

Which Jesus?

Matt Chandler – April 5, 2015

Good morning. Happy Easter. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. John, chapter 12. If you don't have a Bible with you, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. Get that. As always, I want you to see that I'm not just making any of this this up; I'm actually getting it from somewhere.

I know we're from all different backgrounds. Some of you are just here because it's Easter, so let me just let the cat out of the bag. Spoiler alert. I just want to talk about Jesus. That's what I'm going to do. For the next 35 minutes, we're going to talk about Jesus, and then we'll see what God wants to do from there.

That sounds simple, but it's actually far more complex than you might think. If I say we're going to talk about Jesus, the question you should ask yourself is, "Which Jesus am I talking about?" See, everybody believes in some variation of Jesus, in some way about Jesus. So what am I talking about when I say we're going to talk about Jesus?

Do you know that Muslims believe in Jesus? In fact, Jesus is written about in the Qur'an. He's called Isa, and Muslims consider Jesus the Christ to be one of the greatest prophets God has ever sent to mankind. Did you know that Jews (not ethnic Jews, but those who have given themselves to the religion of Judaism) believe in the historical Jesus?

They see him as one of many false messianic claims and the most damaging of those messianic claims because of the influence he was able to garner. Hindus believe in Jesus. Some Hindus regard Jesus as the incarnation of the God Vishnu. According to Hindu belief, Vishnu is periodically incarnated into the world in forms as varied as a fish, a dwarf, and human beings.

Atheists and agnostics believe in a historical Jesus who was either a good teacher or at least a life to be emulated. In fact, just a couple of weeks ago, CNN aired a special report on atheism. It was called

Atheists: Inside the World of Non-Believers. That's my bag, baby. So I'm watching this special report on atheists.

I didn't DVR it, so I'm having to sit through commercials, which I've noticed I'm growing increasingly impatient with in the modern day. I'm like, "Are you kidding? Four minutes? Are you serious?" I'm watching these commercials, and one of these commercials is for another CNN special that is airing called *Finding Jesus*.

I kind of chuckled to myself that in the midst of this special on atheism, Jesus was like, "What are we talking about? What are we talking about in here? This special is great. Mine is next. Why don't you dial in after this and find out what's up?" Right? Now, I have zero confidence that *Finding Jesus* by CNN is credible in any way. I just thought it somewhat ironic that they chose to air that commercial during the atheism special just to give people a chance to at least decide.

Unbelievers, those who don't believe in Jesus in any real religious way, would see Jesus as a historical person, a lot like George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. "Sure, they did some good things, but as far as my life goes today, he's irrelevant. That's definitely true about any type of eternity talk. Then there are nominal Christians, cultural Christians. I don't know how else to put it. They consider Jesus to be a good add-on to their lives but not necessarily Lord of their lives.

He's a type of genie in a bottle who grants us our wishes. He demands nothing from us. If we're really honest, Jesus, for the nominal Christian, kind of exists like an errand boy. We ring our little bell, and he brings us pillows or mochaccinos or whatever we need to comfort our weary souls. If I say, "Hey, for the next 35 minutes, I want to talk about Jesus," which one of those cats am I talking about? They're all very different from one another.

What I want to do is talk to you about Jesus as he presents himself in the Scriptures. I think, I would argue that how you see and understand Jesus Christ will affect how you see yourself and will affect how you see the world around you and directly affect your ability to live the fullest life possible. More on that as we wade through this text together.

If you have that Bible, open to John 12. We're going to start in verse 20. **"Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus."** Very inefficient system. Verse 23.

"And Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. 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 hour. Father, glorify your name.'"

Now, right out of the gate, there is some movement in this text I want to draw your attention to. You can see part of this movement, and the other part of the movement is in the chapters before it and in the chapters after it. In our little 35-minute time clock here, I can't go. Let me explain the two movements. First, you have Greeks who are Gentiles. They are outside the covenant promise of God given to Israel. They would not have been able to worship in the inner temple courts.

In fact, there was an outer court, a court for Gentiles and women, that if you crossed past that wall, that "dividing wall of hostility" as the apostle Paul would call it in Ephesians 2, you could be legally killed. Gentiles, Greeks were not allowed into the innermost parts of intimacy with the creator God. Now, in this text, they're seeking him. There is a movement toward Christ by those who have been historically outside the commonwealth of Israel.

What you don't see in this text is a simultaneous movement away from Christ. That movement away from Jesus Christ is one of the movements I cherish deeply as a follower of Christ. The Pharisees and Sadducees of the day, the religious elite, the most moral, conservative men and women imaginable fundamentally rejected the teaching of Christ.

See, Christ is going to show up, and he's not going to let you puff up your chest about your morality. He's not going to let you walk with a swagger. In fact, he's going to take and put us all on even ground, and the self-righteous hate even ground. The self-righteous like ladders. "I climbed this ladder. I want to just be a little bit taller than everyone else around me, just a little bit better than everyone else around me." People who love self-righteousness hate Jesus.

What's happening in this text is there's a movement from marginalized, excluded people toward Jesus Christ. Then the self-righteous, the hyper-religious, are refusing to follow Jesus. There is a movement toward, and there is a movement away. Here's how I would argue. Even now, in this room, there are those of us moving toward Jesus, and there are those of us moving away from Jesus. The significance of that cannot be overstated.

What is at stake in how we see and understand Christ and whether or not we're moving toward him or away from him is, I would argue, ultimate reality. There is an ultimate reality that can only be known via a creator God. Then there is the reality of our imaginations. How you deal with Jesus is going to line you up with ultimate reality, what is actually real and will always be, or this kind of pretend playground of life you've created for yourself.

The fullness of life is at stake and how you see and understand Jesus. We'll argue more about that here in a moment. I've said nothing yet of eternal consequences and what is at stake there concerning Jesus Christ. With that said though, I still haven't answered the question. "Who is Jesus? Like the prophet Jesus? The fish/dwarf Jesus? Which Jesus are we talking about?"

I'm so glad you asked that question because that's what I had next in my notes. Look at verse 23. Here is what he's going to say in 23. **"And Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.'"**

Now, when Jesus says "the Son of Man," that's not a title that is a New Testament title but a title throughout the Scriptures. When the phrase "Son of Man" is mentioned. It's always tied to one of two things. It is tied to the suffering the coming Messiah, the one who would save people from their sins, would endure, and it would also be attached to the eternality of the Messiah.

What Jesus does in his teaching is destroy any notion that he's a prophet or simply a good teacher. He takes that off the table. He, by his teaching, removes the ability of man to call him a mere prophet or teacher. He says, "No, no, no. The Son of Man." He's saying, "I am God. I'm not *a* god. I am *the* God. I am coeternal with the Father. I have always been. I will always be. I have not been created." He calls himself the second person of the Trinity.

If you really pay attention, even if you want to view the Bible just simply as literature, he certainly doesn't talk like a prophet. Prophets show up and tell you what someone else said, right? A prophet

in any religion shows up and says, "Hey, God wants me to tell you something. Y'all better stop that. Y'all better start that." Right? That's what a prophet says. "Thus sayeth the Lord."

That's not how Jesus teaches. In fact, we see in the New Testament that people are stunned at how he teaches. Jesus shows up and says, "You have heard it said, but I say." Do you know who he's quoting on the, "You have heard it said"? God, the Father. "You have heard it said, but I say." That's not a prophet. That's God himself. He doesn't teach as a prophet.

Now, if we start going back over that list of, "Who is Jesus?" some things start falling off. He can't be a prophet if he says, "I'm not a prophet. I'm God in the flesh." He can't just be a teacher if his teaching says, "I'm God in the flesh." He's the Son of Man, and the Son of Man is the promised Messiah who would die for the sins of humankind. The prophet Isaiah said this would be what the Servant of God, the Son of Man would do. Isaiah 53, starting in verse 5:

"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring [us as Christians]; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

Now, here is something I found that is really interesting in the day and age in which we live. We are an extremely conflicted and confused people. Here's what I mean by that. Categorically, Western thought wants to reject the notion of sin as though there is no such thing as sin. To reject that

category outright and at the same time wrestle with a type of invisible guilt throws us into a quandary.

Almost all of us feel that if we were to be thoroughly examined that we would somehow fall short. Well, fall short of what? If there's no such thing as sin, if there's no such thing as rebellion against God, no such thing as iniquity, then how do we explain just natural guilt? Our mom and daddy didn't necessarily infuse that into us. We were born with it. How can our belief that I should be able to do what I want to do still produce guilt in our hearts?

See, we're a confused people. We want to say, "There is no such thing as sin. I decide what is right for me." Yet, we're plagued by guilt and by a constant feeling of not measuring up to a standard, but what standard? The Bible is clear that that little mess in your heart is actually sin. The book of Romans would say there are three things that are true about every person in this room, myself included. Here's what they are. None of them are pretty. All of us are guilty.

The first one is *all of us prefer creation to the Creator*. We don't want God; we want his stuff. We don't want God; we want what God has created. That does two things. First, that is blasphemy, outright blasphemy. Secondly, that hurts you and your ability to enjoy life to its fullness. How so? If God has created all things, then what makes the Scripture clear is that this creator God has created all things, not so those things might be enjoyed, but rather that *he* might be enjoyed as the giver of those things. Are you tracking with me?

There is an experience of joy that goes past any normal experience of joy. I'll give you an example. A well-cooked filet. By well-cooked, I mean medium-rare. If you cook it more than that, you just ruined it, bro. Eat a pork chop. You leave that steak alone. A medium-rare filet with (if you're able) a nice Cab, surrounded by good friends and family. That's an awesome night. Laughter, stories that border on lies, and just that.

That's a real beautiful moment, but is it not more beautiful if I see and sense and understand that all of that is also a gift from God on high? The steak is awesome, and the wine is awesome, and friends are incredible, and it can be enjoyed, but you're going to slam into the ceiling of that enjoyment if it has not been given to you by a creator God.

I get the experience of the joy of dinner that then compounds past itself into an understanding that there is a creator God who loves and graciously gives to his people, even the gifts of common grace.

I don't just enjoy the steak; I enjoy the giver of the steak. I don't just enjoy friends but the giver of the friends. I don't just enjoy the Cab but the giver of the Cab. Right?

That's exponential joy, and it's a type of joy you can't experience outside of Jesus. I'm not saying you can't have a good time outside of Jesus. In fact, an idiot would say that. You can absolutely have a good time outside of Jesus, but you're not going to have the fullness of a good time you could have because you've built a ceiling over yourself by loving creation rather than Creator.

We intrinsically know this is true because if you're not 7 (and I see a couple of you might be), you know you've been chasing whatever is next for your whole life. Right? You just couldn't wait to get to high school, couldn't wait to drive a car, couldn't wait to get out of high school, couldn't wait to get to college, couldn't wait to get out of college, couldn't wait to get married, couldn't wait to find a job, couldn't wait to buy a house, couldn't wait to have a kid, couldn't wait for that kid to get out of your house. Right? Couldn't wait for, couldn't wait for, couldn't wait for...died. Right?

That's what happens. We just keep chasing. "This is going to satisfy me." So we run. "It's just going to satisfy me. I need to find this person, get this job, get this house, find this car, be seen as this. As soon as I get that, I'll be happy." It just keeps betraying us. We get there, and it can't satisfy us. That's the ceiling you're hitting. It's created stuff. It wasn't meant to satisfy you. It was meant to point past itself to what can satisfy you. That's why Romans 1 reads us so clearly. Everyone in this room loves creation more than the Creator.

The second thing the Bible says we're all guilty of in Romans 1 is *we believe the lie over the truth of God*. Here's what that means. If I could just condense that, I would say we think we're smarter than God. In 20 years of ministry, I've sat across from some crazy people, and I've never sat across from anyone who said, "I just think I'm smarter than God." I've never heard anyone say it. We just live like we are.

Do you know who I disagree with the most in my household? My 5-year-old daughter. It's not my wife. My wife and I don't always see eye to eye, but it's my 5-year-old daughter. We fundamentally see the world differently. We just do. There is no way we can see the world the same. She's 5, so the way I live life makes no sense to her. I'm 40, so the way she lives her life only makes sense to me because I'm 40 and understand 5. To a 5-year-old, my world is weird to her.

Why would I eat what I would eat? Why would I decide this is what we're going to do here? It just makes zero sense to her because she's 5 and I'm 40, so we butt heads, not awfully because I try to say... My philosophy in parenting is I'm just going to say, "Yes," as often as I can because I know I have some noes coming, and I want to be able to, in that no, go, "Hey, does Daddy like to say, 'Yes'?"

I occasionally am just a dumb dad. "Can we have some candy for breakfast?" "You know what? Sure." When you want to say out until 2:00 in the morning, I'll say, "No, you remember those Whoppers, right?" In the end, there are some ways we don't see... Sometimes, the disagreement on how we should do life is so massive that it feels unbridgeable. Do you know what leads to all that? The gap between our perspectives.

I'm 40, so when I'm saying, "No," I'm saying, "No," for a reason. She's 5, so she most often will not understand that reasoning, because she's 5. All she has is five years of life. She doesn't know yet what happens if you go down that path. The path looks clear. It looks clean. I know. I've been down the path or have seen others go down the path.

We engage one another, lovingly, graciously, as long as I can. Surely you can see that in the same way a 5-year-old and a 40-year-old are not going to see the world... Even when the 40-year-old loves deeply and desperately wants to say, "Yes," as often as he can, he will oftentimes have to invade that reality and go, "No. This way. No. Put that down. No. That's not what we're doing tonight."

If that's true simply between daddies and little boys and little girls, how much more will that be true between an eternal God and finite mankind? Right? Most of us would like to believe there are Bible verses with asterisks by them, and if we turn to the back, there would be a picture of us, and under it, it would say, "Never mind." God would just say, "Now that I see your life and what you're going through, never mind that command. I didn't mean that for you. Everybody else, but not you, bro. I get it now. Thanks for catching me on that."

No, no, no. The God of the Bible, because he is eternal, because tomorrow is not a place he knows about but a place he already is (try to think about that for a bit), gives commands on his people and gives commands on the world, and the world most frequently responds with, "Yeah, I hear you, but I think I'm smarter than you. I think when it comes to my marriage, when it comes to my money, when it comes to my life, I'm a better king than you are, but I appreciate you, bro. Thank you." That's blasphemous.

Lastly, not only do we love creation over the Creator and believe we're smarter than God, but then *we fail to acknowledge God*. If you ever want to get a peek into the depravity of man, the darkness in the heart of man, listen to skeptics blame God for every bad thing and simultaneously give him no credit for anything good. He's the God of the bad but not the God of anything good.

Over the years, I try to help people who just think, "I think I'll finally be grateful once I'm glad." I'm trying to say, "No, no, no. You're grateful, and that leads to gladness." At our dinner table at night, before we say our prayers, we go around our little table, and everyone goes, "Here are three things I'm grateful for today." I'm not doing that for the kids; I'm doing that for me. I tend to have the bent of cynicism and, "I want to pick that apart." I'm well aware of what's wrong. I need to remind my heart of what is right.

What I've learned over the years is as I've grown in gratitude, I've grown in gladness. Gladness never fed gladness, but gratitude fed gladness. An acknowledgment that God has been good and gracious to you is a discipline that cultivating it will transform how you deal with others and how you live life. We're all guilty of failing to acknowledge him.

The illustration I used to use was Shaquille O'Neal dunking a basketball. I just don't think he should ever be able to dance for dunking a basketball. You're 7'3", bro. All you did really was lift your arms over your head. I don't know. I don't think you should be able to celebrate for that. Hit a free throw, brother. If you hit a free throw, then dance. You can't hit a shot, so make the shot and then dance.

At no point in his mother's womb did Shaq Diesel say, "I'm going to be 7'3" and athletic." No, God just did that. Every gift and ability you have has been given to you by God for God. To take it and use it as though you had anything to do with that makes you a blasphemer. Because we're all guilty of this, this is the section of the sermon that is least enjoyable.

If you're like, "Bro, I haven't enjoyed any of this so far," then this will even be worse than that. In the end here, because you and I prefer creation over the Creator, believe we are smarter than God, and fail to acknowledge God for his good and gracious gifts to us, the Bible is clear that the wrath of God is building, and it will have a violent and horrific climax.

Let me love you here. The Bible teaches that God hates your sin. He hates it. There is a steadily building opposition against you that one day will fully be unleashed. On that day... The Bible's

language around it is horrific. The Bible says that on that day, upon the return of Christ, where he doesn't come as a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes but comes as a King with a sword coming out of his mouth and a tattoo on his thigh, the Bible says men and women will flee from him and head to the mountains, but the mountains will flee before the coming of the Lord.

How terrifying do you have to be to make mountains run? The Bible graphically says that on that day, the streets will run red with blood. Now, our culture has no space for that. If God is anything, he's a God of love who, like a fairy in the skies, simply sprinkles love dust on everyone. He would never hurt anyone in any way.

He has no wrath toward that, but that's so detached from reality that I don't quite know how to handle that statement. To say he has no wrath is to simultaneously say he has no love, for you cannot divorce those two ideas. I'll prove my point with this. If you would have asked me if I could kill a man with my hands, not like with a rifle 200 yards away or anything like that, even though I would have said, "No," to that too.

If you would have come up to me and said, "Chandler, do you think if you had to, you would kill a man with your bare hands?" I would be like, "Hey, bro, back off that coffee. Why would I ever want to kill a man with my bare hands? Maybe not back off it. Maybe get you a cup." If 10 minutes later, they handed me my firstborn Audrey, and they put her in my arms, and I immediately knew, "Yeah, I'd kill a man. I'd be chuckling as I'd kill him. I'd lose my mind killing him."

What happened? What gave birth to wrath in my heart? Love did, that I loved this little girl so much that I will choke the life out of you if you try to harm her. See, love and wrath cannot be taken from one another. If you take one, you lose the other. If he's not a God of wrath, then there is nothing he loves enough to incite anger, and that's important. That means there is no love. You can't make God a sky fairy God of love and try to take from him his wrath.

Since he is such a God of love, his wrath is stupendous, and it's coming, and it is very real. Do you want to know how seriously God takes your sin? Look only to the horrific cross and the reality of hell. Those two stand as a signpost of God's rage against your sin and my sin. All of us are guilty. The Isaiah 53 passage as well as the rest of Scripture testifies to this. **"There is none righteous, not even one..."** This text is one of those that puts the self-righteous in a place of wanting to reject Jesus because it just says, **"All of us like sheep have gone astray..."**

The self-righteous brother is like, "All of us? Did you say *all*? It sounded like you said *all* there. Maybe you're not watching over here, but look. Sunday school pins. I haven't missed a day in like six years. Maybe you weren't paying attention, God, but I've been nailing stuff over here. I heard that, 'All we like sheep have gone astray.' I'm guessing your eyes have been over there and not over here where my crew and I are." That's why the self-righteous reject Jesus, because he puts us all on the same ground, sinners in need of repentance.

What are we to do with all this wrath talk? Hear me. That's the point of today. We're to celebrate. That goes to what Jesus says next about himself in this text. We're going to skip those couple of verses that are really kind of the secret to life there. Look in verse 27. **"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 hour. Father, glorify your name."**

Here's what's happening. You and I, the wrath of God being stored up, steadily building opposition against that will have its climax in our outright destruction and an eternity in hell. Jesus shows up. One of my favorite verses in the Bible... John 3:16 gets all the press, but John 3:17 is one that just makes my heart continuously leap. John 3:17 is Jesus saying, "I have come into the world not to condemn the world but rather to save the world from condemnation."

What Christ does is he steps into this mess, this steadily building opposition against, this boiling wrath toward those who love creation more than the Creator, who believe they're smarter than God and fail to acknowledge him. He steps into that messy world in human flesh, the second person of the Trinity, God the Son, and he lives an upright, perfect life. He fulfills the law, that law you and I break all the time. He fulfills it.

He does not love creation more than the Creator. He does not believe he is smarter than God the Father. He cannot betray himself, and he acknowledges God in every way. He goes to the cross, and on the cross of Jesus Christ, he absorbs. Do you want to know why the cross is so horrific? What is happening on the cross is Jesus is absorbing all of God's wrath toward those who would believe in him. There is not a drop of wrath left for those who believe.

How do we know? Because Christ rose from the grave. If Christ didn't rise from the grave, then maybe he didn't get it all, but because Christ rose from the grave, we are confident as God's people that he took care of all of our sin...past, present, and future. He took care of all of it. Christ has come

into the world as the Son of Man, as coeternal with the Father, God in the flesh, second person of the Trinity.

He stepped in. He lived the life we could not live, and he died our death. Upon faith and belief, he imputes to us his perfect life so God sees us as spotless and blameless in his sight. This is who Jesus is. This is who we talk about here. He is the Lord and Savior of the world. He is God the Son. He is the King of the universe. He is no prophet, no mere teacher, nor is he some sort of genie. He is not indifferent. He, and he alone, holds the keys to salvation and fullness of life. This is King Jesus. This is who we celebrate. This is who we talk about.

This is such a better story than a prophet or a teacher or even a fish/dwarf man. This is the best news in the universe. Then he goes on, because he is eternal. Remember we're not eternal. Remember this 40-year-old versus 5-year-old kind of clash that will occur from time to time because he is eternal and we are not. In this text, he really gives us the secret to life and how to live life for the fullness of our joy. Look at verse 25. **"Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."**

Now, *hate* here has to do with position or relation to. He's not saying, "You'd better hate yourself." "I hate myself." That's not what he's saying. He's saying that in relation to him, you're in second. You are not the apex of your thinking and authority, but rather, he is. In fact, I think he dials us in to it a bit more there in verse 26. By the way, I think it's common sense that a person who loves his life will lose it. It couldn't be otherwise. To love your life is to fundamentally deny God's sovereignty and reject God's rights as Creator.

We live in a day and age that is just consumed with autonomous rights. This will grate against our American sensibilities, but I would argue that the only one in the universe who has absolute autonomous rights is the creator God of the universe. Now, think about it. Everyone in here would have to submit to a court. Everyone in here could be forced by a government or a regime to do things we would rather not do.

Who puts God in the dock? Who shows up and arrests God when he's being a meanie? Who puts him in jail when he doesn't do what we think he should do? See, God and God alone is the one who sovereignly has all rights. We may not like that, but it's true. How do we then gain life by losing it? Look at verse 26. **"If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."**

When you start talking about *serve* and *follow*, what people want to do is go, "Okay, give me my list of things I'm supposed to do and not supposed to do. Give me the list, and I'll do it. Just tell me how to serve him. What is the little check box of behaviors?" In this context, that is not what is happening. When he's talking about who rules and reigns over your heart, he doesn't have a list of behavioral modification in mind but rather you acknowledging that you make a crummy king.

Taking that pathetic little ganky crown off of your head and stepping off the throne of your heart and bowing before Jesus and saying, "Forgive me for trying to be king of my life. I'm crummy at it. I've made a mess. You sit there and you lead me." At that moment, you enter the awkward dance of sanctification. Two steps forward, one step back, two steps forward, one step back, two steps forward, one step back.

See, when he's talking about serving and following, he's saying, "You don't get to be king. It's not because I'm power-hungry. It's because I love you, and you're a terrible king. I'm eternal; you're not. I'm all-knowing; you're not. I'm in tomorrow. You have no clue." Deep down inside, we know we're bad kings. I've tried to help you understand it over the years by saying things like this to you. Do you know of anyone who has been more dishonest to you than you have? Have you ever met anyone who has lied to you as consistently or as horrifically as you have?

Has anybody let you down more than you've let you down? Has anyone ever consistently been as cruel to you as you are to you? "If you only knew this or this or that..." No, no, no. I know that you lie to yourself more than anybody else. In fact, almost all the awful things that are going on in your life are happening because you're justifying staying there or justifying why it should be this way. We're experts at self-justification.

This text is saying, "Get off the throne." If you're like, "Well, I hear you about this Jesus stuff. I just don't quite understand everything. I don't understand how it all works," I'm saying, "You don't have to understand all of that. You have to get off that throne. You just have to bow down and go, 'I'm a crummy king. Will you lead?'"

Then you enter the dance, and the dance is awkward because as soon as you're off that throne, you feel a bit naked, and you want to get back in. It's a little bit scary. We get off the throne. We go, "Crummy king. Jesus, you sit there. You lead me. You're eternal. I'm not. You know. I don't. Take me." Jesus will assume that throne and go, "This way."

We'll take two steps forward and go, "Can I sit up there again for a second? Okay. Oh gosh. That feels good. Oh, wrecked it again. Okay, you sit up there. I don't want to sit up there. I want to follow you. You lead me. Hey, I just got a bonus check. Do you mind if I sit there for a second? Oh gosh. I jacked that up. Okay. Will you sit there again? You're the King. Please forgive me. Gosh, my wife is driving me crazy. Do you mind if I sit there for a second? Okay, I hate this. I'm a terrible king."

You can see this is the wonky dance of sanctification, but you don't get all of your questions answered before you get off the throne. You get off the throne, and you start getting your questions answered. I'm 20 years in. I've read the Bible cover-to-cover multiple times. I've read more books than I can remember. I still have questions. I'm still perplexed at times. Even this past week, I still went, "Man, I don't know."

Entering the dance, that awkward two-left-feet, two-steps-forward-then-one-step-back dance has made all the difference in my life and in the lives of millions across the globe. If you're like, "Yeah, I hear you, man, but my Christian friends are just hypocritical." Yeah, I just explained it. You're catching them on the back step. If anything, should not their hypocrisy make you feel safer here?

If there wasn't the step back, would you feel comfortable in this room at all? Would not everyone just continually stepping forward serve as a type of barrier of coming into the messiness that is the church and the people who make up the church? Why we celebrate so passionately on this day in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cross and resurrection is the objective evidence that God never tires of this dance. He never tires of it.

The invitation today honestly is a simple one. There is a King who is a better ruler than you. Get out of his chair. I'm not saying that's not scary. I'm not saying that's not confusing. I'm not saying you're not even quite sure what to do after that. I'm saying full life, eternity, appeasement of God's wrath is all wrapped up in you getting out of that seat that is not yours.

I'm not a fool. Some of you aren't tired enough in life yet. The Lord is going to have to, in his loving mercy, burn you to the ground to make you submit to him or, in his wrath, just let you run off. I think people view success as not wrath. I'm telling you Romans 1 also says that one of the clear ways to spot God's wrath is to have him go, "Okay, you want that? Go ahead and chase it."

Your success might not be a marker of God's favor but God's wrath upon your life. The only way to appease the wrath of God is the substitutionary atoning work of Christ on the cross and his resurrection. I love you. Get out of that chair. It's your only hope. Let's pray. Every head bowed. Every eye closed. If you're not a believer but a guest, nothing weird is going to happen. Nobody is going to touch you or take your stuff. I just want to get you in a situation where you can think.

As we've been in here and have let the Word of God kind of bear its weight on us, and we've heard and sensed and seen here that there is a throne in our hearts and a type of rulership over our lives, I think the question I'm really interested in is as we've said these things and as we've shown that Jesus has come into the world not to condemn the world but rather to save the world from condemnation.

If at some point today you've realized, "Man, I've been king. I've sat on the throne. I've been ruling my life, and I'm aware now that I'm really crummy at it. I don't want to sit in this chair anymore. I want to get out of this chair, and I want Jesus to sit in the throne of my heart. As you've talked, Pastor Matt, and as we've sung songs and done these things, I felt compelled to get out of this chair and ask Christ... I have questions. I don't understand everything, but I want out of this seat, and I want him to sit up there and lead me."

If that's you and you're saying today, "Listen. I'm tired of sitting on this little throne in my heart. I want out of it. I want Jesus to sit there," will you just raise your hand right there where you are? Just go, "Man, I'm tired of sitting in this chair. I'm doing a terrible job of being king." All right. Praise God. I want you to put your hands down. Let me pray for us.

Father, I thank you for these men and women. I thank you for even the dozens in this room where I am who have raised their hands and just said, "I'm tired of being king." Father, for those who raised their hands for maybe the first time or maybe in a very real way today, Father, I pray that you would assume that throne and that you would flood their hearts with a release of mercy and trusting in you to lead and guide them.

Father, I pray as we move into what is next today that your Lordship, your good Kingsmanship would be ever before us and that in glad submission to you, we would fight the good fight of staying servants who follow you rather than leaders who try to lead you. I thank you for the joy that is found in that place. I thank you for the forgiveness that is found in that place. I thank you that your

wrath has been quenched once and for all for those of us who put our faith in you and ask you to sit on that throne. We love you. Help us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

We're going to end our service by celebrating the very thing we've been talking about, the broken body and shed blood of Christ. We provide Communion primarily for our covenant members, but if you're a guest with us this morning from a different church or just visiting family members and are a believer in Christ in good standing with the church you're visiting us from, we want you to celebrate with us. Go ahead and grab a cracker and a cup, and let's rejoice in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I would like to say this. If you're not a believer in Christ, if in everything I've said today, you're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. No thank you." Would you do me a favor and just abstain? Will you just let the elements pass? It's not that you're not invited in to this table, but rather you've decided not to sit down at it. Jesus is clear. **"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."** If you categorically reject that, then I'm not trying to keep you from the table. You're deciding not to sit down. If you're a believer, grab the elements.

Here's what I want us to do with all that has been said today, some very heavy things. I want to give you just a few moments to consider. Consider where you are. "Who is Jesus? Is he Lord and Savior? Is he King of your life? Is he an add-on? Is he just a historical figure? Is he just a teacher?" I want to give you just a little bit of space here to consider, to prayerfully mull over the things that have been said. Then I'll come up, and we'll do Communion together as a family. Let me give you a couple of minutes here, and I'll be right back, and we'll take together.

The Bible tells us, "On the night Jesus was arrested, he took the bread and broke it and said, 'This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' Likewise, after the meal, he took the cup and blessed the cup and said about the cup, 'This is the blood of the new covenant.'" He effectively shut down the altar. There were going to be no more offerings for sin. He was going to be the offering once and for all.

He knew we were going to be prone to forget it and want to add a list of behavioral modifications to our salvation, so he says, "This is the blood of the new covenant. All sins forgiven, past, present, and future, for those who repent and trust in me as King forever. Past sins paid for, present struggles accounted for, future sins covered by grace." He said, "This is the blood of the new covenant. Don't forget."

Happy Easter. Let me just say this. We'll dismiss with a song. If you raised your hand earlier and said, "Hey, I got off the throne of my heart. I've asked Jesus to sit on the throne," and that's the first time you've ever done that or it was a really significant moment for you... You're not a Christian who is on the back step, but for the first time in your life you've laid your *yes* down, and you've said, "I'm going to follow Christ. He's going to be my King."

Will you loop us in to that? Will you let us know that you've done that? I'm telling you. Before you get to your car, that throne is going to start looking really attractive again, so let us help you and walk alongside of you in this awkward two-left-feet dance. There will be men and women up here after we sing. They're here for you. If you're like, "I'm not talking to a stranger, pastor," then take one of those little white cards.

All you have to do is put however you want us to contact you on it and just say, "I asked Jesus to be the King," or, "I laid my *yes* down," or something like that, and we'll contact you the way you want us to contact you. Listen. I love you. I love being your pastor. Why don't we stand and celebrate Jesus, and then we'll head out.