

I Am (Part 6) – The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Matt Chandler – March 13, 2016

Well, good morning. How are you? Doing well? Excellent. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. John 14 is where we're going to be. We're going to look at the first six verses there. We have been in a series looking at the seven "I am" statements through the gospel of John. These last three chapters of the book of John take place in the last 48 hours of Jesus' life. There's a sense of urgency that begins to build as Jesus heads to the cross.

In fact, we'll cover, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me," in our time today. Next weekend, on Palm Sunday, will be, "I am the vine," in John 15. Then we'll end on Easter Sunday morning in John 16 with, "I am the resurrection and the life." All of this takes place in a 48-hour period. Turn there to John 14, the first six verses. I want to show you this. If you don't have a Bible, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. If you don't own a Bible, that's our gift to you.

About four years ago, maybe three years ago, some members of The Village Church approached me and a couple of other pastors and said, "Hey, the Lord has just really ministered to us through y'all's ministry. We would love to take you on vacation with us." How I process things like this is we call that gifts in kind. I went to two elders, Brad Payne and Brian Miller. Brian Miller is the chairman of our elder board. Brad Payne is just a good friend.

I said, "Hey, some members of the church want to give a very generous gift to me and a couple of other pastors. What do you guys think?" I can't ever put myself in a position where I can be bought or that people can leverage influence over me as one of the lead pastors, so I wanted one of the elders to sign off on that. I also knew the guy well enough to know that he's not being generous because he wants to control or manipulate the way I lead, but rather, he's just a generous guy.

He took me and two other pastors and our wives on vacation. Look. My dad is a long-haul truck driver. Vacations for me growing up was driving from the San Francisco Bay Area to Lake Pomme

de Terre in Missouri. By the way, *Lake Pomme de Terre* means Lake Potato. My dad, God bless him, would rent, lease a pop-up camper. Do you remember these? The wings would spread out that you would have to put in. Those were the beds.

We would stay at KOA sites. I would get poison ivy every freaking year. I would just be blistered up, calamine lotion. We would drive all the way to Lake Potato. We would then sleep in that camper while we swam in Lake Potato. Then we would get back in the car and drive three days back to the Bay Area. That was vacation.

Here's the deal. I loved it. I have wondered how my parents did it. I just know me, and I'm thinking of three or four days in the car with me. I have a vague recollection of maybe being illegally beaten on a roadside in Arizona. That may or may not have even happened. I might have suppressed that. I don't know. I just have to believe that there were threats, and there was some acting upon those threats, because I did not grow up in the, "Get in the corner and think about that," period of time. That's not where I grew up.

Anyway, we go on this vacation, and I'm just telling you that to this day, it is the most generous thing anyone has ever done for me. We fly to this really beautiful spot in the world, and we're staying in a house. I didn't even know you could do that. It's a fully staffed house. There are chefs. You don't do anything. A guy named Hector runs the whole thing. You wake up, and Hector is there with your coffee. "Here's your coffee, sir." He's asking you, "What do you want to eat today?"

You can just randomly go, "Hey, can we whip up some snacks here?" "What do you want?" "Oh, gosh. I don't know. Guacamole and some enchiladas." "Yes, sir. It's your home." Then he'll go, and he'll bring back everything. We're on this vacation. It's day four. I come out of my room in this stunning house. There's Hector (I guess he heard me rousing) holding a cup of coffee. He just hands me the coffee.

I take the coffee. I'm looking out at the Pacific Ocean, and there are whales cresting and jumping. I'm not making this up. I have my coffee in hand. Hector is whipping up breakfast as he picks stuff out of the garden out back to make it with. I promise you none of this is even embellished. None of this is hyperbole. I'm standing there with this cup of coffee, looking at whales cresting in the Pacific Ocean, and I thought to myself, "I'm ready to go home."

Now, that thought is not a new thought, although it was quite an invading thought in that environment. For the last 20-something years, I have travelled almost full time. What I've learned is that people who don't travel think travel is sexy, and people who do travel understand that it's not. What I've learned about myself is that regardless of where I am, regardless of the scenery or even who's there, after a certain period of time, I start to want to be home.

What I realized when I got home from that trip is I'm Hector. I got back to my house. My kids were like, "I want some juice. Make me an omelet. Where's the oatmeal? There's a mess." I'm like, "Oh my gosh. I'm Hector. Here's your juice, Audrey." I'm like, "Wow, I do live in a place like that. I'm just Hector." I've learned that no matter where I've gone... By the grace of God, I've been able to preach all over the world.

I've been to all of the major cities in Australia. I've been in Europe multiple times. In fact, in just a few weeks, I'm headed to Rome for the Acts 29 European conference. I know you're thinking, "Oh, you poor baby, headed to Rome," but I'm telling you it will be awesome for a few days, and then my heart will start to long, as awesome as it is. It's going to be amazing, but I'm going to want to get home. I'm going to want to sleep in my own bed. As dumb as it sounds, I want to know where the Q-tips are. I just want to be home.

That was going to be my opening illustration for our time together. This sermon has been done for a few days. Friday night, we had a group of friends. We have a thing called Book Club. It shouldn't be called Book Club anymore. It should be called Article Club. There are some brothers in there who couldn't quite swing a book, so we just went, "You know what? Here's a blog post. Read that, and let's talk about it."

The purpose of Book Club is we wanted to create an environment where across the spiritual spectrum, we could have conversations not just about God but really about anything, right? It's a group of men who want to have conversation about life. It's not always Christian books. In fact, the first book we read was *A Season on the Brink*, if you have read that, about Bobby Knight. It was a sports book.

Everybody kind of gets to pick. The guy I'll talk about today picked the next book. It was a book about a mom hitman. I had to hide it in my house just because I was afraid one of my kids would find it because it was not subtle in its generous use of the f-word. I just felt like a teenager. "Put that

under there. Nobody will find it. I'm cool." Just nerves. "What are you doing in my room? Don't look under there."

I was especially looking forward to Book Club because one of the original members had moved away, and he is moving back to town, so he was in town Friday kind of looking at where he might live. Some of us were really looking forward to it. He's a guy who just makes it work. I don't know if you have a friend who brings out the best and, at times, the worst in everybody else, but he's that guy. When he's there, it works. When he's not, it doesn't work as well.

He asks good questions. He's not afraid to push. He's honest. Hear me. The thing your pastor values more than anything else is for you to not... Just don't be a liar, man. If you don't believe, go, "I don't believe." If you go, "I think that's bull," then just say it. I have such little patience for the... It just gets on my nerves. It's not true Christianity.

I found in this brother a more honest assessment and treatment of life than I've found in a lot of other circles. Book Club is grimy, man. I would never let my kids come, and I would never let my wife listen. He was going to be back, so we were geeked up about that. We showed up at Book Club, and we're discussing an article called "The Trouble with 'X.'" It's an article by C. S. Lewis, not one of his books, but just an article. You can probably read it in 10 to 15 minutes, a quick, easy read.

What the article is about doesn't have any bearing on the story, but this friend of mine starts to kind of share how the article struck him. What he told us really through tears... If you've been a Christian for long, vulnerability and authenticity should be, in some ways, normal to you to see a man be honest about where he is, where he struggles, where he's learning, to see a man tear up or maybe even give themselves over to crying. Those are normal Christian responses if we're living the way God would have us live, but it's a very strange thing for the world.

My friend began to share why he was moving back and what he learned. My friend moved to L.A. not to be on the silver screen but because he got a promotion and got more money, got more power, and he took it. We encouraged him not to. "Hey, don't do it. Stay. I think it's going to be better for you in the long run if you stay," but the allure of money and power and women is powerful. Amen? You said, "Amen," or you are a liar.

That allure, more money, more power, it called to him, and he went. It wasn't long after he got there that he just did what he has always done. He just succeeded. He has always done it, no matter where

he has been. He takes very good care of himself. He's a very hard worker. He did well. Yet, something began to gnaw on him, and he missed home.

Here's how he phrased that. It was stunning for me to just hear him talk through tears at our Book Club on Friday night. He said, "My whole life, I've just wondered. If I wasn't successful, if I wasn't all put together, if I didn't kind of show my strength, would anyone ever really love me? Would anyone ever really love me if I wasn't put together and strong and successful? If I wasn't winning, would anyone really love me? What I have here in Book Club is a group of men who love me regardless."

That led to great conversations about how, "Book Club is a really poor shadow for the love and mercy of God on your life, brother," so it turned into great... Now, we couldn't stay there. There are some grimy dudes in that Book Club. We could not stay that authentic for long, so it immediately turned to all sorts of inappropriate jokes that I won't even quasi-mention in here. You just had to break the realness with filthy jokes.

We made that turn, but we just kept coming back to, "No, no, no. What you're describing is a home for the heart, and we're all hungry to get home." We're all hungry to get home, and C. S. Lewis would argue this idea of there being a home for our hearts in *Mere Christianity* like this. "If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world."

Here's Lewis's argument. If money and power and success and sex and all of that does not provide our hearts with a home, peace, rest, then maybe we were designed for something greater than those things. That's Lewis's argument. Jesus is going to address this kind of yearning and desire for a home in John 14. To set it up, the disciples are all in on Jesus Christ, right? They've left businesses. They've left homes. They've left clear secession plans.

In this day, you became what your father was. If your father was a fisherman, you would take over his business. If your father was a carpenter, you would become a carpenter. Whatever. They left their fathers. They left those businesses, and they went all in on Jesus Christ. "We're going to follow you. You're the Messiah. We believe you're the Son of God." In their heads, they're thinking, "This is going to be the man who overthrows Roman dominion. He's going to establish the kingdom the Old Testament has promised us. We're banking our lives that this is the one."

All of a sudden, Jesus is starting to say, "I'm only going to be here a little bit longer, and then I'm going to leave you guys. I only have a little bit more time, and then I'm gone," and the disciples are freaking out. They're wrestling with doubt. They're confused. Jesus is addressing that in John 14, but it's Thomas's questions and Jesus' response to those questions that I want to spend our time on today. Let's look at this. John 14, starting in verse 1.

"Let not your hearts be troubled." I just want to stop there. If you're a guest and are like, "Oh my gosh. Six verses. You're going to get through one, and you're stopping?" You'll be fine. It'll pick up. I want to point out again the character of Jesus because his claims are so hard for us to believe. Here's how I know I'm not Jesus. Do you know how perturbed I would be right now that they're freaking out? I'm 48 hours from being slaughtered, and they're like, "What do you mean?"

I would be like, "You don't remember that Lazarus joint when I told that dead guy he wasn't allowed to be dead? Are you serious? Do you remember when I told the storm to stop storming? What are you nervous about? I'm about to die. I'm about to be crucified. I'm about to be slaughtered, and you're making this thing about you? Remember when we didn't have any food, and I took just a dude's lunch and fed everybody? You don't remember that stuff?"

I would be agitated, but that speaks more to my own heart, but not Jesus. Jesus is what? This is stunning. Despite the fact that he did such miracles... We would convince ourselves that if we ever saw him, we would never doubt, which is just a myth. They had seen him, and here they doubt. In the middle of their doubts, Jesus offers not rebuke but compassion. He is ministering to his disciples. He's trying to encourage his disciples as they doubt him.

"Let not your hearts be troubled." What's he after? **"Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going."**

I love Thomas's honesty in verse 5. **"Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?'"** If we take Thomas's questions... Poor Thomas. Every time he shows up in the Scriptures, he's like, "I don't believe you, Jesus." That's another argument. If you're a first century father and are going to doctor the Scriptures, aren't you going to take stuff like that out? Here's Jesus going, "You know the way," and Thomas is going, "No we don't. We don't know what you're talking about."

But it's there in the Bible. It gives me just comfort that it's so honest. Thomas is like, "Actually, we don't know where you're going. How could we possibly know? You're always speaking in riddles and stuff. We don't know what you're talking about, Jesus." If we could break it down, here's what Thomas is asking. "Where are you taking us. We've bet our lives on you. Where are you taking us?"

I think you could take his question there of, "We don't know where to go," as in this kind of bigger thing of what's happening, Thomas is asking the question, "Can you get us home? Can you take us home? Can you take us to that place where our souls are finally at rest? Can you get us home?" Jesus answers with a sentence. Let's look at it. **"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"**

There's my outline. It's not very creative, but will Jesus get us home? This call home, this desire to have our souls at rest, this desire to finally just be able to sit and breathe out. Can Jesus get us home? Well, Jesus' answer to that question is, "I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. No one gets home except through me." That's my outline. Let's just start it.

1. *Jesus is the way.* Jesus is the only Savior from the slavery to sin and death. Let me try to unpack this. The great chasm between you and home, between you and rest, between you and soul-level communion with your Creator is not more money, not a better job, not another town, not more success, not a better relationship, not a better... The great chasm that robs you from home is sin and death. That's what has separated us out. Now, unfortunately, we live in a day and age where there is no patience with that kind of language. Who is anyone to tell you what sin is?

Now, when you do that, you erode the very humanity out from under us. How do we explain what is wrong with us if we don't have this language? How do we explain what is good and what's bad if there is no good and bad but just what we decide? The real chasm, what separates you from home is sin and death, and Jesus is the way home. He bridges the chasm.

Earlier in this text, when he says, "I go to prepare a place for you," he's not talking about getting a hammer and heading up to heaven like Chipper Gaines and tricking out your apartment, right? That's not what's happening there. By the way, some of you are with me, and some of you don't know that reference at all. God bless you. Watch *ESPN* for me. In the middle of that, he's saying, "No, no, no. I'm going to bridge the chasm of sin and death. I go to prepare a place for you." This is John 14, 15, 16.

He's like, "I'm headed to the cross. I'm going to die on the cross. I'm going to be tortured and brutalized and hang on that cross, and I'm going to absorb all of God's wrath toward your sin, and I'm going to be the bridge upon you, walking across the chasm of sin and death. I'm going to make it so you're welcomed home." "I go to prepare a place for you," is not a reference to some glittery mansion for you in glory. It's being able to commune in that space that your soul was created to commune in. It's about getting you home. "I am the way." But he doesn't just stop there.

2. *Jesus is the truth.* Jesus is the way to God because he is the truth of God. He embodies the supreme revelation of God. If I could just simplify that, Jesus is God's gracious self-disclosure of himself. The apostle Paul would write this to the church at Colossae. In Colossians 1, he says that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Do you want to know what God is like? Look at Jesus.

What you see in Jesus is a type of stunning, scandalous, unexplainable mercy and grace. We already saw it even in his disciples. Jesus is at the cusp of being slaughtered. They're like, "What do you mean? I can't believe you're going to leave us." They haven't understood anything he has said, and Thomas even has the boldness to be like, "We don't know what you're talking about," yet Jesus says what? "Don't let your hearts be troubled."

Jesus with the woman at the well. An extremely promiscuous woman who he ministers to and encourages and speaks life into. The woman caught in adultery. How does he respond? The tax-collectors who are raising taxes from their countrymen to support an oppressive regime that is murdering and raping tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of Jews.

What does Jesus do? He goes into the homes of tax-collectors. He invites the tax-collectors in to be a part of his inner circle. What we learn about God in Jesus really trumps the way we think God thinks about us. Jesus being the truth... I want to spend some time here because I think it's a big deal because I think we fall prey to it all the time. The only true measure of righteousness is Jesus. Right? Let me unpack that. The only true measure of righteousness is Jesus.

A couple of weeks ago, I said this. I want to say it again. I used two names. I used the name Tom, and I used the name Shelly. We have five Shelly's who work at The Village. They're like, "Really, Chandler? Are you serious? That's a little passive aggressive, don't you think?" I'm like, "I have no beef with you. You work in finance. You work in HR. I have no beef."

Here's the way most of us feel righteous. Are you ready? We feel righteous by offering to God someone else's unrighteousness. Here's how we feel righteous. "Here you go, God. I'm not Shelly. Shelly is a two-faced, forked-tongued, wicked woman. There you go. I'm not her." That's how we view ourselves as being righteous, that we're not someone else.

The Bible is clear that that is filthy in the sight of God. Man-made righteousness of any kind is no righteousness at all. This is what the prophet Isaiah means when he says all of our righteous deeds are but filthy rags. I mean, I'm telling you. I would check your heart. Most of us feel righteous not because of Jesus but because we're holding up this offering to God that we're not someone else.

Listen to me. That's evil and wicked, and it will not get you home. It will not. The only standard of righteousness we have that is acceptable to God is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Now, let me tell you why that is such good news. Because Jesus, in his life, death, and resurrection, imputes that righteousness to those who would repent of their sins and believe upon his name.

That means that the perfection of Christ is granted to me so that when God sees me in Christ, he sees the perfect obedience of Christ. When Jesus says, "I am the truth," he's saying, "I'm the truth to get you home. I'm the righteousness to get you home. I am the way. I am the truth." Then he follows that up with, "I am the life."

3. *Jesus is the life.* Jesus is saying here that the deliverance he's bringing is not political or social but is physical and spiritual life. As Christians, we aren't to go, "Okay, I'm saved. Now, I'm waiting for heaven. That's not what we've been saved into. If that were God's ultimate plan, then when we got saved, we would just get sucked out of here. Right? If God's touchdown is you in heaven, then you would get saved, and you would be gone.

First of all, that would be freaky. Secondly, that's not what he's after. He has filled us with the Holy Spirit of God and uses us as heralds of this good news that there is a way home, that there is truth to be known, and there is real life, and it's this way. When Jesus says, "I am the life," he's talking about this space between.

Clearly, in the text above verse 6, he's talking about, "I'm going to come back and get you, and I'm going to get you because I died and was raised. I'm going to come back and get you, and then you're going to dwell with me forever, and there is plenty of room for you." That's his argument. Now, he's

saying, "In the space between, while you're still here, I am the life." There are two ways to think about that. I want to unpack both. There is the physical way, and there is the spiritual way.

I've said before that I always love it when science catches up to the Bible. I always enjoy that, when all of a sudden, science starts writing about things, and you're like, "Duh. Gosh. That's Genesis 5. You're just now catching on?" Commentaries come out. "We've just learned that taking one day off a week and really resting and unplugging is really good for the human condition." Huh. I've read that somewhere.

Right now, what we're finding is... We'll talk more about this here in a moment. If you don't believe in the righteousness of Christ, and you're trying to earn your own righteousness, here's what happens. You begin to have to pretend and project a false strength. You have no other choice but to do that. If you're not banking on Jesus' righteousness, you have to forge your own. There are two ways to do that. There is the offering of, "I'm not this guy," but then you still have to kind of work to be good, work to be acceptable.

When you're doing that, the slavery you give yourself over to is the kind where you always have to be put together. When you always have to be put together, you start to feel like you're a fraud. Watch how universal this is. How many of you, in your quieter moments, feel like you're going to get busted because you're a big fraud? How many of you would just raise your hand and go, "I feel like a fraud"? There are a lot of us who would go, "Look, I just feel like I'm a fake, and I'm going to get busted."

If you really dig on that, nobody really knows what that's about. "What do you mean? Like at work? At home? As a friend? With God? Where do you feel like a fraud?" We can't even dial in. "Yeah. I'm not a good parent, and I don't work as hard as they think I do, and I'm definitely not as godly as people think I am, and I..." What you do in that space is you just project that you're all together, and you project that you're strong, and you project that you don't fail.

You're the best parent in the world. Gram it. You project this image of your life being this real sterile, beautiful, enjoyable thing. Few things are as life-sucking as that. As my friend through his tears revealed Friday night, he was just... You could just look at... He had made a lot of money. He had a lot of power. He took very good care of himself physically. He did decently with the ladies.

Behind all of that is this low-grade insecurity of, "Oh my gosh. I hope I don't get found out." See, you become a slave to the lie of this projection, but if you believe in the righteousness of Christ that is not yours, then I'm just free to embrace being the failure that I am. If you've ever wondered why I can stand up here and go, "The first seven years of my marriage were a nightmare," and if you thought to yourself, "Oh my gosh. He said that. Pastors aren't supposed to... Pastors are supposed to have amazing marriages." Mine wasn't for seven years.

It has been incredible for the last eight, but the first seven were very, very difficult. If you ever wondered how I can talk about, "Man, I struggled with that. I doubt that." Do you know why? It's not my righteousness I'm trying to project to you. My righteousness is inadequate for you to get you home, but the righteousness of Christ gets us both there, so I don't need to be a hero to anyone. We have one. His name is Jesus, and he frees us up from having to project that we're all together when we now we're not.

Then you don't feel like a fraud anymore because I'm telling you. Oftentimes, when I get really crazy emails just blasting me for something, I will oftentimes just send back, "Oh, I'm far worse than that. Really? That's all you have? You weren't even paying attention. I've said far worse than that. I've been to far worse... I am far more of a sellout than that. You're not even paying attention to me if that's your only complaint about me."

What helps me do that? I would be a liar if I said, "I don't want to be liked." That's absurd. No, it's that I'm banking on the righteousness of Christ and no righteousness of my own. What happens is when you're projecting, physically, that takes a toll on you. Stress physically affects you. The Bible says that those who fear the Lord sleep well at night. The psalmist will also say, "When I kept quiet about my sins, when I projected, when I wouldn't admit I was stuck and jammed up, my bones wasted away inside of me."

There is a physical toll that bears its weight on the body when all of our energy and vitality is spent projecting an image that isn't reality. Jesus frees us from that. That's what he means when he says, "I am the life." Then on top of that... I've been like a broken record on this for 13 years. All of the commands of God in the Scriptures, all of the "thou shalt" statements and all of the "thou shall" statements are about leading you into the deepest life possible.

In Psalm 16, the psalmist said, "The boundaries have fallen for us in pleasant places." Here's what the psalmist was getting at. The law of God leads us into safe places. You'll love this. We probably

don't have time for it, but I'm going for it. Last night, at the 5:00 service here, there was a 3-year-old girl who sat right there in that chair. She was between her mom and dad, and they were just like putting their hand over her mouth. She was with me.

I like it with people talk while I'm preaching because I think I'm doing well, and it's just like... You know? I used sex as an example, and I said, "Who knows how sex works better than God?" and that 3-year-old little girl goes, "Me!" I go, "No you don't. Anyway..." Her poor mortified parents. It was awesome. I don't know what else the Lord did last night, but that was a real gift to me in that moment, to see the terror of her parents and the boldness of her to scream out, "Me!" at exactly that moment.

When God says, "This way. Do this. Don't do this." Look right at me. He's not trying to take anything from you ever. He's trying to lead you into life as he designed it to be. It would not serve the purposes of God for you to live a life of begrudging submission where you're afraid he's going to blow you up or give you cancer if you don't do what he says.

Again, this is another one of those areas where sociology and psychology and science is catching up to what the Bible has been saying all along. Honestly, sex is better when you're in a monogamous relationship, when you have true value for the other person's soul. We're like, "Yeah, it does." That's Christian virtue straight from the Scriptures. God has designed it to work a specific way, and when we give ourselves to that, it works really beautifully.

Who knows money better than the Creator of it? Who knows relationships better than the Creator of it? Who knows... On and on I could go. Here's the Word of God going, "This way to life." We're just like, "I don't think so." It's the last statement here that really causes a lot of problems for people. You have, "Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life." He's leading us home. Then you have this crazy statement.

4. *No one gets home except through Jesus.* If you haven't been a Christian or you haven't been around Christians a lot, maybe in this moment, you're thinking, "Brother, you can't be serious. This is 2016, man. You're still thinking in kind of that back woods, 'There's no other way of Jesus.' Surely you don't believe that. I just can't believe that a guy in 2016 would boldly preach something so absurd in a church this large. Are you really telling me that over half of the world's population isn't ever going to get home?" Yeah. I believe that.

Let me try to explain why I believe that, because I think if I can lay my case before you, you would see why we would believe that. The world's major religions are all built on the antithesis of what the Christian religion is built out of. Here's what I mean by that. At the center of most of the world's religions is what is called moralistic deism. Be good enough to be accepted by this God. Here is the list of things that if I do these things, this God will accept me.

That's Islam. That's Judaism. "If you'll just do these things, then God will accept you in." What does that do? That forces us back to self-righteousness. It forces us to try to forge a righteousness of our own. When you do that, you have no choice but to live a duplicitous life. Let me give you a stunning example. The radical Muslims who flew the plane into the towers on 9/11, do you know what they did on 9/10? They stayed in hotels in Boston and in New York. Do you know what they did that night? They rented pornography.

The receipts from those hotel rooms... Here are the most radicalized Muslims imaginable who are so dedicated to earn the approval of their God that they're going to kill thousands of people the next day, and they spend their last night on earth ordering expensive meals and watching porn in seedy hotel rooms. Do you see the duplicity there?

When the Navy SEALs crashed into Osama's compound and they pulled all of the computers, do you know what was littered throughout? Some of the most vile, disgusting pornography imaginable. Do you see the disjoint? "Let me project radical dedication." What's in the background? Seedy wickedness. Look at me. I love you enough to say you're terrible at being good. You just are. You're terrible at it.

The way we usually play this game if you're a guest is we play the Ten Commandments pop quiz. Here's what I mean by that. Don't start stressing right now. I saw some of you go, "The Ten Commandments. If he calls on me, I'm going to nail it." I'm not going to ask you to list them, but I will just say this. When I was a kindergartener, 5 years old, in the Bay Area, the Ten Commandments hung on the wall in my school.

That means that they thought in a Bay Area that they thought a 5-year-old would get these things. So let's just all agree that they're not complex ethics. They're not like, "I don't know." It's just straightforward morality. Let's take the quiz real quick. Do you love things with more dedication and more fervor than you love God? You don't have to answer. I know it. Yes, you do. So do I. Are

you guilty of taking the Lord's name in vain? That has nothing to do with cussing. I think that was (37:00) by parents a long time ago.

That means that we would treat the name of God lightly. Maybe that can fit in that category, but it's more like indifference toward God, a lack of reverence for God. That's absolutely true about every one of us. Look. I know you're not a liar. You just lie sometimes. It's cool. You're not a liar. Just every once in a while, you lie. You haven't committed adultery, maybe, but your hearts are filled with lust. You maybe haven't murdered anybody, but your heart is filled with anger.

You, at times, get really frustrated when good things happen to people who you don't think good things should happen to, and you love it when bad things happen to people who you think deserve them. That's called coveting. That puts you in the position of God to judge others. We could just keep going. My point is you make a zero. God is not into the self-esteem move. He's not going to let you take it again next week with open notes this time.

You are going to over and over and over again fail this test. Here's why. The Ten Commandments were not given to you because you were going to be able to obey them but to show you at the very base level that you would never be able to. The reason here Jesus can say that moralistic deism cannot get you home is because the human heart cannot rest in any righteousness other than an alien righteousness that is better than its own.

I get to rest when Jesus pays my bill, and I don't owe. I get to rest. If you think that means we don't strive for holiness, you're not hearing that right. The Spirit of God, when he invades this space, begins to compel us toward obedience. In fact, the objective evidence of being born again is a desire to be obedient imperfectly executed. I haven't met a brother yet who would try to argue that he's perfectly executing obedience to God.

We don't perfectly. Christ perfectly. That's why he's the way, the truth, and the life. That would be the first issue people have with this statement, but I'm telling you that moralistic deism will never get you home. The second thing we're going to have to really be careful of is we live in a place and a time in which radical individualism rules the day.

Now, I'm not against individualism. In fact, it finds its roots (you can dig around in this) in a Christian understanding of the world. Before Christianity kind made its way through Europe and the Renaissance popped up, you'll notice that works of art didn't have faces. The faces just wouldn't

be there, but it was the understanding that all men and women have been made in the image of God and therefore have value and worth that really started to change how people saw one another and how people saw the world, and individualism was born.

But individualism left unchecked by the truth of God's Word turns absurd. Here's how I defined it in my notes. Individualism is to prioritize the desires of self over all else (then I added this), including reality. Let me read that again. Individualism is to prioritize the desires of self over all else, including reality. Let me try to explain what I mean by that.

Individualism is, "Nobody tells me. I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. I'll decide what's right for me. I know how to get myself home. I'll pull myself up by my bootstraps. I'll be the best." When you radicalize individualism, and it starts to fall downstream, you no longer have any category for mental illness because everything is just personal decision, personal choice, self-identity.

Yesterday, Lauren and I were drinking a cup of coffee in our front room, and we were just talking. I was talking through my sermon. We started to discuss this article. How many of you are familiar with South by Southwest? South by Southwest is down in Austin, if you ever get a chance to go, it's great music. There are all of these kind of forums on culture and life and technology. It's a really cool place in a really cool town. If you ever get an opportunity, I would encourage you to go.

At South by Southwest this week, there is this forum for a group of people who identify themselves as trans-humans. Here's what they mean by that. They believe that they, to be all they're meant to be, need to be cyborgs. Here's what they're doing. They're literally having parts of their body taken out and replaced by mechanical, robotic machines because they believe that their identity is that they're cyborgs, and they'll never be happy until they're cyborgs.

As graciously as I can say it, that's a mental illness. If you're in here, and you feel the pull toward trans-human, I don't want to make you feel uncomfortable, but I'm telling you that's a mental illness, but we live in the absurdity of our day where the individual self rules all decisions, so we can't even say, "That's crazy," because then what are we? We're the most unforgivable sin in our age, intolerant.

We can't go, "No, no, no, bro. You're trying to become a robot." "You're a bigot." "No. I love you. You can come to my house with your robot arm and have dinner with me. I'm saying you need to get some help. You're broken." Right? But we can't say that. Even some of you right now are

uncomfortable. "Well, maybe they are supposed to be robots. Who am I to say?" This is what happens.

Again, the sciences are catching up to the Bible. This is from a psychologist named Martin Seligman. I have no idea if he's a Christian or not. This book is about optimism. It's not even about... It's not a Christian book. It was written about the power of optimism on our neurology, how optimism affects our brains and wires our brains. Here's what he says.

"Events have occurred that so weakened our commitment to larger entities, things like God, as to leave us almost naked before the ordinary assaults of life. Where can one now turn for identity, for purpose, and for hope? When we need spiritual furniture, we look around and see that all of the comfortable leather sofas and stuffed chairs have been removed, and all that is left to sit on is a small, frail, folding chair, the self."

You take God out of the equation. You take the spiritual life out of the equation, and we no longer have the capacity to define our realities. Who are we? What is life about? What am I to do with suffering? Suffering is real. What am I to do with that? How am I to think about that? How am I to interact in relationships?

Well, in individualism, the rule is just, "You make the rules," but it can't get us there. It can't get us home. When Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father but by me," this is not a pronouncement of judgment on over half of the world. This is an invitation to half of the world to come home. Think about it. If you're stuck in this, if you're stuck in a type of, "I have to earn. I have to make it right. I have to work my way there," and Jesus says, "No, no, no. That's not the way. This is the way," that's not judgment. That's an invitation home.

It's not cruel; it's loving. It's not bigoted; it's gracious. "This way home." Individualism will not get you there. You will not be able to get yourself home. Can you make more money than you do now? Absolutely. Look right at me for a second. More of what you already have that is not making you content is not going to make you content. You see that even that is brain broke. "More of what I currently have that is not making me satisfied is not going to make me satisfied."

Brother, you're on a treadmill, running and running and going nowhere. "I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. You're not getting home except by me, except through me." Thomas à Kempis was a catholic mystic back in the 1300s or 1400s. I'm not a big mystic guy, but I do think they write

in a way that is more poetic, more beautiful than say kind of the linear thinking that really is kind of new in human history.

Thomas à Kempis wrote this about this text. "Follow thou me. I am the way, the truth, and the life. Without the way, there is no going. Without the truth, there is no knowing. Without the life, there is no living. I am the way which thou must follow, the truth which thou must believe, the life for which thou must hope. I am the inviolable way, the infallible truth, the never-ending life. I am the straightest way, the sovereign truth, life true, life blessed, life uncreated."

I'll just end with this. Jesus tells this parable in Luke 15. I think it's one of the more stunning stories in all of the Bible. If you have a church background, you know the parable as the parable of the prodigal son. The Bible tells us that the younger son of a wealthy father wished his father was dead so he could just go ahead and take his inheritance, so he takes his inheritance.

According to the Bible, he devours his father's property with drunkenness and prostitutes. That's what the Bible says he does. He devours the father's property, the father's good name with drunkenness and prostitutes. We find the prodigal son near the end of blowing his inheritance in a pigsty, wallowing in the sty with the pigs and fighting the pigs for food.

This guy who is immensely wealthy, heir to the kingdom of promise, now finds himself rolling around with pigs and fighting them for pig slop. Pigs are filthy creatures. They enjoy, need to roll around in mud and their own excrement. Here's this Jew who, by the way, not good with pork, finds himself in the pigs, fighting them off for what they eat.

The Bible says he comes to his senses, and he thinks to himself, "Even my father's servants live better than this. Maybe I'll go home, and he'll accept me as a servant. He certainly won't have me back as his Son." The prodigal son gets out of the pigsty. He starts walking home. His head is down. he's covered. I just can't imagine what he smells like, what he looks like. He's just covered in pig excrement and mud and filth.

He's rehearsing the speech in his mind. "I am unworthy to be your son, but if you would just let me be one of your servants..." If you ever got busted growing up, and you were heading home and knew your dad was waiting up, you did the same thing, right? You practiced a speech. "Well, I know I said we were going to Tim's. We got to Tim's, and his dad wasn't home. I know you don't like it

when I go to places and parents aren't home. So instead we went to the Kappa Alpha Delta. We went to a party there because there is a frat dad there, Dad."

You're kind of practicing this speech to lay on your pops when you get home in the hopes that he won't handle you. This is what this kid is doing. "I can't be your son anymore. I've just broken the right to be your son. Maybe you'll just let me be your servant. Maybe you'll just let me work here." The Bible says that the father sees his son coming on the horizon and runs to him. The father runs.

The son starts his speech, "I'm not..." and the dad won't listen to him. He grabs him and hugs him just in the middle of all of this filth. He doesn't go, "Clean yourself up, and let's talk in my office." That's not what he said. He grabbed him covered in pig dung and urine and mud, and he kissed his face. At 41 with a 13-year-old, 10-year-old, and 6-year-old, if my kid has the sniffles, I don't kiss their face. I kiss their head. "Uh-uh. You're not getting me. I'm not going out like that." Right? I'm not doing it.

But this father kissed the filthy, grotesque face of his absurdly rebellious son. Then he grabbed a ring, and he threw the ring on his finger. The ring was like, "All that is mine is yours. You carry our seal. You're mine, son." Then he commands the servants to kill the fatted calf, and he orders live music. He's like, "Man, you put that iPhone up. We're doing live music tonight." Then they throw this epic party, Christians. An epic party.

The music is so loud that the servants heard it in the field. The older brother heard it in the field. "What is going on up at the house?" "This brother who was lost is now found." You get this celebration of this idiot kid coming home. Let me lay this before you. Some of you are in here, and you're prodigals, man. You grew up in church. Mom and Dad used to dress you up in uncomfortable clothes and drag you here, drag you to church, stick you in Sunday School. You don't want to be here.

Maybe at a youth camp or something like that, you were like, "Yeah!" In a fit of emotion, you gave your life to the Lord. Then something happened, and you ran. Listen. This sermon series has been planned for months. It's not ironic that you're here today. It's sovereign. It's your Father bidding you to come home and that the paddle is not waiting for you.

If you find in yourself a restlessness, a weariness of yourself, an exhaustion from kind of fronting, that you're all-together and so well put together and so successful, if you're finally tired enough of

that, I just want to lay before you God's invitation to come home. A better version of you will not solve that angst in your soul. More religious activity will not solve that angst in your soul. Moralistic deism will not solve that angst in your soul. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one gets home without him. That's not arrogant. It's gracious. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for the opportunity just to hang out today together, to open up your Word and let your Word wash over us. I pray that more than we read it, it read us. I pray for my friends in here who are prodigals, who at one point affirmed that they loved the Lord, and things have happened, and they found themselves running from the Lord.

I just pray today that they would hear your mercy and being here on this day and that they would come home. For those who are weary, I pray that in your grace, you would awaken them to their weariness, and they would find their hearts longing for home in a real way. Be gracious to us even now. Help us. We need you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.