

## Grace Made Visible (Part 2) – The Generosity of God

Matt Chandler – June 22, 2014

---

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. Go to John 3. We'll start in verse 16. I am going to move around a bit this morning...not up here, because that's a given, but rather in the text. This will be our primary text, but we will move around to other parts of the Bible. If you're a guest with us this morning, there should be a hardback black one around you. If you don't have a Bible, if you don't own one, this is our gift to you. Feel free to take that with you.

Last week, we started this series, *Grace Made Visible*. It'll be six weeks long. We pulled that phrase "grace made visible" from Jonathan Edwards' *Religious Affections*. One of the points Edwards made in *Religious Affections* is that when people experience the grace of God, not an intellectual assent of, "I can define grace," but rather when they are at their worst, and they realize Christ died for them, when they finally understand not in their mind but in what I've just called their guts the goodness and grace of God, it transforms them in such a way that grace is made visible or that we can see that God has done a work in a person's life.

We wanted to be really careful with that to make sure we don't put some sort of checklist Christianity on the lives of people, because that's not going to work in regards to freedom and joy, the things Christ has died to bring us. We instead looked at Isaiah 58 last week, and we literally just walked line-by-line through Isaiah 58. We distilled it down into simply this. Grace is made visible when the people of God live with an open-handed understanding of all they have and all they are. They see themselves as not the owner of anything but rather as stewards of all God has given.

We just said really grace is made visible when the people of God are generous people. I always know that when you talk about generosity, people get a bit nervous. Let me just really early on say this is not leading to a giving campaign. This is not leading into me building another building. None of that is going on here. There is no ulterior motive other than the freedom that is found for you in Christ. The more generous the soul, the more happy the soul. All that we'll unpack in the weeks to come.

What I wanted us to focus on today was really just the generosity of God, the generosity of the Godhead (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit), how generous our God is. Before that, I wanted to talk about Bill Gates. For the last seven years (God bless him), Bill Gates has not been at the top of the list of the Forbes List of the richest men in the world, yet he has this year reclaimed that title. Bill Gates is worth \$72.7 billion.

Let me give you some statistics about Bill Gates. These are statistics. If you know what Mark Twain said about statistics, you can file them there. If you don't know what he said, I certainly cannot quote him here. I'm guessing by your laughter that some of you do know what Twain said about statistics. Let's go through some of these.

At \$72.7 billion, Bill Gates as an individual is the thirty-seventh wealthiest country on earth...just him. That means there are hundreds of countries who have fewer resources than Bill does alone. That's what I call him: Bill. At \$72.7 billion, at a 6 percent rate, every second of his day is worth \$114.17, which literally makes it not worth his time to pick up a c-note off the ground. A c-note is a \$100 bill. He should leave it alone for one of us, right? You just wasted \$300 picking it up when I could have gained \$100.

Bill Gates is 57 years old this year, so if we assumed that he would live to be 90 (so we'll give him another 33 years), he has to spend \$6 million a day to exhaust his wealth, and that's making no more. That's with no rate of return on the billions he has. That's if all of a sudden, the economy collapses. No more rates of interest. He's not making any more money. Yet he would still need to spend \$6 million a day.

I would like to try, but I have no idea how you do it. Would you like a shot at it? Yeah, but I don't know quite what you're buying. Planes every day? I don't quite know what's happening there. A couple of other ones I thought were astonishing... If Bill Gates at \$72.7 billion gave everyone on earth \$10 tomorrow, he would still be worth \$2.26 billion. That's unbelievable. I almost got angry reading this. If he gave everyone \$10, he still has \$2 billion. Not \$2 million, \$2 billion.

In regard to just his wealth, if we compile everyone who is going to be at The Village this weekend at all our campuses, if we compile all we will ever make in our lifetimes, he is still snickering at us, and we have a few hitters. We have some guys who have some pockets. This is the kind of wealth that would just chuckle at that, \$72.7 billion.

Not only is he the wealthiest man on earth, but he's also one of the more generous men on earth if not the most generous man on earth. In fact, Bill Gates has given away between \$26 billion and \$28 billion of his income to various charities, primarily the charity he founded with his wife that seeks to eradicate certain diseases on earth via vaccinations.

Let's get rid of all his other wealth and just talk about what he gives away and how what he gives away is still beyond what we're all going to make combined. His generosity will trump all we ever make. If we were to put it in a pile and try to figure out what to do with it, he's giving away more than we're ever going to earn combined.

Here is what we must note about both his wealth and his generosity. In a worldly sense, to look at this kind of wealth is a profound kind of mind-boggling, "What do you even do with that?" kind of thing. Compared to the wealth of God, he's a pauper because everything he has and all he is was created by God.

In regards to his generosity, which is stunning, \$26-28 billion... You're giving away more wealth than some countries have to eradicate disease. That's generous. No one could argue that he's not generous. In fact, he's unbelievably generous until you compare him with the generosity of God. Then all of a sudden, he looks like a hoarder.

How could I say something so brazen? Well, you're in John 3, but I want to read Colossians 1:16 really quickly and argue a point. **"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."**

All you have, all we are, has been given to us by a Creator, God. My argument right out of the gate is that all of life, regardless of whether or not you're a believer in Christ... It doesn't matter whether you're in here as a lover of Christ or you're in here as a seeker or you're in here and just can't believe you're here, but you got forced into it by a loved one or a friend. All you enjoy about life has been given to you by God.

In fact, you begin to get a sense of the character and nature of God by just considering his generosity, by considering how he's woven into our existence, whether we love him or not, certain things that are delightful that don't need to be delightful. He just, in his generosity, made them

delightful. Like the taste of food. I bring that one up often because I'm an eater. Why did he do that? He didn't have to make it enjoyable, and no one saw it coming.

You've never driven by a pasture and seen cattle and thought, "That would taste good." You've never watched a pig wallowing around in its own filth and thought, "You know what? The back end of that, if you put it in the oven, is going to be unreal. There is something inside of this animal that, when fried, makes everything better. The cure for depression. The cure for..." Right? No one saw that coming.

Why? This gives us a picture of the generosity of God, when he gives such things as flavor to food. He didn't have to do that, yet he creates those things. We see the generosity of God in these simple what are called "common graces," gifts to all mankind. There is nothing you enjoy that was not given by God, created by God. In fact, all of life is sustained by, gifted by, and held together by the generosity of God whether you love him or not.

What I want us to do today, very simply, is to look at the Godhead, and I want us to marvel at his generosity. My hope is that if I can just kind of go all the way to the conclusion, when all is said and done here, we might leave this place being more dialed in to all that he has given to us rather than being most dialed in to the things we feel like we don't have, because the default position of all of our hearts (I'm with you) is to be hyper-aware of what we don't have, what we want and haven't been given, what we feel we deserve.

Few of us are experts on all God has already given us, all he has already generously lavished upon us, and if you have a hitch in your spirit in regards to worship, in regards to a delight in God, nine times out of ten, it can be tracked back to an unawareness or a glad ignorance in what God has already given to you and how generously he has already dealt with you. Instead, you know what you should have had and what you didn't get and how it didn't work out, all the while being completely ignorant of where it has worked out, what he has given, how well off you are.

At the end of the day, that's my hope. To get there, I just want us to marvel at God. The first thing I want us to look at is God the Father. The triune God of the universe, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, overflows out of his own gladness in himself, the Godhead, generosity on all of creation. Let's look at this.

1. *God the Father gives us Jesus.* The generosity of the Father is seen in him sending the Son. John 3:16... If you have a background in church or watching any sporting event, you know verse 16, but the other verses are just as profound. **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."**

Here's the thing right out of the gate that makes the generosity of God stunning and so different than, say, Bill Gates' generosity. God's generosity is pointed toward his enemies. Do you know who Gates never gave money to? Apple. In fact, if you're a businessman and want to study ruthlessness, study Bill Gates.

He, at acquiring, dismantling, and destroying other tech companies, is unsurpassed. Have you used Netscape lately, anyone? How about... Some of you are younger. Do you know what Netscape even is? There are a few of us who do know. Why? Because Bill Gates just handled that nonsense. Microsoft just said, "Nope, not going to compete," and just crushed them. Is it weird that I kind of like that?

What God does... What makes him so different in his generosity is his generosity is pointed at his enemies. Here we see in John 3:16-18 that God sends the Son into the world not to condemn the world but rather to give them a way out. Think about it. We are all in glad rebellion against our Creator. We are all, to the man or woman in here, firm believers that we can be our own God, our own authority, know what is best for us in life.

It is the default posture of the human heart, wicked rebellion against our Creator. The response of God is not to destroy but rather to send the Son, not to condemn, not to show up with a new list of things you will not be able to do, but rather show up as a way out of condemnation, to create a way out from under our failures, shortcomings, and rebellion, to eradicate past sins, present struggles, and future screw-ups.

This is the generosity of God. He sends the Son. How does the generosity in sending the Son work itself out? Well if you want to turn there, I'll put it on the screen, but let's go look at Romans 8:3-4. It says, **"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."**

There are two things I think become extremely important for you to get and understand here about how God sending the Son marks his generosity in our hearts and lives. The first one should bring us quite a bit of relief, and the second one even more so. In this text, I think you see two things. One is that you will not be able to obey the law. "For God has done what we, the law, could not do, weakened as we were by our flesh by sending the Son."

You and I are not going to be able to keep the law in such a way. We're not going to be able to obey and be good enough to purchase from God our own justification. We're not going to be able to be good enough. If you have stumbled in here this morning, just exhausted at trying to check all the boxes, the Bible says you're not going to check all the boxes.

The illustration we used last week is a man trying to earn his own salvation is much like a man neglecting his family, working 15- or 16-hour days to pay a mortgage he doesn't owe. It's madness. The commandments of God in a very real sense were given to show you that you can't obey them. Almost all the days of your life are objective evidence that that's true. "God has done what the law could not do, weakened as it was by our flesh..." By doing what? "...by sending the Son."

What is the Son going to do? He's going to fulfill all the righteous requirements of the law. The first kind of great news in Romans 8:3-4 is that you have this just admission in the Word of God that you and I as his children are not going to be able to keep the law perfectly. We're just not going to be able to do it. Weakened as we are in our flesh, we're not going to be able to do it. God accomplished it for us by sending the Son.

The second piece here is that Jesus has provided all that is required when it comes to the law, that he has fulfilled it all. Surely there is something in us that is going, "Fulfilled it all? Well, that can't be right. Surely I need to do something." Look right at me. When it comes to your salvation, when it comes to God forgiving you, delighting in you, and calling you his own, you can do nothing to help him with that. Salvation belongs to God and God alone, and it is Christ alone who justifies by grace through faith.

Maybe this will help you. If you have children, certainly it will. There are things I want my kids to help me with, and there are things they simply cannot help me with. There is a time for them to be

in the kitchen, and there is a time to get out of the kitchen. Right? God help us. What so many of us want to do is help God with our salvation. "Get out of the kitchen, bro." You can't. You're not stopping him from saving you; you're stopping yourself from enjoying what he has done. You don't thwart the purposes of God; you thwart your own joy purchased for you by the Son.

The generosity of God the Father is seen in the sending of the Son. The Trinity is this beautiful mystery that is understandable. I think people just don't want to do the work of actually digging. In fact, that would be a great series. We should just do a series on the Trinity...not today, but at some point in the future. The Godhead, having always been... There is something profound that happens when God the Son puts on flesh and comes to earth, an emptying of himself of divine power and authority and putting on the flesh. This is Hebrews 2. The humility to put on what he created...

One of the ways I try to get my head around this and marvel at it is the fact that everything Christ was doing while he was on earth was actually created by him and sustained by him. If we get to the crucifixion, the very tree, the very wood that they nail him to, is created by him and held together by him and sustained by him. The glands necessary to work up spit in the mouth and the muscles required to fling that spit out of your mouth was created by, sustained by, and held together by Christ himself.

When men spit upon him during his crucifixion, they are doing it because Christ allows it and designed them to be able to do it. So it is with the nails. This is why he has that authority over the creative order, because he created it all, he sustains it all, and he holds it all together. That's why he can curse a fig tree, and it just dies. That's why he can tell a storm to stop, and it obeys: because he is God. He has always been, and in him, all things hold together. That's what the book of Hebrews tells us.

God the Father shows his generosity by sending the Son, in whom he delights greatly. In fact, multiple times in the New Testament, he'll say, "This is my Son with whom I am well pleased." We see it at his baptism in Matthew 3. We see it at the transfiguration. "This is my Son. I am well pleased." It was a costly thing to send Jesus, and God's generosity is seen in sending the Son to redeem those in glad rebellion against him. We see Jesus coming and giving his life. God the Father sends the Son.

2. *Jesus lays down his life.* Now, there is an important way for us to think about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Let's look in John 10:18. This is Jesus speaking. I'll put it on the screen, or you can turn

there, but here is John 10:18. **"No one takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."**

It becomes important for us to get this, to understand this. Yes, Jesus is arrested and murdered by men, but it's important for us to get this. Let's dial in here. Christ is not killed via the authority and power of man. Rather, he is killed by the glad submission to the Father's will. No one takes his life; he lays it down. It was not the flexing of Pilate and the power of the high priest guard that took the life of Jesus.

In fact, on two separate occasions, we see this working itself out. The first place is in the garden where Peter wants to make this a swordfight. Jesus isn't having it. He tells Peter to put away his sword. He heals the guy Peter struck. You would think that in and of itself would shut down the arrest, wouldn't you? Peter whacks a guy's ear off. Jesus puts it back on. You would think at that moment, that guy would be like, "I'm out. I'm out of this. The dude just put my ear back on."

That's not what happens. They arrest, and Jesus says to Peter, "Do you not know that I could call out to my Father and have at my disposal 12 legions of angels?" Translation: "You think they are arresting me, bro? I'm going; they're not taking." In this great dialogue about the nature of truth and power with Pilate, Jesus tells Pilate (this is a paraphrase), "Oh, you think you're crucifying me. You have no power except what was given to you from heaven."

You see in the Scriptures no one is taking Jesus' life. He is laying it down. At any moment, he calls out and has at his disposal 12 legions of angels. What we see in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, is you don't need legions of angels. Just a few will rout entire armies, so 12 legions is a little overboard. I don't think Jesus speaks in hyperbole, but he's saying here, "No, this is happening because I'm letting it happen." The death of Jesus Christ was a laying down of life.

We also see that not only is it laid down not taken, but the soul of Jesus, knowing the pain that was to come, pushed into the desire of his Father and the delight he had in the Father to purchase for the Father many sons. We see that in John 12:27, where he says, **"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this..."** "I have come to die. I have come to lay down my life. I have come to give my life."

There isn't some sort of divine lidocaine that is about to be put on the Son before he goes to the cross. It will be brutal. It will be painful. He will be absorbing all of God's wrath toward those who will repent and believe in him. Yet, sweating drops of blood, he says, "Not because I will it but because you will it." I think the text I go to often in my own life... I want this text to mold me and shape me and form me and rebuke me and help me see my marriage a certain way and how I pastor a certain way and how I engage with people a certain way.

Matthew 20, starting in verse 25. If you have your Bibles, why don't you flip over there really quickly? Here is what it says starting in verse 25. **"But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'"**

I want to start at the bottom of this text, and I want to work back up to the top. The bottom of the text says Jesus has come to give his life as a ransom for many. We've already covered this. You and I owe a debt we certainly cannot pay. We just can't pay it. There is no amount of good we can do that will purchase from the Father forgiveness and acceptance. Too wrought with guilt, even our motivations are bent. Christ's life is one he does not owe. He has not sinned. He has not rebelled. He is in every way perfect. There is no sin in him. He and he alone can pay a debt we owe but cannot pay. He gives his life as a ransom for many.

What you see above this idea of ransom is the idea of example. We said last week that if we are being conformed into the image of the Son, what we're being conformed into is a greater and greater and greater dying to self. I've argued for a long time that I think men and women are happiest when life is the least about them, and they are more miserable the more their life is completely about them.

What he says here is, "You will not, as my sons, my adopted, my ransomed brothers and sisters, lord how I have been gracious to you over others. You will not lord your wealth over others. You will not lord your position and power over others. You will use how I have gifted you, wired you, and been generous to you to extend that generosity to others. You want to be great in my eyes? You want to be great in the eyes of the Father? Serve."

"Why? Begrudgingly?"

"No, because you have been so graciously served. Give."

"Why? Because the pastor did a drive-by guiltig?"

"No, because I have dealt so abundantly and richly with you."

The paradox here is that greatness is found in a humbling of oneself. Yet our culture is consumed with an exaltation of self. Don't get trapped in that. It's a brutal, awful place to find life playing out. You will create a toxicity in your marriage that is very difficult to overcome. It will create a relational dynamic with your children and with your friends that is far from what the Lord has for you.

God sends the Son. The Son lays down his life. That leaves us with God the Holy Spirit. Everybody relax. The Holy Spirit is not just the weird cousin of the group, okay? In fact, if we were going to talk about the generosity of God, we could honestly camp out at the Holy Spirit for quite some time. The Holy Spirit does much in regards to lavishing upon the children of God generosity.

3. *The Holy Spirit brings gifts to the children of God.* He gifts them from heaven on high. Let me read this. We'll extensively look at this idea in three weeks, but for now, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 says this. **"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."**

I want to concentrate really on two ways the Holy Spirit kind of brings gifts to the believer in Christ. God sends the Son. The Son lays down his life. The Holy Spirit brings gifts to the children of God. There are two ways that giftedness works itself out. The first thing he does is he ransoms and redeems your intuitive gifts. Each of us was born with a bent toward things we're naturally good at, personality markers and skills we just came out of the womb with.

No one taught me to be curious. That was there from when I started breathing oxygen. I wanted to know how things work. I wanted to know how they were put together. I don't know if you've picked this up. I'm a bit of a passionate guy. That curiosity and passion... I'm driven. That drivenness... That was all there before I came to know Christ. All of it was there. It was just pointed in very dark directions.

What the Holy Spirit did when I became a Christian is redeem those gifts. I was going to use them toward my own destruction. The Holy Spirit said, "That curiosity... I will take that curiosity. Instead of it being on these goofy things, what I'm going to do is with laser-like focus put it on the person and work of Jesus Christ. I'm going to put it on the Word of God. I'm going to put it on objectives."

All of a sudden, I just couldn't believe other people didn't think Jesus was beautiful. I just couldn't believe there were people who didn't want to submit their lives to him. He's so awesome. How could you not? I immediately just went, "What are the arguments? How does this work? Why would you think...? Oh, okay. No, no, no. It works like this. Okay, how does it work? Let me get in here and study what programs..."

All that had been everywhere else now kind of honed in on Christ. My passion that was always there all of a sudden burned with the right fuel. I don't know how you think about your life. I shudder to think where I would be had the Lord not saved me. I just feel like I'd be a cruel man. I feel like I'd run up the back of my grandmother to win a race. I do. I think I would be an arrogant, impossible, ridiculous man. I think I would be far more wealthy than I am now. I think people would be afraid of me in a way they're not now. God help my marriage.

Yet the Lord said, "No, that curiosity, that zeal, that passion, that driven nature... That's mine. We're going to go down a different path. I'm going to flip this switch for your own joy and the glory of my name." The Holy Spirit comes in and takes those intuitive gifts we have and flips the switch away from idolatry and lets those gifts begin to serve the kingdom in a way that brings us joy and gladness and honors the name of the Lord.

That doesn't mean that all of us are heading into Christian ministry. That doesn't mean all of us are going to gain a laser-like focus. "I'm no longer concentrated on law. I'm concentrated on..." No, no. Some of us are very much just going to use those gifts and abilities God has given us to be the best businessmen, to be the best lawyers, to be the best businesswomen, to be the best husbands, to be the best we possibly can be, under the grace of God and live with faithful presence in the spaces God has placed us.

All of a sudden, work doesn't own us because it doesn't define us. We work hard because we work not for man but for the Lord. It redeems the long days and the long nights. We leverage our natural

gifts and abilities in ways we serve the Lord and show that there's something greater than all we could accomplish with these gifts naturally.

On top of these intuitive gifts being switched on, saved from idolatry, the Holy Spirit brings new gifts. Patience, empathy, compassion, intercession... You know, there are no intercessors before people become Christians. That is a gift brought by the Holy Spirit. Nobody had the gift of intercessory prayer before they became a Christian. It just didn't exist.

If you have that gift, it was given to you by the Holy Spirit. Here's what's great. When we think about giftedness and think about how we're gifted, I feel that some of us get broken down in our gladness in how God has gifted us, because we've kind of created this tier of giftedness that robs us of the joy of serving the Lord.

Maybe this will help. Five years ago, the elders of The Village Church gave me a sabbatical. The first five years here were insane. We had been running six services a weekend wheels off. It was evident that I did not have a long future in ministry if I kept running that hard. "Hit reset. Go rest. We're going to figure out how we're going to do things a bit differently."

I went on sabbatical. While I was on sabbatical, I would go to churches. I went to large churches on purpose. It's not because I thought small churches don't have gospel presence. In fact, there is a really loving... I came to The Village Church because it was small. I was like, "Oh, how great would it be to just walk with 160 people for the next 50 or 60 years?" It has not gone that way, which is fine. Let the Lord do what the Lord wants to do.

What I learned is it's a weird thing to show up at a place you've never been before that's as big as big churches are. To pull into a parking lot where you don't really know anyone who is there, you're not sure where to go... If you're like my family, you have three kids, and all three of my kids are Chandlers. Are you tracking with me? That means they all look and act like me. We fed them Nerds for breakfast. They're on a sugar high that shouldn't be there. It's just naturally there.

I just apologize to my wife. "I'm sorry, baby. That's on me. I know you weren't like this. These are strong genes in the Chandler blood. I apologize." Here we are trying to run a high-low zone on the three Chandler kids. We don't know where we're going. We don't know what to do. You could feel in certain places (not in every place we went, but certain places) where there was a delight in the Lord and a gladness of heart to serve.

There is just a type of safety you begin to feel when immediately, men and women are serving you. "Hey, park right here. Let me show you where to go. Hey, can I help with that? Can you come over here?" Before a song is ever sung and a sermon is ever preached, the body has ministered to the body. See, the reality of the Holy Spirit bringing gifts is that you and I need one another.

I've been uniquely wired and uniquely gifted and uniquely placed just like you, but God has brought us together because I need you, and you need me, and we're going to be together in this place better than we would ever be apart. We all get to serve him. I don't know if you're paying attention to how often in our baptisteries, the testimonies are, "I just knew when I pulled in the parking lot that this was home."

What happened in the parking lot? We're not playing worship music out there. There's not like a pre-sermon going on in the parking lot, even though that's not a bad idea... None of that. What happened? Somebody smiled. They helped them get a parking space, and they pointed them to which way to go. That's it. Yet in that moment, God is using what is not considered a varsity gift of helping people in a parking lot and pointing them in to begin to woo a heart unto himself.

Greeters, people watching children, praying over children, teaching children, those who will serve communion, those who give up their weekend to lead us in song, and on and on and on I could go. We need each other. If the Lord has brought you into this place not just as an attender but as a kind of connected member of the body, he has uniquely wired you and gifted you for the good of all of us. This is how the Holy Spirit's giftings work.

Although it's not a bad thing to aspire to greater gifts, no one controls how they move forward in that gift. The first message I remember ever teaching was to fourth grade boys. I taught a fourth grade Sunday school class for a while there. In the middle of my first talk... Great trepidation. I'm trying to figure out how to communicate well to fourth grade boys. It wasn't too hard. I kind of have an inner fourth grade boy in me.

In the middle of my talk, which I thought was profound... I was just like, "This is the Third Great Awakening right here in this fourth grade boys' Sunday school." In the middle of my talk, a young boy raised his hand. I said, "Yeah?" He said, "Hey, what's that lump in your throat?" "Are you talking about my Adam's apple, you little punk?" That's not what I said, but that's what I thought, so that's what the Lord heard. Grace...

In that moment, I'm not thinking, "I have a bright future here." "Hey, what's that thing in your throat?" I'm not thinking, "You know what. I'm gifted at this." I'm talking about the Lord, talking about his grace, talking about how our hope is in him. Where is this young man's soul moved toward? Wondering why I have a lump in my throat.

Here is what we do. Here is how we walk in our gifts. We just walk in them. If you have the gift of hospitality, praise God. If you have the gift of encouragement, praise his name. How unbelievably helpful is the gift of encouragement? Just the person at the right time has the right word, the person who can see you and takes advantage of seeing you to speak life into you. Simple service. What a gift is simple service?

Don't despise how the Lord has wired you. Don't despise how he has put you together. Understand that you are part of a greater whole. In fact, the most consistent picture the Bible gives us about how our giftedness works is the human body. There are hands. There are feet. There are eyes. There are ears, but we can't all be the same thing.

If we all were, wouldn't that be a nightmare, if we all had the same gift? Think about it. If we all were exactly alike, all had the same gift, what a nightmare that would be. If we just took it out of spiritual gifts and said if the entire planet were extroverts, wouldn't that be a nightmare? If the entire planet was introverts, wouldn't the human species just die out? Don't you kind of need both of those?

In the same way, the Lord knows how he is wiring his church. Let's just be glad that he has given gifts and we have the opportunity to serve for his great name. I think it was Shakespeare who said there are no small parts. All the more true in the kingdom of God. There are no small parts. There is just obedience. May we walk in it well.

I want to end our time together today like this. I think it's a simple way to do it. I said at the beginning that my big hope was that leaving here today, we'd be much more dialed in to what we have been given rather being dialed in to all we have not been given and that we would leave here today more of an expert on the grace and mercy of God.

I want to give you just a few minutes here to consider God's goodness toward you. There are really simple ways to think through this. It was brought to my own spirit, my own heart, last night as I was

teaching in the 5:00 service. We had a good full house in the 5:00 service. There was a woman about six rows in the center right over here who I know is in the fight of her life with a type of stage four aggressive rare cancer, and she was here with a wig on. She had lost some color.

You could see that she had been taking a beating, yet here she is, just wanting to be in the house of the Lord. Most of us aren't in here like that. Most of us have a ton of energy this morning or at least coffee-induced energy. Most of us are not aware in this moment that we're mortal, if you're tracking with me. We all know we're going to die, but nobody thinks it's coming this year.

What did you do to get your health? Don't be too quick to jump to spinach and yoga because I can introduce you to plenty of people who took very good care of themselves. In fact, one of the women who was diagnosed with the same cancer I had three months after me had done nothing but run boot camps all over Dallas. She never ate anything that wasn't organic. She died a year ago.

We have far less control than we think we do, so if you think you're healthy, if you have friends, if there is money in the bank, if you ate a good breakfast, or you chose not to eat a good breakfast but could have this morning, these are all things to be grateful to God for. If you have a job that is set... Do you know how many people we've prayed with in this kind of downturn? Men who have families, women who have families and need to support them and are finding work hard to come by.

You have a good job. What did you do to get that? Be awesome? Okay, where did that awesomeness come from? Your hard work? No. I won't give you hard work for awesomeness. Intuitive, intrinsic gifts were given by God, not decided by you. Opportunity has so much to do with how you land in a certain space and time. Who controls space and time?

Let me give you just a minute or two to do what I think used to be called just counting your blessings. I think there was a song. Name them one by one. Whatever posture you need to get in to just think through God's generosity toward you, how he has blessed and been generous with you, I'm going to give you just a minute or two. Think specific things, not just kind of a blanket, "He's generous," but specifically, how has he dealt generously with you?

Father, I thank you for these men and women. I thank you for the opportunity just to spend time together this morning under the idea of your goodness and grace. I thank you and praise you, Father, for your goodness. Thank you for sending the Son, and Jesus, for laying down your life, and

Holy Spirit, for strengthening, empowering, and giving gifts so we might make much of Jesus, we might join you in making much of Jesus. Thank you, Father. Dial in our hearts to your goodness and grace, your generosity, kindness, and richness toward us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

I love you guys more than you know.

© 2014 The Village Church