What you, I and everyone outside of this room have as our base commonality is that we are sinners incapable of righteousness.

Let me give you a few more. Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

And then I love Ephesians 2:1-3 because it attacks a common misconception. "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh. . . ."

There should be no such thing as an arrogant Christian. An arrogant, judgmental, boasting Christian simply reveals that he doesn't understand his own faith. We all once walked among them. We have all fallen short of the glory of God. There is none who are righteous. There is no one who does good. We read a couple of weeks ago that we all, like sheep, have gone astray. There isn't anyone in here who has a résumé who God is interested in hiring.

I love how this one finishes. ". . .among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath." By our nature, by our birth we are children of wrath. David says it this way. "Surely I was brought forth in iniquity," which means this. Your environment doesn't make you a bad person. Your environment is the fertilizer that makes the bad in you grow. It's not your environment that has perverted you; it's your perversion that has perverted you.

And if you have kids, you know this. I have never bit my wife and ripped the remote out of her hand. But that happened this week. I didn't bite my wife, but in my house, someone was assaulted over the remote control. That's not environment. I have never yelled from another room, "Lauren, get me my coffee!" I don't know who you married, but Lauren would actually get me my coffee. . .and it would hurt badly. And yet that happened this week in my house. A demanding, impatient, out of control three-year-old tried to set up her throne and rule our house. But we crushed the rebellion. Don't worry about it.

Ultimately this is brokenness in our hearts trying to get out. And it's not because you grew up in this kind of house, this kind of culture or there was this thing that happened to you. And I'm not trying to take away from how you were shaped by your environment. What I'm saying is that you were broken to begin with, and your environment simply fertilized that brokenness into a pretty big tree. So don't blame your parents, this instance or circumstance. You were broken long before any of that. Now that surely might have aided in the shaping of who you are, but it's not the cause.

And then let me show you another verse, because this is so good at illustrating what I mean when I say this is the Bible being diagnostic on you and me. James 3:2 says, "For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body." Now in this passage in James, he is really talking about how the tongue works. He goes on to talk about how the rudder of the ship is so much smaller than the ship, but yet the rudder controls the ship. So does the tongue control the body. So he's saying that if you can control your tongue, you're a perfect man, able to constrain and control your body.

So if you read the text wrong, what you do is go, "Well, I want to be a perfect man, so let me watch my mouth. Let me leave here today with this commitment. I'm going to watch my mouth, I'm going to not gossip, I'm going to not slander, I'm not going to talk bad about people and I won't drop F-bombs all over the place. I'm going to control my mouth and in controlling my mouth, I'll become a perfect man." Well that text isn't meant to tell you to watch your mouth. That text is to show you that you're in a lot of trouble. Because despite the fact that you've been taught that since you were a kid, even now you're unable to comply.

Now you might be going, "Oh, I think I'm able to comply." Well, I think what you're probably doing is cloaking it in some sort of religiosity. "Hey, we need to pray for Jim." "Really? What's going on?" "Oh I didn't tell you? Well, I told him that he thought he was making a mistake by marrying that woman." And now all of a sudden there's no real compassion or love. It's this kind of, "Let me tell you where he was wrong." Have you ever noticed that when that happens, you're always awesome in the story or you're always the one trying to save the situation and fix it all up? Have you ever noticed that? What is that but slander? What is that but gossip? It's only framed up to be quasi-spiritual.

Maybe you've learned to control the outward flow of your mouth, but you have not shut down your internal dialogue. You are not blessing people who cut you off in traffic. "In the name of Jesus, just bless them...Merry Christmas to that guy... I just want his whole family and him to reconcile and for there to be love and cranberry sauce." You don't do that.

So the point of James 3 is not to work on your mouth but rather that your mouth exposes that you have a heart problem that you can't fix. In fact, I contend that the entire Bible is evidence that you have a heart problem that you cannot fix. The laws and commands of God have been given to you to show you that you are incapable of keeping them. In fact, I know why some of you come only once every two months. I know why we have Christmas and Easter only attendees. I know that some of you have come in here today and you feel this and know this. When the Bible says that we are rebellious, sinners and that we have turned from God, you know that's you. And when all is said and done, that's actually good news, because it will free you up to actually know who you are.

So let me say something really hard to you, but it's proof that ultimately my allegiance is to the Lord and that I do love you. The issue with you is not that you do things; the issue with you is that you are. Your problem is that you do this or don't do this; your problem is you. Which is why wherever you go, your issues follow you, because there you are. So you don't lie; you are a liar, which is why you lie. So let's quit soft-selling our awesomeness. You don't take what's not yours; you're a thief. You and I are Godbelittling, God-mocking, rebellious, wicked men and women. Merry Christmas.

But there's good news in the middle of all that, although it probably doesn't sound like it. Some of you are well aware of the shame and guilt and you feel it when you come into a place like this. Some of you aren't aware of it at all. In fact, you don't think I'm talking to you at all. Now you know people who are like that, but it's not you. In fact, when you came in here and God noticed, His happiness went through the heavens of the heavens. All His concern about His creation was alleviated because you were here today. I want you to lovingly hear me say that that is God's wrath on you. You not seeing your imperfections and your rebellious heart is God saying, "You want to be awesome? Go ahead. Good luck."

So the gateway for ever-increasing joy for you and for me is an understanding that surely we were brought forth in iniquity. We have a bent towards rebellion. We don't have to be trained in it. We are God-belittling, God-mocking fools. And if you would pay attention to your heart long enough, you would see it.

The tragedy of our day is that we're so busy that you can numb yourself to all of it forever. Just go get a new phone, just buy some new pants, get a new car, get a new or get a new game. These are all things that help us not look at us. Update your Twitter feed. Just do something. Don't stop and think. Don't sit in that little voice that's going, "Hey something is wrong." Just quiet it. It's not hard to quiet. . .it's just expensive.

Now God's response to our rebellion is nothing short of spectacular. And that takes us to John 1 and takes us into looking at how God responds to you and me being the rebellious, arrogant sinners that we are.

Starting in verse 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." We can skip verses 6-8 because they are an introduction to John the Baptist.

So look at verse 9. We're going to get back into Jesus. "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

I want to continually point out when we read texts like this that ultimately you can't fix you. What has gone wrong in you cannot be fixed. A dirty hand cannot clean up a surface; it will merely smear the mess. Not by blood, not by the sweat of your brow, not by your will and not by your might, but it can only be done by God. So the problem in your heart and mind will not be fixed by us. That's an impossibility. The good news is He's going to tell us how it's fixed in verse 14.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") Now that's speaking to the eternality of Jesus Christ. Because John the Baptist was months older than Jesus, and yet he says, "He is greater than me, because He was before me." He's saying that Jesus is not some prophet, not some teacher, not just some cousin of his, but that He's God in the flesh.

Let's keep reading. These next two verses are unreal. "For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Now I love those last two verses if this text, because here's what it says. Moses brought the Law and what we know sitting right now today is that the Law isn't enough because we can't obey it.

It doesn't matter what kind of miraculous signs God does or what kind of power He flexes. I often chuckle at skeptics who go, "Well if I could just see God do something, then I would believe." Well if we watch Israel leave Egypt, you've got all sorts of plagues, all the water turning to blood, the sun being blacked out, all the firstborn sons of Egypt dying, the parting of the Red Sea, they get to the other side where Moses goes up on the hill and comes back down, and already Israel has melted all their gold into a little calf and they're worshiping it in this kind of sexually depraved, horrific scene that makes Moses smash the tablets. Some miraculous display of His power is not going to make you keep the Law.

So Moses comes with the Law, but Jesus didn't come with more rules, did He? How tragic would that be? How tragic would it be if it was, "Here's that Law that you can't keep," and Jesus shows up with more Law? "I know you couldn't keep the simple ten that I gave you, so I brought nine or ten more. Let's just make it the Twenty Commandments since you stink at the Ten Commandments. Since you have a zero on these, let me give you ten more and maybe you can get a fifty." No, He doesn't come with the Law. Moses came with the Law. Jesus comes with grace and truth.

So let me try to explain that. He comes with truth in that He is the fulfillment of the Law. Jesus is what you and I certainly aren't. Jesus is not a liar; Jesus is not a thief. Therefore He does not lie; therefore He does not take what is not His. Do you see how this works? He is the Perfect One.

He also comes with grace and forgiveness. This is a spectacular thing to think about. If you've ever been to a concert or movie, do you know who is not hanging out with you in the crowd? The artist. You didn't go to some show and have the artist sitting next to you in line going, "I can't wait for the show to start!" He's in a place called the green room. In that green room is whatever they wanted. There is security posted to keep us out, and inside that room is anything they wanted. That room is a room of privilege for them. If they just want green Skittles, that's all that is there. If they wanted this kind of bourbon or this kind of beer, that's what's in there. They write it in a think called a rider, and it is a list of demands of what they want in that room. It is a place of supreme privilege for the artist.

How insane is it that God Himself puts on flesh and blood and steps out of the most privileged place that is (heaven) and begins to walk and dwell among us, knowing who we are. There is nothing in your past or present that is surprising to God. You haven't surprised Him. He hasn't called a holy huddle to figure out what to do about you and your depravity. He knows. The whole point of Christ coming with grace and truth instead of more Law is because it was made evident early on that we're incapable.

In Genesis 1 and 2, there is one rule: "Hey, don't touch that." How long does that last? "Everything that I have is yours. Here's a naked wife. Enjoy. You have food, dominion, all of it. Just don't touch this." And some people may ask, "Well why did He do that?" I believe He did that just to show how gracious He is in His Law. And yet with one rule, we just couldn't help ourselves and just blew the whole thing up. Yeah, we're unable, so Jesus comes with truth (fulfillment of the Law) and grace (forgiveness for our sins).

Now the implications of the fact that Jesus came are astonishing. Let me cover the big two. There is an amazing amount of unity in the Scriptures, which means there is one story from Genesis to Revelation. It's a story that we don't really like in our culture, but it's one we desperately need.

The story from Genesis to Revelation is that an infinite, all-knowing, all-powerful God displays on the canvas of His creation His glory for the praise of His glory. Which means ultimately God is for God and God is about God. Yes He loves you, yes He provides for you and yes He cares for you, but that provision, care and love ultimately are not because you're spectacular, but rather because He is spectacular.

Let me tell you why that's such good news for us. That means God is all in on our joy. If God is ultimately after the praise of His glorious grace, then begrudging submission is not His plan. The best illustration I know look like this. Say a single guy walks up to me and says, "Matt, tell me what it's like to be married." What if I reply, "Well, I'll shoot you straight. I hate it, but I made this vow in front of God and other people. It's just a nightmare, man. But I can't leave. I made a promise, and I'm going to keep that promise"? Do you think that guy's going, "I've been dreaming of that since I was a kid"? There is nothing that is gloried in in that moment. There's no weight on that.

But let somebody come up and let me tell of Lauren's heart, let me tell of the laughter in our relationship and let's talk about the friendship and the creativity. Let's talk about those things. Let's talk about the fact that I've been blessed with a woman who I sometimes don't want to leave when I go to work or how I'm always excited about getting home. Now just so I don't paint a picture that's not a reality, sometimes I can't wait to get home to explain why I'm right. But I'm blessed to love my wife very much and be loved by my wife very much. We've got a great peace in our home. I know she's in in spite of all my imperfections and idiocy, and I'm in despite her shortcomings. We have a ferocious commitment to one another.

If I begin to unpack that, if I begin to unpack what date night looks like, if I begin to unpack how we value a romancing and wooing of one another that is continual, now all of a sudden something is being gloried in and now something is being made much of. And in being made much of, others are attracted to it. So if God is ultimately about God, if God is after the praise of His glorious grace, then God is ferociously about your joy in Him.

So then, the Law of God is good. The commands of God are good. When He says, "This is marriage," He's not trying to take from you, but rather give to you. We've got to get out of our mind as Christians that we're in this kind of moral cage, but at least we've got heaven. Because that's not reality. The teachings of God on sex, money, family and all of those things are not God robbing from you, but rather Him leading you into everincreasing joy. Why? For the praise of His glorious grace. And the apex of God's plan to bring glory to His name is in the coming of Jesus Christ. The pinnacle of God's glory is seen as God puts on flesh and blood and saves sinners.

Do you know who never glories in their doctor? Healthy people. Last night, after the 5:00, I had the opportunity to meet with a young woman who on her way down to MD Anderson. She has anaplastic (malignant) brain cancer. I'm a malignant brain cancer survivor myself. So that puts you in a weird fraternity with other people. I walked out in between services, and Sarah and I spent some time talking with one another. You have weird conversations with someone who has been where you've been. So we talked about scars, drugs and side-effects.

We had this really cool conversation where she understood and I understood, and then she shifted it. She shifted it to how much her doctors meant to her, how they ministered to her, how they encouraged her and how they explained so well what she was going through and what her chances were. She talked about how their optimism and care for her gave this kind of strength to fight the fight. And then I just immediately went into my doctors and how great Barnett was, how cool Fink was and how Cheek was quirky but I loved him.

In that moment, we gloried in our doctors. Why? Because something was wrong with us that we couldn't fix. There wasn't a pill to buy and there wasn't a homeopathic meditation that was going to fix it. Someone was going to need to crack open our skull and very skillfully cut out portions of our brains without killing us. I couldn't do it by myself, and she couldn't do it on her own. We were trapped in desperate need of someone to save our lives. Praise God for common grace, for steady hands, for intraoperative MRIs and for all the things that God has gifted to all men in His kindness that He used to miraculously save me, to miraculously save Sarah and to miraculously save countless others.

We gloried in our doctors with great joy. Why? Because we were sick. Do you know what you don't care about? Neurosurgeons. You probably don't even have one. I doubt that at some point this week you're just going to go, "Oh Dr. Jefferson rules!" You're just not, because you're healthy. When you're healthy, you don't glory in what cures you. But when you know you're sick, now you can glory in something.

So God is ferociously committed and Jesus glorifies God by coming and saving and healing what could not save and heal itself. So God is glorified in that He says, "I have come to save sinners." This is actually Jesus' illustration. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." So He's saying, "I didn't come for the righteous; I've come for the sick." So for those of you who are in here going, "Oh poor me. I'm such a sinner. I've rebelled so much," yes you have, but here's the good news. In your rebellion, God has made a way and Christ has come, which trumps your pity party and blows it out of the water.

The second implication of Jesus coming is one that has been a strange one to me, because over the years I have found that it makes people very, very angry. If Jesus Christ came, if God put on flesh and dwelt among us, then forgiveness is here. We are drawn to our own failures, because with our failures and shortcomings, we can justify a billion things. One of the weirdest things that has happened during my time of following Christ and sharing Christ with others is I've seen people get really angry not at what the Bible says about sexuality or what the Bible says about the kind of universal claims of Christ being the only way to God, but I've seen people get furious at the idea that they can be forgiven.

You see, shame is like a warm blanket for some people. It helps them justify certain behaviors, it enables them to hold on to rage for somebody else and it helps them keep the heat of hate in their heart. So they don't want to take that shame off. They don't want to be forgiven. So they're able to justify that they can't.

But if Christ came, then you can. Maybe some of you are already, "Not me. You don't even know what you're talking about. You don't know where I've been, you don't know what I've smoked, you don't know what I've drank, you don't know what I've shot up and you don't know what I've done to my family members. You don't know the carnage that lays in my background." I always confess that, for a lot of you, I have no clue what kind of carnage is in your background, but here's what I would tell you. Whatever is behind you is sophomore, B-team stuff compared to what God has forgiven historically. Let me just give you a quick example. Has anyone in here ever cheated on your spouse with somebody else's spouse and then had their spouse murdered? Anyone? So just to be clear, you have not cheated on your spouse and then had their spouse murdered. Well David did that, and God calls him a man after His own heart. I'm not saying you don't have a wake of carnage behind you. I'm just saying that to think that is somehow more powerful than the coming of God in the flesh, dying on the cross, absorbing that wrath and granting you His righteousness is ridiculous. Has anybody imprisoned, killed and ravaged the church of Jesus Christ? Anybody? Anyone in here firebomb a church? No. It seems like you guys are pretty upstanding citizens. Well that's Saul (who becomes Paul) who heartily agrees with the execution of a man who simply preached a sermon. I could go on and on here. If Christ came, there's no sin in this room that has more power than the cross of Jesus Christ.

Now here's where it rolls to another level. If forgiveness is here for us to receive, then forgiveness is here for us to give. So the incarnation not only says that forgiveness can be ours, but forgiveness can be ours in such a way that we can extend it to other, regardless of the offense. Now we need to do some work here, because forgiveness is difficult. If you've been seriously harmed, forgiveness is difficult, and if you're honest, you've probably had that moment where you thought you've forgiven but a year later that name was brought up and you found yourself creatively thinking about them burning alive. And then you're like, "Wait, I don't think I've forgiven them."

So it's not just forgetting. That's not even biblical forgiveness. Biblical forgiveness is not that I just forgot that you belittled, mocked, betrayed and stabbed me in the back at this unbelievably deep level, but don't worry about it. If someone even said that to me, I'd be nervous. I'd be waiting to get shanked in an alley...if Flower Mound had alleys. So Jesus doesn't just forget your sin. He doesn't just forget your rebellion. Jesus dies on the cross, is brutally ripped to pieces and crucified, and in His crucifixion, He is absorbing, out of love for you and for the name of His Father, the wrath of God towards you. So forgiveness is the absorbing of an offense out of the motivation of love.

So maybe you're going, "Well, I know I can't forgive, because I don't have any love for this person." Okay, it's not even possible outside of the Holy Spirit's work in your heart, to be honest with you. But here's what happens as we begin to think and meditate on what the coming of Jesus means for us. You and whoever has committed the offense against you are the same tree. You might bear different kinds of fruit, but you're both equally guilty of rebellion against God. You have the same root of sinfulness that made the offense possible. So when you get that, when you get that you have sinned and you have rebelled, then you're able to, with more empathy, look upon those who have sinned against you with compassion.

The gospel should just bring peace to all of our lives, regardless of offenses against us. It's really the best opportunity for peace to rule and reign on earth. Because the gospel says that Jesus has died and forgiven me, has absorbed God's wrath towards me and will in the end righteously and justly judge all offenses that were not absorbed on His cross. So revenge and vengeance really don't even need to be on our radar. Because either the offense against us was absorbed in the cross of Christ and God will save and redeem the person or He will justly and righteously judge the action against us. So I don't need to punish you for how you wounded me. God has all that taken care of. He'll rescue you, save you and lead you to repentance, or He'll destroy you on the Day.

To not see this is to saddle yourself with an exhausting amount of baggage. Probably one of the saddest things we see as pastors are those men and women who don't want to let go of the offense against them, and some of those offenses are horrific. But in not letting those offenses go, they carry it with them and destroy other relationships, and they think that's somehow getting that person back. "I'm not going to let this go because to let this go would let them off the hook." And so you're dragging around this anger and bitterness, harming yourself and other relationships. I don't understand how you think that equals getting them back.

To wound yourself, to lack intimacy in your relationships with others and to really walk in bitterness and anger in order to get someone back destroys you, not them. Do you think they're losing sleep going, "Oh, that person that I knifed in the back doesn't like that I did that. I just can't sleep"? Do you think that that's happening? "All the more right for me to hang on to my hate." No, all the more crazy for you to. You don't have to. God has this. So we can just live open-handed.

Now that doesn't mean every relationship needs to be restored. There have been several times I have forgiven freely, but we just don't walk at the same level that we did. I'm not saying you gloss over legitimate issues. There are legitimate issues in our lives that dictate some of the things in our relationships with others. There is forgiveness, but there are some rules that have been established because of history. So don't mishear what I'm saying. What I am saying is you need to forgive, because you have been forgiven.

Now, my hope for you and for us is that the diagnostic of our heart that the Bible lays open that we are rebellious, that we are liars, that we are thieves, that we have turned our back on God, that we do think we're smarter than God, that we have believed that we are gods, my hope is that that being exposed in us would lead us to the cure of not more selfdependence and more "I'm going to get this done and take care of this," but rather that we would humble ourselves before the Lord and cry out for Jesus. My hope is that this would sent us to the substance of the season instead of the

shadow. So my hope is that you would cry out and ask for mercy. I think mercy is available for those who cry out for it. My hope is that you would submit yourself to the goodness of God in Christ and that this year might be a spectacular Christmas season for you as you look back on it as the time in your life when you got really serious about the things of God.

So let me pray for us. "Jesus, help us. Holy Spirit, I pray that You would do what I cannot. Instead of being motivated and entertained, I pray we would have our hearts pierced. I pray that You would grant the gift of salvation to many today, that You would open up hearts and minds and that we would come to see You as our treasure. I pray that there would be an emotive response to Your goodness to us despite us. We thank You and praise You that You are good and that You do good. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."

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