

# The Work Of Jesus

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Preacher: John Hopkins

[ 0 : 00 ] So I can stand right here. That's it. Do I have to face only to the right? Okay. So let me start off this morning by saying a great thank you to everybody who helped us move.

! We got everything done on Friday, done meaning from one address to the other. Now, we know generally where everything's located. It's a 2386 Maplewood Drive.

Beyond that, I have no idea. That's why I'm dressed like this. My nice shoes, they're in a box. My nice pants are in a different box, probably in a different part of the house. And you see the trend. So it's a little confusing. But we are truly grateful. It went so fast. And we're all done out of the old house. One favor I would ask if someone would put this in their calendar.

We're planning on one more move. At some point in the future, we want to buy a home. Now, when that happens, could you just make a note and say, hey, John, about two or three weeks before the move, take the week off.

[ 1 : 07 ] Because I didn't do that this time. And there's a consequence of that. I was just showing Jim Huseman. This is a sermon this morning where we're going to be spending a lot of time in several different passages.

But I didn't have time to make slides. So you're going to have to stick your fingers in different spots. So I'm going to prime the pump here. So first of all, of course, we're in Colossians chapter one. So put a finger there. We're going to be in Ephesians. Because you know I love Ephesians. And we're going to be in Romans. When I was at Emmaus back in 1985, I took a class on Romans that was fantastic.

A lot of my theology was formed during that semester of studying the book of Romans. Well, the next semester, I took a class on Colossians from the same professor, Dave McLeod. Some of you have heard him preach.

Well, Dave was in a really, really bad car accident in late February, early March of that semester. Another professor took over.

[ 2 : 15 ] And their teaching styles were different. It was very confusing to go from Dave McLeod to Jack Fish. So I sat down to my final for the Colossians class.

A little bit of a side note. I love tests. I know some of you hate tests. You hate that part of school. That's the only reason I graduated from high school was because I could take tests. I never did homework.

So I came in cocky. I got this thing. I sit down to take my Colossians final. And the first question is, what is the gospel? That's a good question.

I don't remember. I can still remember this. I thought, I know I've been saved. I know what it took to become a Christian. So what's the gospel?

And I panicked. Read through the test. Didn't know a single answer from Colossians. But then I remembered, oh, that's okay. I took McLeod's Romans class.

[ 3 : 13 ] I got an A on that paper on Colossians. And full disclosure now, Dave McLeod has never heard this. I passed the Colossians final because of the book of Romans.

And we are going to spend a lot of time in Romans today because it's very relevant. I think it was a foundation for Paul when he wrote the book of Colossians. And this passage that we're going to be in today is very, very rich, just like last week.

So remember, I didn't forget that we've been working our way through an acronym. We want to be faster learners.

So I've covered the F. We want you to forget what you think you know, not throw it away, but to come to the passage with a fresh perspective to gain new insight.

Because sometimes what we know from the past can put blinders on and it blocks us from gaining new insight into a passage. So forget and take a fresh insight. That's the first letter of the FASER acronym.

[ 4 : 15 ] The second one is ACT. Be an active learner. Take notes. Choose to pay attention. And then it's also ACT or take action and apply what you learned today.

The purpose of the Bible is not to sit around and compare notes about what we believe versus what somebody else believes and decide who's right and who's wrong and kind of be like, remember Siskel and Ebert back in the day when they were critiquing movies.

You're not here to Siskel and Ebert my sermon. I appreciate feedback. Don't get me wrong. But the objective is to learn. And part of that is to apply what you learn in the world tomorrow.

So we're going to be forgetful and take a fresh perspective. We're going to be active. Today, we're going to talk about our state. Not Iowa. But our mental state.

The state of our heart. I am ashamed to admit, before I read this acronym, I'd never given a second thought to what I'm about to say. And I have been in hundreds, if not thousands of sermons and classes in the Bible over the course of my life.

[ 5 : 25 ] I have never stopped to think, am I prepared to learn? What is the state of my mind? What is the state of my soul? Am I coming recognizing that this is the Word of God?

It's God's Word to me. Am I going to respect the fact that the person up front has put in a lot of time to prepare a message? And to pray and think and come before the throne of God to bring truth that I can digest?

Never thought of that before. And am I really looking to see what the Holy Spirit wants me to know today? All of that revolves around the state of our mind. So what I want you to be is a better learner than me.

Think about your state. Am I ready to learn? Am I ready to see what God has for me out of Colossians 1? Because I tell you what, there is a lot in this chapter.

There is a lot in this book. It is so rich. So we are halfway through being faster learners. Let's pause.

[ 6 : 36 ] Let's get our minds and our souls quiet and ready to learn from what God has for us. Let's pause for a second. Holy Spirit, we pray that you would clearly communicate to us.

I don't think it's a matter of the clarity of your communication so much as our willingness to receive. So I pray that our hearts and our minds would be ready to hear what you have to say to us through the book of Colossians.

I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So last week, we went through this rich couple of verses. I keep using that word, but it's the only word that fits. It's like this gold mine that you keep just going deeper and deeper, and you find more and more and more.

It's this rich vein of gold that we're pulling so much out of. We talked about the person of Jesus. And in just a couple of verses, we saw, just going to run through them really quick.

Sorry, I didn't print out my thing last week. So I'm looking at it on my phone. So we saw that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He is the means by which God has chosen to communicate with us in words of one syllable what his character and nature are like.

[ 7 : 55 ] When we look at Jesus, we see the Father. Jesus clearly told that to the disciples. It says he's a firstborn of creation. Not the first person created.

Not the first thing created. But that's a position. He is above all of creation. He is the firstborn. He has the highest place, as he should. And why is that?

Because all things were created by him. We saw that in John chapter 1. But it says in Genesis 1 that the Lord spoke. That's Jesus.

Let there be light. And there was light. Light. That's our Jesus. The image of the invisible God. The firstborn of a creation.

The creator of all things. That's our Jesus. He is before all things. He's the uncaused cause.

[ 8 : 53 ] That means when we start regressing backward through time, we know we're in an expanding universe, which means that we can go backwards and trace it back and get to a beginning point.

Jesus was there already. He's before that. He has always existed. He's the uncaused cause. Jesus holds everything together by the word of his power.

Your body doesn't explode because Jesus is active. You know, if someone says, I don't see God in my life at all. Buddy, you woke up this morning and you didn't explode.

Jesus is working in your life. He's holding it together. They say, oh, I don't believe that. Well, buddy, that's the only reasonable explanation because the scientists that you hold in such high regard don't have a clue why you don't explode.

Jesus holds all things together by the root of his power. And Jesus is the head of the church. We talked about how he maintains the health of the body. He directs us.

[ 9 : 58 ] And of course, he has a preeminence again. It always comes back to that. Jesus is first. Jesus is first. And the final one I didn't actually get to is that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead.

Jesus definitely died on that cross. Some people will say, oh, he just passed out. No, he did not pass out.

No, they didn't steal the body. Jesus died. His death was witnessed by credible witnesses. He was buried.

He was put in that grave by credible witnesses. The grave was sealed by the governor, who might be a credible witness.

You know, politicians, you never know. And then he was raised. Don't lose sight of the title.

[ 11 : 02 ] Firstborn from the dead. Why is that important? Because we know. That because Jesus was raised, we will be raised. That is our hope.

It says in Romans, we're going to look at this later in chapter 4, that he, because he died, I got backwards. Because of our sin, he died.

Because of our justification, the declaration that we're righteous, he was raised from the dead. That resurrection is your life. Because it proved, it was God's amen to Jesus' declaration, it's finished.

We were declared righteous. The righteousness of God became ours. And he's the firstborn from the dead. We will be just like him. It says that in 1 John 3. Behold, behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

And we don't know, I'm paraphrasing now, we don't know what we will be like, but we do know that when we see him, we will see him as he is, and we will be like him. New bodies.

[ 12 : 12 ] No more glasses. No more cancer. No more sleepless nights. Our bodies will be perfect. Because we're going to be recreated.

That's our hope. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. So we looked at, this is the person that did what we're going to talk about this morning.

And you need to get that in your head. We have a tendency, and if I'm not being fair to you, I apologize, but I'm speaking for myself without question.

I diminish Jesus in my mind. I recognize that he died on the cross for my sins. I do. I recognize it was a horrific death.

I understand intellectually, as much as I can, it's possible that he was fully man and fully God. But think about what we talked about last week. Jesus Christ is fully God.

[ 13 : 19 ] And as we unpack the next few verses of Colossians chapter 1, I want you to just keep going back. That's the person, the person who got me this blessing is that person we talked about last week.

And it all came from his death. Don't lose sight of that. So turn in your Bibles to Colossians chapter 1. We're going to read verses 19 through 23. Let's read.

Paul. Paul. Paul. Paul.! Father, the fact that we are reconciled to you, that we have peace with you, that Jesus is going to present us holy and blameless and beyond reproach is mind-boggling.

Because if we're honest about our own hearts, we know that it has to be all from you. We don't deserve it. We couldn't have earned it. But you have given us this gift. And I pray, Lord, that as we unpack this this morning, as we look at these few verses, that we would be moved to worship.

That we would be awestruck by the overlap between the person and character of Jesus, his magnificence, his preeminence, and his love that propelled him to enter Mary's womb, to grow up with all the indignity that's associated with growing up, and ultimately to die on the cross for us.

[ 15 : 48 ] Help our feeble minds keep our focus on that. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So, here we go. Colossians chapter 1.

Buckle up. We're going to be going through a lot of verses. Like I told you, I told Jim, this is probably the most verses I've put into a sermon. But, you know, it is what it is. I've got to tell you, God is gracious.

I saw a piece of a sermon that a gentleman by the name of Alistair Begg gave. It was actually directed to two pastors. And he said, you know, sometimes I've got lots of time during the week, I

can prepare.

I've got all this time to pray and to study and to interact with commentaries and other theologians and really get the things together that I need to for a sermon. And then there's other weeks where I'm up at 3 o'clock in the morning on Sunday morning frantically trying to get together a sermon. And yet God still speaks. Well, I wasn't up at 3 o'clock this morning. But I certainly didn't do my normal amount of study. But I think, I pray that God will speak through what we're going to look at this morning because it is, it's beyond words.

[17:02] There are no words to do justice to what we're going to discover in Colossians chapter 1. So, I only got, as I was preparing this week, this was on Monday, verse 19, for it was the Father's good pleasure.

I couldn't get past that. I want you to pause for a second and think about how do you think about God? And be honest. This is just between you and Him and He already knows.

So, it's not like you're going to offend Him. But do you think, when you think about your relationship with God about His good pleasure? I do.

But it's always conditional. And it's always reluctant. And what I mean by that is my image of God is that He's reluctant to bless.

He's reluctant to express His pleasure with me because I really don't deserve it. And He's holding back, you know, John, I love you and I wish you'd straighten up and, you know, if you do, I will say, well done, good and faithful servant.

[18:14] But, are we ever going to get to that point? That's my unexamined, unthought through look at what, and how God looks at me.

And it's wrong. Hear me. It's wrong. Will we have to give an account for our life? Yes. But it doesn't, that doesn't preclude the fact that God takes pleasure in us and all He does.

So, I spent some time and thought, well, what does God take good pleasure in? Let's look. So, first of all, in Colossians, so it's a good practice, by the way, when you're studying the Bible, start with a narrow focus in the passage you're in and then work out.

Okay? Okay? So, we're going to start at Colossians 1. Verse 19, for it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Jesus. So, God was thrilled.

He was pleased to put all of His fullness and make this human baby, Jesus, fully human, also fully God.

[19:24] And He was thrilled to do that. Now, you've got to, our minds are going to be overwhelmed repeatedly this morning. Just be ready for it. I'm not sure it would be my good pleasure to put one of my children in a circumstance that would lead to what Jesus experienced.

I might do it because I feel obligated. I might do it because I love the person for whom my child is going to suffer. But the act itself, I'm not so sure about that. But it was God's good pleasure.

That's what the Word says. to let His Son become a man. He was pleased to do that. Grab a hold of that.

That was God's good pleasure. Then verse 20, and, little words matter, He was pleased for all the fullness to dwell in Jesus and through Him, through Jesus, to reconcile all things to Himself, God the Father.

Having made peace through the blood of His cross, through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. So, God was well pleased to reconcile us to Himself.

[20:40] We're going to come back to that in a minute and talk about what reconciliation is. But God was pleased to reconcile us. He was happy about it. He was excited. I would say, excited like my grandchildren on Christmas morning, excited to reconcile us.

So, what else? In Luke chapter 10, I'll just read this to you. Oh, I got ahead of myself. In Luke chapter 3, at Jesus' baptism, do you remember the scene?

Jesus goes to John and says, I want to be baptized. John says, I don't think so. You should be baptizing me. And Jesus says, it's appropriate. It's the right thing to do.

So, Jesus is baptized. He comes out of the water. The Holy Spirit descends like a dove. Now, when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized.

And while He was praying, heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came out of heaven. This is important. You are my beloved Son.

[21:45] Who is He talking to? He's talking to Jesus. You are my beloved Son. In you, I am well pleased.

Jesus hadn't even started yet. This was the beginning of His ministry. In you, I am well pleased. God is well pleased with His Son.

Then, go forward a few chapters in Luke. Luke chapter 9, Jesus sends out the disciples to go two by two. Luke chapter 10, He sends out the 72, also two by two.

He says, pray. At the beginning of chapter 10, He says, pray for workers. The fields are ripe for harvest. The laborers are few, so pray for workers. Oh, wait.

Keep praying, but why don't you guys go? Which I think, by the way, is what God does with us. Praying for workers doesn't mean that we're not workers also. So He sends them out. They come back and they're just elated.

[ 22 : 50 ] Jesus, you should see all this. We saw people healed. We saw people saved. We saw people respond to the gospel. This was so cool. By the way, if you've ever been on a mission trip, if you've ever had an opportunity to have an immersed time where you're serving, now all of life should be service, but if you've ever had a chance to go where you've got a week or 10 days or a few months where you're just, my job is to be here serving these people, whoever these people are, and you see God moves, there is nothing that compares.

It is so much fun to work in constant with God. And that's what the disciples were saying to Jesus. This was so cool. Jesus responds to them by saying, I saw Satan cast down out of heaven. And then he prays. And this is what he prays. At that very time, Jesus rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit and said, I praise you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.

Amen. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in your sight.

It was well-pleasing. Now, there's an application there. One you may not like. Paul repeats it in Corinthians. I used to love giving this part of the message to teenagers in my youth groups.

[ 24 : 17 ] and say, look around. We don't have any smart guys in this room. We don't have the valedictorian of the class. We don't have the people who are great and wealthy and at the pinnacle that are famous and everybody knows.

Now, those people get saved. Don't get me wrong. But, we're nothing special. That's who God chooses to save.

God chooses to save us. I brought nothing to the table and I know you guys well enough. I'm sure you didn't either. But God was well-pleased to reveal himself not only to us but through us.

Now, that's important. Why is that important? We live in a culture today that says, you are not really qualified to carry this book out into the marketplace or certainly up here on the sacred place, the stage.

Please note my sarcasm. Unless you've been through years of school and had all this education and this is for a privileged view. Now, we're evangelicals.

[ 25 : 27 ] We don't believe in priests but you gotta be a priest in order to handle the word of God. That's our church culture today. That is not what Jesus is modeling here.

I'm not qualified. You're not qualified except by the grace of God working through us. And what does that mean? We can tell anybody. Somebody says, all right, you don't know my life.

It's too much of a mess. God doesn't care because we're all a mess. We're gonna see that in a few minutes too. But that's the essence of the gospel message. And that's what Jesus was so pleased about was God, this is so cool that you've revealed this to children.

Not the intellectual giants but children. Men who just don't know a whole lot but they know you. And it was a father's good pleasure to save those types of people.

People like us. So if you're offended, I apologize. but the truth hurts sometimes. So he's pleased to put the fullness of Jesus in Jesus.

[ 26 : 38 ] He's pleased to reconcile us. He's pleased in his son. He's pleased to reveal the truth to infants. But wait, there's more. The father is obviously well pleased when somebody repents.

This is in Luke 15. You know I choke up a lot but this is one story I cannot get through. It's the prodigal son.

This is the scene when the son is walking toward his family home expecting to apply for a job because he's not worthy.

He sacrificed his rights as a son. That's what he's thinking. He's walking up. The father's on the porch. Maybe he's sat there every day looking for his son.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him and ran, ran and embraced him and kissed him.

[ 27 : 57 ] and the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his slaves, quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him.

Put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet and bring the fatted calf and let's eat and celebrate. And celebrate.

Celebrate. It was the father's good pleasure to see his child return. It is the father's good pleasure when any one of us returns.

On the day that you return to him, this was a response. When someone comes to Christ, this is the response. It is the father's good pleasure that people repent.

And not just people who are turning from sin that are lost, that are dead in their sins and coming to Christ. But this is also the response of the father to one of us.

[ 29 : 08 ] When we sin and we realize our sin and we turn and go back, we're welcomed with open arms. Do not forget that. That's the lesson of the prodigal son.

I believe that the clearest picture of the heart of the father is the parable of the prodigal son. So if you're doubting, God can't love me, I've done something that's too out there, go back to Luke 15. Read the prodigal son again. And we say, oh, I just don't believe that. That's just the story. Read it again. Read it again until you feel the father's arms around you. Because you have that kind of a welcome in Christ, in him, and he is well pleased.

He will celebrate the return of one of his children. There's more. God is pleased with his work in your life.

This is in Philippians chapter 2. So then, my beloved, Paul is speaking to the Philippian church. So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but also, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

[ 30 : 31 ] Praise God that's not a period. Right? Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Now, we do have a responsibility. We do have a responsibility to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness.

This isn't so that we will be saved. It's not so that we will be welcoming to the Father's presence. We work out our salvation to fully engage with God in what he's doing in us and to experience the blessings that he has for us because, here's the next verse, for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure in you.

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling knowing, knowing it's God who is at work in you. So you know what that means? That means that we don't will ourselves to be better.

We don't will ourselves to be more disciplined. We don't will ourselves to obey what the Bible says.

We follow the Spirit's leading obediently and he's doing the work within us.

Our job is to say, here am I. Send me. Do with me whatever you want. But it's God's good pleasure. This is what we have in Christ.

[ 31 : 57 ] Christ. The pleasure of the Father on us. Stop and think about that for a minute. That is no small thing. Let me put it in a little bit of context because this is such a small thing.

But it's a little picture. So Sunny, my six-year-old granddaughter, is in karate and her teacher is a great guy.

Master Springer does a great job. He's great with little kids. And Sunny will do a move and he'll correct her and he'll do a move and he'll correct her and then when he says good job, what's really interesting, she doesn't look at him every time.

She looks at me in the gallery every time without fail. that little girl wants to see my approval, wants to see my face saying, you got it, sweetheart.

Kick him harder. Knock that man down. He's not that big. But that's a picture of how we should be relating to the Father is to look to see expectantly because that's the thing Sunny knows that I'll be looking.

[ 33 : 13 ] Sunny knows that I'm watching her do her karate practice and get better at it. We should know that our Father takes great pleasure in us and we should turn our attention to Him.

Amen? Amen. So why does this matter? Why did I get so obsessed with this? One is our identity in Christ. We've got to be constantly being reminded of who we are.

That's number one because we forget. We forget who God is. We forget about His love for us or we forget our identity. Either we get too high on ourselves.

I can do this on my own. How hard can it be? That's what I thought when I started to put my washer and dryer together last night. There's a reason why I'm up here and don't have a wrench in my hand.

I do not have that gift. It works. Sometimes, you know, I tell a funny story and I lose my place. I don't know where I was going with that.

[ 34 : 21 ] Sorry. Yep. You know, you could have found a better guy but you're stuck with me now. John and Tim realized about a month ago we were having a pastor's meeting and they looked at each other and Tim says to John, do you know that last week was the end of our money back guarantee?

There really was a money back guarantee and I outlasted it. So now you're stuck. So occasionally I have a, I just forget what I'm talking about. So we want to be reminded that God loves us but we need to keep in mind that Colossians was written for a purpose.

The book of Colossians is addressing a growing heresy in the city of Colossae in that region of Asia that was a belief that was totally at odds with the gospel.

And it's very seductive and it hasn't gone away. And God's good pleasure, the fact that God takes good pleasure and all these things I've listed really matters as a way of refuting this heresy.

Because one of the things that's common about heretical teaching is it paints God as a miser. kind of the way that I was described that I tend to think about him.

[ 35 : 36 ] That's why I need the reminder. But God is standing back reserved, doubtful, reluctant to give to us.

That's what heresy teaches. And we've got to earn our way up there. So as we're going to see in a few weeks when we get into Colossians 3 and actually chapter 2 and 3, this heresy created all these steps that we had to follow to get to God.

And I'm sorry, but my interpretation is if I put steps between me and my children or between me and my grandchildren, there really isn't much of an expression of love there.

The expression of love is when the kid can bypass the steps and get to me anyway. But the Gnostics were saying, no, no, you've got to deny yourself.

You've got to create alliances with angels because you need supernatural help to get past the hurdles to get access to God because there's all these things in the way and it's very, very dangerous. It's very taxing and only the few make it to the top.

[ 36 : 46 ] That's totally at odds with the gospel. And what we need to remember, the baseline way to refute false teaching is to remember that it is God's good pleasure to do these things for us.

He's not a miser. He's the opposite of a miser. He's the father who welcomes us with open arms, gives us a robe, gives us a ring, kills the fatted calf and has a party.

Not because he's not thinking about his child sinning, he's thinking about his son returning. That's our God. And when you're tempted, by some of this thinking that's circulating out of the marketplace, this idea of deconstruction is really the same thing.

But I tell you, it leads to more loss because the God of deconstruction is me. And I'm not qualified for the job.

And neither are you. But when we remember that it's God's good pleasure and he's working, puts things in an entirely different perspective. So it's very important to remember these things.

[ 37 : 52 ] Every word of God's word matters. We're not going to get all the way through this this morning because it's so important. Four words.

Did I count that right? For it was the father's good... Okay, six words. It was the father's good pleasure. And let's go back to Colossians.

Remember I told you it was a good idea to focus, then work your way out. Then we want to come all the way back to the passage we're studying. So we're back to Colossians 1. In Colossians 1, it says, the father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Jesus through him to reconcile all things to himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross.

Through him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And then in verse 22, yet he has now reconciled you in his fleshly body through death in order to present you before him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.

We're going to cover briefly, but I want you to give this a lot of thought, three things. That we have been reconciled, that we have peace, and the third thing is actually three things.  
[ 39 : 02 ] That we will be... Actually, it's one thing. We will be presented holy, blameless, and above reproach. I don't know about you, but when I present someone that's important to me, I want to introduce them to...

I want to introduce somebody to somebody that's important to me, this person's got it all together. I love them. I want to show them the best possible light, and I'm presenting. Ta-da! Here's my grandkid who's adorable.

Here's my son or daughter who I love, and here's why I love him. Jesus is going to present you to the Father. Ta-da!

Really? Really? You may not say ta-da, but that spirit is going to be there, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

So let's talk about reconciliation. What is reconciliation? Reconciliation is very simple. It's a restoration of a friendly relationship. So in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had the privilege of a day-to-day relationship with God.

[ 40 : 11 ] They walked in the garden with the Father in the cool of the day. I believe that part of that conversation was just, how are you doing? Just talking.

A lot like we would talk as friends. Some of it, I think, was Adam saying, you know, you've given me this job as manager of this garden, and man, these plants do not cooperate. Help me out here.

And I think they talked, I think they problem solved because it was an opportunity for God to enter into a relationship with Adam in a different way. But they're friends. And I think for Adam, this was before the fall, I think the problem solving was fun.

It's just part of the challenge. And I get to work with God and together we're discovering why this group of plants died and this group of plants didn't. or whatever the case may be. But they had this rich relationship.

And I'm sure God, part of it was God saying, I love these words. I think this is going to be the theme of heaven. But wait, there's more. That was a relationship that Adam and Eve had with God.

[ 41 : 10 ] And then they blew it, they fell. But then we're reconciled. There's a restoration of that relationship for all of Adam and Eve's descendants.

That's you, in case you were wondering. You're reconciled to God. So how did that happen? So now you can turn over to Romans chapter one.

I was looking for a passage that talked about our fall, our sinfulness. You know, the first several chapters of Romans, there are a number of passages I could have chosen from. Paul was really making a point to illustrate the fact that when Adam and Eve fell and came into sin, that sin spread onward to us.

I'll never forget back in the 80s or 90s, one of those two, a gene was discovered, not this type of gene, a gene was discovered that said that homosexuality was genetic.

And the evangelical community just freaked out. What? It's hereditary? And the homosexual crowd said, see, it's not our fault.

[ 42 : 26 ] We inherited it. And I said to the evangelicals, have you read your Bible? We should not be surprised that there's a gene for homosexuality because we inherit sin from our father.

and how do we inherit anything from our fathers? Through our DNA. That doesn't absolve us of responsibility. It doesn't.

Not at all. But sin is inherited. So let's look at Romans 1. This is Romans 1, 22 through 25.

Professing to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

So, humanity made idols. They do that right away in the early chapters of Genesis. And they keep doing it. They can't seem to stop. And we continue to this day. Therefore, God gave them over in the lust of their hearts to impurity so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

You know what God's ultimate punishment is? Really simple. He says, okay. Have it your way, dummy. And he lets us go.

[ 43 : 46 ] Praise God. Remember what I read in Philippians. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling knowing there's God who is at work in you. But if people refuse to turn to Christ, he says, okay.

Just like Burger King back in the day. Have it your way. Therefore, God gave them over in the lust of their hearts to impurity so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever.

Amen. That is our state apart from Christ. That's our state from conception that we are sinful. We are sinful by nature. That's why it's not surprising that there's a gene for homosexuality. There's probably genes for all kinds of awful things.

Not surprising. So in reconciliation, all that thought, that horrible thought that you are, I am hopelessly lost in sin by ourselves.

[ 45 : 03 ] I want you to stay in that spot. Right now, hypothetically, you're still lost in your sin. You've exchanged the truth of God for a lie. Got that?

Reconciliation usually involves two parties who are at odds and somebody comes in the middle, a mediator, and talks to person A, talks to person B, really finds out that person A and person B contributed to the problem, helped them see the other person's side, teaches them to change their behavior, and they meet in the middle, they shake hands, and their relationship is restored.

Blame on both sides, merit on both claims, and they bring it together. That's human reconciliation. That's not what I'm talking about. In this case, we were completely at fault.

Remember what I just said? Lost in trespasses and sins. Exchange the truth of God for a lie.

Worship the corruptible instead of the incorruptible. We were completely at fault.

Romans 5 says we were God's enemies, not by His choice, but by ours. gleefully so. God was the injured party completely.

[ 46 : 22 ] And here's the amazing truth of the gospel. I'm never going to get through this passage. Ephesians chapter 2.

I'll never have to do a whole sermon on Ephesians chapter 2 because I end up going there so often that you should know it anyway. This is Paul again. And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

And we talked about that last week, that there is a devil and he's busy. Among them, we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh. Formerly being the operative word there.

If you have accepted Christ as your savior, that word formerly applies to you. If you have not, it does not. You're still in verses 1 and 2.

Among them, we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of our flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath. By our very nature, we deserve God's anger, even as the rest.

[ 47 : 34 ] So we were all in the same miserable bucket. But God, but God, being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace, you have been saved and raised up with him, past tense, your future is secured now. Lost my place here.

And raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come, he might show the surpassing riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The theme of heaven is going to be, but wait, there's more. If we're going to say, oh, this is probably 10,000 years from now, God, I can't take it anymore.

And God's going to say, oh, wait, there's still more. As a matter of fact, I just scratched the surface. We haven't even started yet. This was a preamble of the introduction. But wait, there's more. For by grace have you been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves.

[ 48 : 50 ] It's a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. So this is the part where you've got to stop and look in the mirror. Paul said to examine yourself to see if you're in the faith.

Your responsibility is simple. It's to recognize that you're spotted, you are hopeless on your own. But Jesus died on the cross.

This reconciliation was accomplished because Jesus took all the mess of your life, all the sin, on himself on the cross. And he died. He satisfied the righteous wrath of God for you.

Your job, quite simply, is to say thank you and allow him to work in your life according to his good pleasure. And trust me, it's all good.

If I could adequately explain this deal, nobody would say no. But that's the question you have to answer this morning is have you made that choice to recognize your sin, to accept what Jesus did for you on the cross like you receive any gift at Christmas or a birthday, and then live out all that comes with having that gift?

[ 50 : 09 ] Because a gift doesn't do any good if you unwrap the shirt and hang it in your closet and never wear it. That's the gospel. That's what you've got to do. For by grace you save through faith and that not of yourselves.

It's a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. And what happens? You're reconciled to God. The language that the Bible uses for our relationship with God is very rich.

We're his body. We're his bride. We're his child. We're his friend. With God.

Remember what we talked about last week. That's who we have a relationship with because of his death on the cross. How could you say no to that? And if you've already made that decision, if you accepted Christ as your Savior, how can you not rejoice?

But wait, there's more. We receive peace. Paul was speaking as a Jewish man, a Jewish rabbi, so when he said peace, he didn't mean what we think of with peace. Absence of conflict, just kind of everything is copacetic.

[ 51 : 18 ] No, to a Jew, peace was a much deeper concept. It does mean absence of conflict, but it also means well-being. It means calm.

It means peace of mind. It doesn't mean life is perfect. We still get sick. We still deal with the trials of life. But we have peace with God relationally and peace among ourselves.

That's why a healthy church body as it grows should naturally be diverse, should be a reflection of the community in which it finds itself because we're at peace.

The neighborhood I lived in, Seattle, was very different from Dubuque. In that neighborhood, I could go down the street and I could eat at an Ethiopian restaurant that was cooked by Ethiopian people. I could go to another restaurant and eat Indian food, which I think is going to be the main course at the marriage supper of the Lamb. I could eat Indian food made by an Indian family, Mohammed and his kids.

[ 52 : 22 ] Or I could go down the street and eat pho, not my favorite, it's soup, at the Vietnamese place and you better speak Vietnamese because nobody in the back speaks English.

And our church looked like that because we were bringing the peace of God to bear relationally. That's what happens. We have that peace. And then, God is going, Jesus is going to present us. The words boggle the mind. There's a part of me that says it really doesn't seem appropriate that God would use the word holy in reference to us.

Because in the Bible, the person who's usually called holy is God himself. Isaiah had a vision of the throne of God and the angels were saying so loud that the temple was shaking.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty. And when Isaiah saw the holiness of God, his response was, I am undone.

[ 53 : 31 ] Woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips from generations of unclean people. Woe is me. That's holiness.

Utterly transcendent. Pure. No sin. Jesus is going to present you holy. You. Me.

Why? Because we're in contact with God. In the temple, the articles of the temple were holy because of their relationship with God.

We are the same. Paul actually wrote in 1 Corinthians 6 that we are the temple. We're holy. We're going to be presented as holy.

But wait, there's more. Verse 22, blameless. What? I could see holy with a caveat. Okay, he's holy, but you know what he did.

[ 54 : 33 ] No, blameless. Remember what it says in Psalms. Our sins are in the depths of the ocean as far as the east is from the west. You are going to be presented before God blameless.

Rejoice in that. And this one is even more mind-boggling to me. It's hard to believe you can keep building.

Beyond reproach. You know what that means? That means I could run for office and the journalists who like to dig up dirt would find nothing.

That's how we're going to appear before God. Beyond reproach. Nothing. Anything that's dug up, Satan says, oh, there's that thing. Jesus says, nope, cross. It's behind the cross.

And the Father says, I don't know what you're talking about. I don't see anything there. All I see is holiness. Blameless. Above reproach.

[ 55 : 35 ] That's what you have. That's who you are before God. So, as we wrap up, two things. One, I called an audible.

Pastor Jack gave me permission to do this. Occasionally, you run into a passage that's just got too much. And sometimes, I'll just choose to not give it in the sermon and give it to you as homework. But chapter 23 has some really difficult language in it that deals with the assurance of our salvation, which I know some of you have wondered about my views on and how that works out for us. So next week, we're going to focus on Colossians 1.23. That's going to be where we focus our attention. But I want to leave you with the assurance, not that it really matters what I believe, but I'm convinced that the Bible teaches that if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you cannot lose your salvation.

Unequivocally, when you put your trust in Christ, you are saved forever. You will be presented wholly, blameless, and beyond reproach.

Now, here's the question. It's the same question I ended up with last week, which you would think I would remember, but, you know, it's been a long week. Do you really believe that what you believe is really real?

[ 57 : 00 ] I have made some extravagant claims this morning. Do you believe that what you believe is really real? In other words, did that Jesus go to that cross for me, for you?

And am I really going to be presented to God with whom I've been reconciled, with whom I enjoy a peaceful relationship? Am I really going to be presented to Him wholly, blameless, beyond reproach?

Do you believe it? And if you do, tell you, it should affect your behavior. That's for you to figure out. That's what the rest of the New Testament is for.

But think about that. What does this look like? If this is really real, how do I behave toward God, toward the people around me? Let's pray. God, Paul wrote that all the promises of God are yes and amen in Jesus Christ.

God, your promises are so extravagant. They beggar the mind. But we pray that you would allow us to understand to the degree that we can. and in our lives that you would be glorified and that we would draw other people in to experience this unbelievable good news that we've received.

[ 58 : 27 ] Help us to live out what these magnificent promises are to us. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.