



## Advent (Part 4) – Magnify

Matt Chandler – December 23, 2018

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[Video]

Hi, Pastor Matt here. Thank you so much for either streaming or downloading this sermon. I pray that every week you're challenged by the Word of God, you're built up in his love, and the Word of God kind of gets in you and rearranges things and draws your affections up to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

I want to remind you, as always, that although I'm so glad you want to hear what I have to say this week, or *we* have to say this week, this is never meant to substitute God's good plan for you to be in a community of faith where the Word of God is preached and proclaimed. I want to encourage you to use this like a vitamin, not like a meal, so that you belong to a community of faith where you're being shaped by being known, by using your gifts, by receiving the Word, by partaking in the sacraments, and by walking faithfully in accordance with the Scriptures.

Then this is something you're listening to while you run or you're watching when you have a few minutes. I just want to make sure we frame what this is and what it should not be. With that said, one of the things The Village Church wants to do is to give away the things that are created here by the grace of God. That's podcasts and vodcasts. That's family discipleship curriculum. That's Bible study curriculum. What we've tried to do for over a decade is to give away whatever we create here. To do that, though, we rely on the donations and generosity of those who believe in what we're doing and who have benefited from the things that have been created here.

So before you dive into what I'm sure is going to be a 45- to 50-minute sermon, I just wanted to encourage you. If you have grown, if you have benefited from our resources, would you consider being a part of the team that helps this engine continue to produce and create biblical, creative, and practical discipleship curriculum for men and women of all ages and all stations? If you'd pray

about that and consider that, that would be amazing. Thank you so much. Enjoy the Word of God proclaimed.

[End of video]

Good afternoon. It's good to see you. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in Luke, chapter 1. While you're turning there, I had one of those "I'm glad I live in 2018" moments yesterday. My wife was wrapping, because I am not allowed to do that. She said, "Hey, did you get that deal for Reid?" I was like, "Well, *you* were getting that deal for Reid." You could just feel the tension there.

Then she picked up her phone and ordered it on Amazon, and then we went to a high school football game and got back and it was on our front porch. I was like, "It is a different day." My head has kind of been spinning since that happened. It's just a good time to be alive...maybe...on that front. It was for me yesterday.

Last week, we looked at the angels of the Lord exploding in the sky in front of the shepherds, delivering good news of great joy...not great news of good joy but good news of great joy...for all peoples. We talked about how what we're seeing there is not only kingdom economics, that the way God does things is different than the way *we* do things, but we also saw a theology of breakthrough. In given times and given places, the Holy Spirit of God might just show up and do something miraculous and mighty out of nowhere in an instant.

What I want to do today... Here we are at the precipice of celebrating Christmas morning. I want to orient our hopes around the Godness of God and the frailty of what it is to be human. That might sound counterintuitive for a Christmas message. "Wait. Right before Christmas you want to talk about the Godness of God and the weakness of humanity?" I'm saying, "Yes," because I don't think there's better news in the universe.

If I could distill this sermon into a sentence (which is not going to save you from the sermon), it would be this: *the coming of Jesus pulls us out of our own prideful imaginations and into the freedom of not being our own god.* So that's where I'm going. The coming of Jesus ultimately pulls us out of our prideful imaginations and into the freedom of not being our own god. With that said, let me tell you about the text we're going to be in.

The passage we're in today is called Mary's *Magnificat*. This is a song of praise Mary sings after Gabriel shows up and lets her know she will be the mother of the Messiah. If you know the story, an angel of the Lord appears to Zechariah and says, "Hey, I know you're old. I know your wife is old. You're going to have the front-runner to the Messiah." Zechariah is like, "That's impossible. What do you know, angel?" Which seems like kind of a cocky position to take with an angel of the Lord.

So he is muted and told, "Hey, you write 'John' on a board or something and tell your bride to call him John." So that's how it plays out. Then Gabriel himself... We don't know the name of the angel who shows up to Zechariah and Elizabeth, but we know it's Gabriel who shows up and lets Mary know the Messiah will come through her. So she runs to Elizabeth. Apparently they're tight. She's like, "Oh my gosh! You're not going to believe this." (This is a paraphrase. You probably won't read this word for word in the Bible like this.)

She shows up and says "Hello" to Elizabeth, and John the Baptist leaps in the womb of Elizabeth when he hears Mary's voice. So those two ladies hang out together for, according to the text, three months and just marvel at what God is up to in their day. It's in that context we read Mary's song. We're going to pick it up in verse 46, and we're going to read all the way through verse 56.

**"And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.**

**He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."**

There's a juxtaposition taking place in this song that leads me to the sentence I stated above. You have this juxtaposition of how God is interacting with the humble and how God is interacting with the proud. What you have on display in Mary's song... After hearing from Gabriel that Christ was coming and was coming through *her*, you have this song that's drawing a line between the approach of God toward those who are humble in heart and those who are proud in heart.

What I want to do is kind of tease this out, but I think it's important that we're saying the same thing when we use terms. As far as this text goes, when Mary is talking about being low of heart or of humble estate, of walking in humility, you could divine it like this: *humility* is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God's holiness and our sinfulness. When Mary is talking about being lowly, when she's talking about being humble, she's not saying you're walking in a humility because you're looking around and other people are just more talented than you.

It's not like, "Oh man, I'm not..." That's a faux humility. "I'm just not as good as *that* guy is. I wish I could mom like *that* lady moms. I wish I could sell like *that* guy sells. I wish I could run a company like *she* runs a company. I wish I could deliver on that like *that* guy." That's not what's taking place here. When she's talking about humility, she's talking about seeing ourselves rightly in light of the power, magnificence, and might of the God of the Bible.

That's what it means to walk in humility: to understand where I fall short and where he does not and then live in the confidence of that; that he is able and I am not able, that he knows and I don't know, that he is there and I can only be where I am. That's what humility is: a glad recognition that he is greater than I am, wiser than I am, more glorious than I am, more powerful than I am, more gracious than I'll ever be. That's legitimate, genuine humility.

Here's what she says about that kind of humility. Starting in verse 50, we read this, and it's pretty simple: **"And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation."** You see here that God has mercy on those who fear him. Now, it's important that we understand what we're talking about when we say *fear*. This is not the fear of, "Oh my gosh! God saw me sin, so he's going to light me up with a lightning bolt. He just can't wait to give me cancer or destroy my life. I just know at any moment he's going to pounce on me and rip me to shreds."

That's not what's taking place here. He's extending mercy to those who need it. When the word *fear* is used of the Lord, it almost could always be translated *awe*, that we're in awe of something. We feel small. To fear the Lord is to feel small in the grandeur of the God of the Bible. I've said this for years. I've used these same illustrations for like 16 years. There's something in our hearts that feels right when we feel small.

I'll give my example, the same one as always. No one stands at the precipice of the Grand Canyon and drinks all that in and is like, "I am the most beautiful woman alive. I have a PhD in rhetoric.

Behold my greatness!" No, you feel fear, awe. You feel small. Here's what's crazy. This is kingdom economics. It feels good to feel small. That's why we keep going back.

In a day and age where everything is like, "Be enough. You're enough. Go get it," it's when we feel small and powerless that we feel most alive. Why do you think we keep going to the mountains? Why are we drawn to the oceans? I'm not talking about the Gulf of Mexico. By definition that's gulf. It's the *Gulf* of Mexico. It is not the Pacific. It's not the Atlantic. It's not that it's not powerful; it's just it is not as powerful *as*. You stand in front of the roaring Pacific Ocean and you'll think twice about letting your kids piddle in there. I'm just being straight.

Years ago, Lauren and I were teaching on the Big Island, which a man lovingly told me isn't real Hawaii, so thank you. They were flying the Hawaiian flag there, so what do I know? But we went to the beach, and it was during November. The Vans Triple Crown of Surfing was going on on the North Shore. It was the first time I was like, "Nuh-uh. No."

There was a lifeguard, and you could just tell who the tourists were. This family came up with beach chairs and their kids. That dude announced over the speaker, "If you have kids at this beach, you are not a good parent." I appreciate that kind of brazen honesty. You're looking at something that could take your life with no regrets, no fears. It's just powerful, so powerful you feel tiny, so massive you feel small, and there's something in that our hearts like, our spirits feel good in.

The Grand Canyon is just a giant hole in the ground, but millions of people every year just go stand and look. "It's a giant hole in the ground. This is incredible!" Why? Because it feels good to be small, because despite our best efforts at being big, we're not. We're not. Where we fear the Lord... We realize we're small. We realize we can't fix it, we can't make it, we can't control it, we can't do it, and we see that he *can*. Mercy is lavished on those who fear him.

It's not the only thing that's going on in this text. In verse 52 she says he exalts those of humble estate. She's certainly talking about herself, but one of my favorite parts of reading and studying the Bible is how consistently God chooses the one nobody would choose. He chooses the afterthoughts and makes them great. Then you and I in 2018, again, looking through the cross, through the resurrection, through the incarnation, see these men and women and are like, "They're giants," but they weren't giants when God grabbed them. They were afterthoughts. Let me give you a couple of examples.

I love the fact that Jesse forgot that David was his son and was there. Have you read that story? Samuel, the prophet of Israel, not a higher office... Do you know who chooses the king? God. Do you know who tells the king they're the king? Samuel. So the prophet is coming to Jesse's house, and Jesse knows why. "Gather your sons. I'm coming." Samuel gets there, and he's like, "No. No. No. No. No. Hey, man, do you have any more sons?" "Oh my gosh! Yes. Ah!"

You don't think David needed to work through some stuff on his inventory? His dad just forgot he was there. Now you and I are like, "Oh, he killed a lion. He slaughtered a bear with his hands. He killed Goliath." No, he was an afterthought to his own daddy. But this is what God does. "Give me the afterthought. Bring him in."

What about Moses? Who finds the 80-year-old to lead the revolution? Let me answer that for you: no one. "He still has a spring in his step." No one. You're like, "Hey, for the next 40 to 50 years we're going to get after this. Find the 80-year-old." No one but God. Why? Because God is far more interested in his glory and his Godness than he is in the strength of men. This is what you see happening. Over and over and over again, you see this happen. Even when it comes time for Christ to be born, it's like God is trying to sabotage himself.

Everybody involved in this story is disreputable. Have you ever thought about it? Everyone in this story is disreputable. "I'm going to reveal this to the shepherds." The shepherds run into town. They're like, "You're not going to believe this. Angels showed up everywhere. Christ has come. The Messiah is finally here." Maybe one guy believes them, and he runs and tries to tell his crew. "Hey, man, you're not going to believe this. The Messiah has come. Christ is here. Only a matter of time."

"Where did you hear that, man?"

"The shepherds."

"Oh, all right. The shepherds. Maybe they stumbled into some devil's lettuce or something. How do you know those brothers weren't in some peyote out on the range? Are you going to trust...? They're thieves. They're liars."

Then you go, and who is it? It's Mary. "Wait. Isn't Mary the one who got pregnant before she was married to Joseph? And what kind of weakling is Joseph?" Everybody involved in this story, it seems, is built to sabotage the story, yet we're in Dallas worshiping Jesus. Why? Because God is

interested in his glory, in flexing his might in such a way that you and I can realize it's not our strength, might, and power that makes the kingdom of God move forward; it is *his* grace, *his* power, *his* might, and his picking the weak and wounded and broken to show his power off. This is how God interacts with those of humble estate: he exalts them.

Lastly, verse 53: "**...he has filled the hungry with good things...**" What Mary is saying here Jesus repeats, in a way, in the Sermon on the Mount. "**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**" I want to help, because I think the day and age in which you and I are living is training us that everything we want we should get right now. We want it to happen fast, and we want it to work now, and we want everything instantaneously.

There's something about hungering and thirsting that is glorifying and sanctifying in and of itself. I've thought a lot about that. So if you're in that season of your life where you're like, "Man, I want to walk in greater victory over this struggle. I want to follow Jesus more passionately. I want to surrender more completely. I want to dive in and grow more..."

That angst, even if that angst feels unfulfilled in this season, is an objective evidence that the Holy Spirit of God is at work in your heart, and it's cause for rejoicing. The angst to want him, to want to follow him, to want to love him more deeply, to want to surrender more fully is being wrought by the Holy Spirit who dwells inside of you and is cause for rejoicing.

So don't let the angst and desire to be farther along than you are rob you of the joy of today. Did you hear me? *Don't let the desire to be farther along than you are rob you from joy today.* Where you are in this current moment is not a surprise to God, and God is not regretting the cross, your salvation, and his sanctifying plan for your life. "**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**"

Now the other side of this is the pride. This is all how God responds to the lowly, how God responds to those who walk in humility, to those who fear him, who understand their smallness in regard to his grandeur, and then there's this back side here about pride and how God interacts with the proud. So let's define proud. *Pride* is when sinful humans aspire the position and status of God and refuse to acknowledge their dependence on him.

I put that sentence here, but here it is simplified: pride is what happens when you think you're a better god than God is. Here's what's crazy. In 20 years of pastoring, no one has ever said to me that

they believe they're God. I've hit some pretty crazy meetings, and no one has ever said to me, "That's me. I am he." No one has done that, but countless of us *live* that way. Anytime you see clearly what the Word of God says but think it doesn't apply to you, you think you're God.

Anytime you think you know what's best for you and everybody around you, you're playing God. You ascend to the throne of your own heart, and you rule like a sovereign, despite the fact that you're ignorant. I'm not trying to offend you. I'm saying literally you don't know. You're ignorant. What's going on at your house right now? "Let me get my phone and check my Ring thing." Okay, but if you saw something, what could you do about it? Nothing. Do you know why? Because you're here and not there. Do you know who's both places right now? Yep. Not you.

I could go on and on and on here. When you assume the role of God in your life, you enslave yourself to anxiety, fear, anger, and on and on and on I could go. Trying to control the people around you as if if they would just do what you say you would be happy and full is a sure way to destroy everything you're really hoping to walk in.

I think all of us find ourselves moving in this direction. Just so that you might be encouraged, have you ever had a friend or a family member or somebody like that and were like, "Gosh, if they would just do what I'm telling them to do they would be happier and I would be happier and everything would be better"? Anybody? You either have your hand up right now or you're a liar. This is what we do. "I wish people would just..."

Not only that. We think that of our own lives. "I'm going to beat this. I'm going to get this. I'm going to control this." The Bible is lovingly like, "Hey, man, you are in a dream world. You are in an imaginary dream world. Gosh, you can't even take care of yourself, much less anybody else." Isn't it weird that with our best efforts we continually find ourselves falling short, yet we think we can manage others? It's odd. It's evil.

He says, "You want to be God? Great. You live like you're God? You're living in an imaginary world. You are outside of reality." Then in his mercy you get this next line. Look at verse 52. "**...he has brought down the mighty from their thrones...**" God has a way of reminding us that we are not God and we are not in control. I don't want to give anybody a panic attack, but I want to give examples.

It is a good, wise thing to steward your physical body. It just is. You should eat somewhat healthy. You should still feast. The Bible is clear about that. You *will* feast. You *will* have festivals. You *will* party. That literally is in the Bible. We're so blind to it. If you think about the big festivals today and the celebrations they are, that's what God's people used to do. They'd get together for four or five days and just worship and dance and eat and laugh, and it was a festival unto the Lord. God is serious about those things in the lives of his people. He's serious about them.

It's a wise thing to steward your body, but you don't control your body at the cellular level. Eat all the spinach you want. Do all the hot yoga you want. Drink all the blueberry smoothies you want. Live long enough and you're going to get sick. Live long enough...*badly* sick. Again, I'm not trying to create anxiety in here today. I'm just trying to remind you of just how small you are. The great theologian Sting said how fragile we are. We're far more fragile than we think we are.

I'll give some other examples of places where I find a compulsion to control but have to remind myself it's in vain. I deeply and desperately want my children to love Jesus. Not just to go to church, not to just be moral kids. I want them to love Jesus. To be a part of a church when they grow up but to be half-hearted toward Jesus to me is no victory.

I want them to love him, and I can't do anything about that other than pray, point to him, and try as best I can to live a life that is an example of desperation on him and a life of ongoing repentance and extending the same grace he extends to me to them. I want that. I can't do anything about that. The impulse for me (I'm sure not for anybody else) is to try to control and manage that, and I have some significant control. I could lock things down. Amen?

Lock that thing down. Put a little tracking device on their soon-to-be cars and know where they are and how fast they're going and shut down the car from the house. I can do all that. I can control where she goes to some extent. I can control what she's doing to some extent, but none of that gives her a heart that loves Jesus. Now is there some wisdom in expectations and rules? Yes. Yes, yes, yes. Is there wisdom in discipline coming off of those rules being scoffed at? Hallelujah, yes. But will any of that ignite a fire in my daughters' hearts or in my son's heart? No. The best I can do is put kindling around their heart and pray.

God bless firstborns. Parents are always just figuring it out on the first kid. You don't even know. You're like, "I'm going to try that and see what happens." The next two kids... They're like, "That was awesome. Where did you learn that?" "Oh, your sister who's in the fetal position in the corner..."

We tried it on her and it went badly, so we said next kid we're not going to do that." The baby gets the most sanctified version of Mom and Dad, all of the lessons learned on the first one or the first couple. Baby excels, maybe, and then there's all this trauma in the first two. So if you're a firstborn, God bless you. He loves you. You're doing awesome. The deck was stacked.

I could keep going here, but I'm on a clock. We can't do these things we want to do. That hasn't stopped us from trying to control, and the more we try to control the more we sabotage our own joy. It is always our choice to worry, control, manipulate, and contrive or to surrender. You can feel it well up in you. There are places where primal impulses fire in me, specifically around my kids, around my wife, and some other areas. These primal impulses. It kind of touches those tender spots where the fight or flight mechanism fires. I don't have a lot of flight in me.

So in that moment, in that space, will I go, "You know what? I cannot make this happen. What I can do is what's right and good, as you've revealed in your Word, and then lay it down in front of you and ask you to do what I know I can't." Over and over and over again in your life the Lord will knock you off the throne of your heart if you keep ascending up there. I'm 20-something years into following him, and I'll catch myself ascending back up there over and over and over again, which makes me so grateful for his grace.

How many times am I going to get up there and try to run things in my ignorance until he gets weary of me? The good news of the gospel is he won't. When these things happen, you'll either armor up or you'll surrender. You'll armor up, you'll double down, you'll take control, you'll take your human power, and you'll push it away from where it was meant to thrive under the weight of your humanity instead of under the likeness of God's grace and power.

You'll exhaust yourself. You'll grow weary. You'll lose your hair. You won't sleep well. You'll get really angry and wrestle with anxiety in a way that if you'll just be like, "I can't do anything about this. I'm going to try to trust you. I'm struggling to trust you," which is a great prayer... It's not always, "I trust you, Lord."

Sometimes you're like, "I trust you." Let it go. "I said I'd trust you." Let it go. "Okay, I trust you." That wrestle is still a good wrestle. "Help me let go of this." I've been there. "Help me let go. I'm trying. I know I should. I don't know that I want to, though. Help me." Those are honest prayers. God never gets frustrated with honest prayers.

The last thing he says here concerning the proud is in verse 53: "**...the rich he has sent away empty.**" Here's where you have kingdom economics at play again. Are you hungry? Are you poor? Are you empty? You get to be full. Are you rich? Are you full? Are you in no need of anything? You get to be empty. No one would guess that, yet that's a spiritual reality at the deepest possible level.

I think it's important if you are a believer to know your Bible. Two books in particular that are going to serve you well are found in the Wisdom Literature: Job and Ecclesiastes. Let me explain why. Job loses everything and finds out God is enough, and Solomon *gains* everything and finds it to be vanity, worthless, useless next to knowing God. Those two books are important because you are in the middle of them.

Here's my guess. My guess is not that you've lost everything you know and love in a week, even your health, and you're trying to figure out a way forward. My guess is also that you're not a "kajillionaire" and could have whatever you want whenever you want it with no rules applying to you. My guess is you're somewhere in the middle, probably shaded to the left, if I was honest. You have struggled some, have suffered some. You're a long way from being a kajillionaire, if that's even a real number. Stuck in this space.

It's important that you know those two things because you're in the middle. If you're not careful, you'll resent your past and think that financial security and wealth will somehow fix it, yet you only need to watch one of those specials on what happens to people who win the lottery or into the lives of billionaires once you move past their homes and jets to let you know the rich will go away empty.

This is not talking about financial wealth, because the Bible is clear that oftentimes he grants financial wealth to people who can be trusted with it for the good of his kingdom and the joy of those people. It's saying putting your hope in such things in such a way that you don't depend on the Lord leaves you empty.

You could get the jet and the island and the house and so much money that the next 12 generations are going to be fine, and it would do nothing to satisfy the longing of your soul. That's why he says the proud, those who think they have no need of God, no need of his grace, who ascend to the throne and rule it with their own financial power and might, go away hungry, but do you know who's full? The one who's low and broke and in desperate need of God to come through. *That's* the wealthy one, not *this* one.

Now if you're stuck here, if we're talking through this and you're like, "Oh my gosh. I'm far more on the proud side of things than I am on the humble side of things," here's the good news of Christmas: Christ has come to draw you out of that, to reveal in you that you are way too serious about yourself and not serious enough about him, that you think way too much of your own ability and not enough of God's capacity to save and deliver and sustain. Christ has come to shine a light on that and draw you out of it.

I want to end with this. Look at Mary's first line. Verse 46 says, "**And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...'**" I love this. Feeling small and seeing the grandeur of God leads to rejoicing and joy. According to the angels, it is good news that leads to great joy. We see in this text that to embrace our smallness and the grandeur of God is to lead a life of rejoicing, which is important, because that's what you've been wired for.

Yesterday, my wife's high school football team played in the state title game, so we put on our Longview Lobos gear that she bought at Walgreens in Longview, and we headed to the game. AT&T Stadium...50,000 men and women to watch a high school football game. God bless Texas. Only we do it like that. The lower bowl full, the second bowl full...50,000 people. I'm on the end...kids, Lauren, her parents. I'm sitting next to a complete stranger, if there is such a thing.

So I'm sitting next to this man, and we're freaking out at that game. We're celebrating, screaming. I didn't know that dude. We became friends. I don't even know the guy's name. I was like, "They've run that same play like six times. That three-man front ain't going to stop that power play." "Oh, you're telling me. That kid can't throw to save his life." Then when that kid threw and scored a touchdown, we were like, "Oh yeah! Yeah! Yeah!"

I embraced, chest to chest, jumping up and down, a complete stranger along with 50,000 other people. Not all of them were losing their mind in a good way, but everybody was losing their mind in a two-point win for the state title. You can see humanity doing this everywhere. We were wired to rejoice, wired to laugh, wired to dance, wired to sing, wired to express joy for something bigger than us. This is the good news: being rescued from our pride.

You don't have to be God. That's great news. You don't have to be God. "I don't know what to do about this." Well, you're not God, so... "I'm really anxious. It's a scary time to be alive." Yeah, yeah. I agree with you, but you're not God. There's not much you can do to fix it. "I'm just so anxious about what might happen about *here*." I get anxiety. I do. I wrestle with it from time to time myself in *this*

place or *that* place, yet I'm not God, and that's such good news. I'm sure you're awesome. You're just a really crummy god.

So as we prepare our hearts to celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ, we're reminded again of the size, strength, and power of the God of the Bible, how small we are and how he fights for us, loves us, serves us, provides for us, and cares for us. If you're like, "I just find that hard to believe," I want to point you to the manger and the cross.

Tomorrow, when we get together again, we're going to focus on the coming of Christ and what that means for the second coming of Christ, and we'll get to rejoice in the fact that the light has shone and the darkness has not overcome it. We'll get to celebrate that tomorrow, but for today, again, who's the big one in your relationship with God right now?

Do you have this? Are you running things? Things are going all right? Or is it a humility of heart that says, "I see my frailty, I see my weaknesses, and I see that you have no such weaknesses, so I surrender despite my wanting to control, wanting to hang on, wanting to cling to. I just want to give this to you. I'm tired of clinging to it. This is terrifying. Help me." Or maybe the prayer is, "I don't *want* to give this to you."

Again, in the Psalms it says, "The broken and contrite in spirit you will never despise." So the confession, "I don't want to give this to you. I'm not sure you'll do what I want you to do with it. I don't want to give this to you because I'm scared to death of what might happen if I do..." Those are good prayers. Those aren't prayers you should hide from God. He knows your heart already. I want to say it again and pray for us. *The coming of Jesus pulls us out of our prideful imaginations and into the freedom of not being our own god.* Let's pray.

Father, thank you for my brothers and sisters. I pray for those who find themselves today stuck in their imagination, that you would, by your grace, shine light in there and get us out. Get us back to reality, back to that place where you are able, back to that place that you are working, back to that place where we can rest in you. We confess even in this moment that that's really terrifying, because without *this* area or *that* area we feel naked. Without it we feel exposed. Without it we feel vulnerable, and we think there are real hurts coming if we let this go.

We just ask, Holy Spirit, that maybe some of that breakthrough we talked about last week would land today and we'd find our hearts being able to release control and fear and anxiety and anger

into your hands and just breathe out as we prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus just a little bit from now. We bless you, and it's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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