

# The Surpassing Value of Knowing Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Alright, so we're going to try a new headset. I've moved the transmitter all the way back so I can't hit it.! And Lord willing, we will make it all the way through the end without changing mics or any other weirdness.

So, but no guarantees. No guarantees. So if the technology fails, you still have to listen. That's kind of how that works.

So, you know, it's been interesting over the course of my life. I've taught in the basement of our house when I was in high school. I taught a Bible study. I've taught in youth groups.

I've taught at camps. Obviously, I've preached sermons. And my expectation is, my hope is that as I'm preparing a sermon or preparing a Bible study, or whatever the case may be, that I am positioning myself before the Lord to allow Him to take the study that I'm doing and to prepare my heart to teach me from the Scripture so that I can bring something of value to the people I'm teaching.

That I'm not just giving you information that you can go, oh, that's cool. I've never heard that before. If that's all that happens on a Sunday morning, one of us isn't doing their job right. And so, it's a spiritual exercise as we open God's Word that the Holy Spirit has been working in me, we hope, through the week, and preparing.

[ 1 : 19 ]     He's been working in you, preparing to receive. And then He's going to take that and apply it and take it out into our lives. And we'll find expression of God's Word in the way we conduct ourselves.

Now, over the years, there has been times where there seems like the Lord is lining things up. There's a message that needs to be conveyed.

And I'll tell you, a lot of times it doesn't make sense. One time at camp, the speaker, I was a counselor, the speaker had a very set schedule for his sermons.

Thursday night was going to be gospel night. Well, the Holy Spirit doesn't really care about our schedules. And we had this mass revival. I think a dozen kids came to Christ during the Moonlight Swim. Why? I don't know.

It was just one of the oddest things. But there was clearly a movement of God during the Moonlight Swim. Who knew? But there's other times where things line up and different elements of the service just hit the same note without consultation.

[ 2 : 27 ]     Where it's just a consistent message. Today is one of those. When Eddie put Hosea 10-12 up on the screen.

Soweth of you to righteousness. Reap in accordance with kindness. Break up your fallow ground. For it is time to seek the Lord until he comes to rain righteousness on you.

That's our sermon this morning. Now, I didn't know that because I didn't find Hosea 10-12 in my study. But the Lord said, that's okay. I've got your back. I actually wrote it.

So I'll just bring it up since you missed it. One of the great things about God is he takes care of what I miss. Which is good for you too, trust me. So there was that.

And then Caitlin talked about recognizing the love of God for her in her dialogue with Gratia this morning. That too was another element of what you're going to hear this morning as we look at the next part of Mark chapter 9.

[ 3 : 34 ] What's the point of what you're going to hear this morning is that God so loves us and wants the best for us. Now Gratia's convinced, well, what's really good for me is popsicles for breakfast.

But Elias and Caitlin are good parents. And they said no. And Gratia's not happy about it. And yet God, and yet they love her. And so they did what was best for her despite what she wanted.

Isn't that so much like God? And if you're not sure, you're going to see it this morning. And then the breaking of the bread. I like gospel words.

But redeemed is my favorite. Because it talks about our sins, certainly, as Pastor John shared. But it's also woven through every part of our lives.

For we know that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. That's redemption. God takes the circumstances of our lives and he redeems them and makes them good.

[ 4 : 41 ] That's redemption. So we see this weaving together of different elements that are going to bring home something that I think is critically important for us to understand as believers as we live out our lives.

I'm going to tell you something. Kind of set up the sermon. Part of my prep involves doing a lot of reading. A dear friend of mine has encouraged me to listen to other people's sermons, which is good and bad.

It's very helpful to hear some insight. But it's also frustrating. And one of the things that really grinds my gears is platitudes. So I listened to parts of this sermon that this guy gave about God being present in our time of need.

And basically all he said was, man, if things are tough, God's got your back, bro. God's got your back. And then he moved on. And you know, if you're not feeling good and things are hard, God's got your back.

Well, what does that mean? Thanks for nothing. It's just like when one of your friends says, oh, your car broke down and I got your back. Well, did you come and help me get it home?

[ 5 : 44 ] No. So I don't care if you've got my back. Platitudes are annoying. This is not a platitude sermon this morning. But the counter to platitudes is hard questions.

It's to challenge you to think about what you think you know about the gospel. What you think you understand about God's relationship with you. What you understand about the role of the challenges of life in your life.

And I'm going to give you time to really think, which means I'm going to have to talk really fast. So brace yourselves. And in keeping with, I'm not doing slides because I want you in your Bibles.

Buckle up, folks. We are going through the Bible fast because there's some key concepts that I want to get you to see that are underneath, are foundational for what we're going to talk about this morning.

So super fast review. This section, Mark 8.27 through Mark 9.50, is about a two or three week period where Jesus was very intentional about avoiding population centers so crowds wouldn't form.

[ 6 : 51 ] He was avoiding the Pharisees because they were annoying and a distraction. And he focused on the 12. These were three things that he had to get across to them. He felt urgency because he knew the cross was coming.

They are headed south. They're going down to Judea that we're going to talk about in the weeks to come. And he's headed to Jerusalem. He's going to be rejected, suffer, and die and be raised again.

And so Jesus has to get this point across. And to make it even worse, he's surrounded by knuckleheads. Remember talking about that? They just didn't get it. So there were three things that were central.

We've been talking about this over and over again. I took some time this week and wrote a summary of this teaching. It's going to go out to you this afternoon. I've got some study questions I want to include with it.

But that's going to go out to you in an email this afternoon. Because these are core concepts that we're going to come back to again and again and again and again.

[ 7 : 51 ] Because it's the core of the gospel. So you've heard this before. Do not tune it out. Tune in. Ask God to give you something you haven't thought of before. First of all, Jesus is both the suffering servant who's going to suffer, die, and be raised again.

And he's the triumphant king. Those are the same person in a particular order according to God's plan. That really was blowing the disciples' minds.

But that's one of the things Jesus is trying to get across. I'm the suffering servant now. But I will come back as promised. I am the son of David who will restore God's rule to earth or bring God's rule to earth as it should have been.

But I have to go through this because you're not ready for me to rule. If I rule now, you're not qualified to be part of my kingdom. That's what he was saying to the disciples.

That's what he's saying to us. If he hadn't come as a suffering servant to die on our behalf like John was just talking about with the breaking of the bread. The next key point that Jesus is trying to get across is our best interests are nested inside of God's interests.

[ 9 : 08 ] We talked about that last week. We think that I can have my best interests or I can have God's best interests. But really for the most part, they're at odds.

No, no. Now our interests may be at odds with God's interests like you saw in the conversation with Peter. But our best interests, what is absolutely best for us, kind of like Gratia not getting popsicles for breakfast.

God knows we have to trust him. But our best interests are nested in God's. So we can trust him that when he's pursuing our agenda, it leads to our benefit, to our blessing, and to the life that God designed us to lead.

Doesn't mean freedom from pain. It doesn't mean that we don't have hardship in this life because it's just part of the deal. But all of a sudden that suffering has an entirely different purpose.

It has meaning. Our lives have significance. So Jesus is both suffering servant and the triumphant king. Our best interests are nested in God's interests.

[ 10 : 15 ] And in the highest path, Jesus yells at Peter, you do not have God's interests in mind. You're thinking about your own interests. If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

That's the path. That's not a path for super saints. It's not something that I have to do because I'm a pastor. Or my friend who's a missionary in Egypt has to do because she's a missionary. No, no.

This is the path to your best life. To subordinate what you think is the best way to do things and listen to God. That's denying yourself. To take up your cross.

The analogy we used was that God gives us a garden, an area of influence. That we are to step into that garden in partnership with God and see it thrive.

Everybody who's there is blessed because we are fulfilling God's plan for our life within our sphere of influence. And then we have to follow Jesus.

[ 11 : 21 ] That's not an option. We don't convert, make a decision that, yes, Jesus, I believe that you died on the cross for my sins, but that's all I really want.

I want to make sure I go to heaven someday, kind of like buying life insurance. I really hope I don't have to use it, but I may have to, so I'll buy it. No, no, no. No, no. That's not the gospel.

The gospel is repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. Turn from your own way of understanding how life is to work. And turn to submit yourself to God, trusting that his way actually is better.

Follow Jesus. So those are the three things that Jesus was trying to get across to the 12 knuckleheads. I think there's going to be a gathering in heaven when I get there, where all these people that I have mocked that are in the Bible are all going to gather together and beat me up for saying things about them.

It's like, you know, that's not exactly fair. So, sorry guys, I apologize, but I think they were knuckleheads. Just like us, to be fair. So, the other thing that's interesting, and this is just a side note, is I was studying this series of conversations that Mark reveals.

[ 12 : 34 ] Not only are the disciples confused, but Jesus actually makes them more confused. His answer just stirs the pot.

He confused. So, I'll give you an example. When he asks the question, who do men say that I am? Who do you say that I am? Peter says, you're the Christ. Jesus says, don't tell anybody.

Subtext, because you don't get it. Because you're a knucklehead. And then he says, the Son of Man, which is a title for the triumphant King, is going to suffer.

Die and rise again. Wait. What? Are you the king or the suffering servant? And then, he goes on to other things.

He lets them stand their confusion. Then they go up to the Mount of Transfiguration. They see Jesus transformed. And you can see from Peter and John's writing later that they understood that part of the message of the Transfiguration was, this is your future.

[ 13 : 43 ] They understood that later. So, they see this like, cool, king, got it. That's what he's going to look like. Radiant. Overwhelming. He's the head.

We hear God's voice. This is my son. Listen to him. And then Jesus says, hey, don't tell anybody until after I rise again. Wait. What?

Are you the king? Are you the servant? And not only does he stop there, he confuses the issue more. Because he refers back to Malachi 4.

It says, hey, you know, Elijah came. Well, the prophecy in Malachi 4 is that Elijah will come before the great and terrible day of the Lord, the day of judgment. The coronation of the king.

And then he stops talking. What? When you face things in your life that don't make sense, you think you've done what you were responsible to do.

[ 14 : 46 ] When you think you've understood what God means. And then he gives you mixed signals. Or things aren't clear.

Cling to him. Those days will come. They will come. It's part of our life. You need to press into Jesus.

Continue to ask the questions. That's the one thing that the disciples did right. They kept asking. Keep asking. Keep asking. Keep asking. I don't understand.

This is what I understood this promise to mean. But this is my experience and they don't line up. God, help me to understand. One of the most consistent promises throughout the scriptures is that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

Go hard after God. Follow Jacob's example. Grab a hold of him and don't let go. Ask him for an answer. He'll give it to you. He'll tell you.

[ 15 : 53 ] Or he will reveal to you that he is trustworthy. That even if you don't know the answer right now, because we don't get them all, that God is trustworthy. So this morning, we're going to talk about value and belief through two questions.

The two questions are these. Do we understand, really understand the value of what is being offered to us in the gospel?

Do we get it? And I'm going to go out on a limb and say, no. We're going to spend, truly, we're going to spend all of eternity getting deeper and deeper and deeper of an understanding.

Just how much God loves you. Okay, that wasn't my fault. I didn't touch anything. So I don't know what's going on. So technology, got to love it.

So do we understand the value of Jesus' offer to us? And two, what would be different if we really believe what we claim we believe? What would be different?

[ 17 : 01 ] We're going to come back to that. Turn in your Bible to Mark chapter 9. Mark 9. I know last week I told you to loop. Because I was, here's a, while turning there, here's an extra lesson and no extra charge.

If you're going to do a public presentation of any sort, don't take Mucinex the night before. I was a little wobbly last week.

And I thought, I took that stuff 14 hours ago. But my brain was not working. So we're going to Mark chapter 9. And turn to verse 41.

For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.

If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than having your two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

[ 18 : 09 ] If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than having your two feet to be cast into hell, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hell, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good. But if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.

Let's pray. Father, thank you that your love for us is so great. The value of what we have in Christ is so beyond our understanding that you're going to spend all eternity unpacking that for us.

I think the theme of heaven is going to be, but wait, there's more. God, as we look into Scripture this morning, help us to get a glimpse of that.

[ 19 : 20 ] And I pray for each person here this morning that there would be a step, even if it's a small one, closer to an understanding of what we have available to us because we are in Christ.

Praise us in Jesus' name. Amen. So do we understand the value of Jesus' offer to us? That's essentially what these two pictures that he's given us are.

The first one is your value. So Jesus, and these are probably just little fragments of longer conversations that Jesus was having. But one of the things he said to the disciples, but whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.

If you think back to the scene about the judgment day in Matthew, when Jesus is separating the sheep from the goats, what is the standard by which he says, you're a sheep going to heaven and your reward or going to hell and that reward?

And it's, you fed me, Jesus speaking, you fed me when I was hungry. You visited me in prison when I was in prison. You cared for me when I was broken.

[ 20 : 34 ] And of course the sheep say, well, when did he do that? When did we do that? When you did it for the least of these, you did it unto me. Jesus took ownership of it. I used to teach our, in our orientation when we were in the Dominican Republic, I used to teach our new volunteers every week that when you are touching one of these orphaned children, you are touching God.

You are touching the face of God when you touch these children. I'm not saying it. God's saying it. And what he's doing in Mark is he takes that idea and he applies it to us as believers.

If you are in Christ, when people do you good because you're in Christ, because they see something in you, they give you just something as simple as a glass of water, it's like Jesus is the recipient himself.

You have value. And on the flip side, he says, if someone causes you to stumble, hurts you, causes you to question your faith, attacks you, they're better off if they had a millstone hung around their neck.

Just to be clear, a millstone is not a rock like this. It's not the portable version that you know you take when you camp. No, this millstone is the one that's used for industrial grade milling for a whole village.

[ 22 : 01 ] And it's about six or eight or ten feet wide. It's so heavy, it requires oxen attached to it to make it turn and grind the wheat. Jesus said, you're better off if you hurt one of my children to have that around your neck and thrown into the ocean than let me get a hold of you because you mess with one of my kids.

Yes. Yes. You have value. John talked about that.

In the lead up to communion this morning, we have value. We have value because we are created in the image of God. We have value because we are in Christ if we have trusted him as Savior.

First question, do you recognize your own value? And by the way, I missed the third one. You have value. Jesus died on the cross for you.

He took your suffering so you wouldn't have to. He satisfied his Father's wrath so you wouldn't have to. You have value.

[ 23 : 15 ] You need to step into that. We go through seasons of life where we think we're not, maybe we're beyond our expiration date and I have nothing more to offer. You have value.

It's not just your utility that gives you value. It's that you are in the image of God. Jesus died for your sins. He loved you that much and you are part of his family.

You have value. Enter into that. It gives you access to your Father. You can go boldly to the throne of grace, it says in Hebrews.

So, that's the first one. So, now let's look at the value of the offer.

Verses 43 to 48. I'm just going to summarize it. If your hand, eye, or foot causes you to stumble, leads you away from following God, cut it off.

[ 24 : 18 ] Get rid of it. Because, what God has on offer to you is of far greater value than your eye, hand, or foot. Does that make sense? But do you believe it?

Now, let me clarify something first before we move forward into unpacking this a little bit of what the nature of that value is. The nature of the offer.

I believe that when John 3.16 says that for all who believe receive eternal life, that's not merely a promise of what happens to us after we die. That's included in it.

But I would submit to you that when a child is conceived, an eternal being is born, regardless of where they go in their life.

A new spirit has been created by God that will live forever. And, heaven or hell starts in this life.

[ 25 : 22 ] A better translation of John 3.16 is that those who believe receive an eternal kind of life. We can access heaven now. We live in God's presence now.

We are beginning to do the things now that we will do later in heaven with God. But we're learning what that looks like now. And the contrast in this passage in Mark 9 is that when we put our interest ahead of God's interest and we pursue our way at the expense of His way, we're creating hell on earth.

Ask yourself honestly, when you're indulging sin, when you're not walking with God and you know when that happens, is life heaven or hell? It might feel like heaven for a minute, but the fact is, it's hellish.

Your relationship with your spouse isn't what it needs to be. Work isn't going the way it's supposed to be. You don't understand. You don't have access to the Father to process through when things are hard. You're experiencing life on hell on earth.

What we're being told here is that the value of what's being offered is so great that we should let nothing get in the way.

[ 26 : 33 ] If our eye causes us to stumble, if we are prone to look at things we shouldn't look at, if our hand, we're dipping into the coffers or whatever, or we're walking in harm's way, we need to recognize that the value of what God is offering to us is so great that we lose taste for those things, even as attractive as they are.

Jesus used different analogies to make the same point. In Matthew chapter 10, he said, he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. He who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.

He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for my sake will find it. That's an expression of value. And Jesus isn't just saying, I'm worth more than your spouse or your children or your own desires because I'm God, which he could do.

He's actually saying that because, you know what, son, daughter, I love you. I love you. Those relationships pale in comparison to what I'm offering to you.

Do you believe it? Ask yourself that question. Do you believe it? Listen to what Paul said in Philippi.

[ 28 : 00 ] He was in prison when he was writing to the Philippians. This is Philippians 3, 7 through 11. But whatever, excuse me, I get fired up and then I get choked up.

Whatever things were gained to me, those things I have counted as lost for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be lost in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

By the way, it's not knowing facts about Jesus. It's knowing him in intimate relationship. More than that, I count all things to be lost in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things.

He saw value. And count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ and may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law on my merits, which aren't enough, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know him and the power of resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death in order that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.

New life. When we submit ourselves to God, when we die following his example, dying to ourself, what's the promise? It's new life. And not just new life beyond the grave.

[ 29 : 31 ] New life. A new kind of life now. Romans 8.18, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

2 Corinthians 4.16-18, Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

That's the heavenly life. For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

For the things which are not seen, excuse me, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Now understand the context. Paul was not sitting in an all-inclusive resort on the Caribbean, sip a Mai Tai.

The theme of 2 Corinthians is total, total suffering. He opens the book with the saying, we despaired even of life, but God.

[ 30 : 53 ] You've heard me say it before, you'll hear me say it again. Two most important words of the New Testament, but God, because that's the pivot point to life. Paul saw the value.

And I really hope you understand. Listen carefully to what I'm saying. So I said that Paul's not sitting in an all-inclusive resort on the Caribbean when he wrote these words.

By the way, I've been at some. The food's overrated, but the scenery is awesome. But he's also not talking from a place of suffering that's uniquely reserved for those who are the serious saints.

Because if we fall in either trap, we miss the point of how this applies to us. The suffering that Paul is talking about is the day-to-day grind of life.

Isn't that actually harder? A child that's not walking with the Lord or not relating to us who's refusing relationship?

[ 31 : 55 ] I've talked to, prayed with many of you who are going through health issues. Life is hard. We're aging. Got my haircut yesterday. I don't know what Joanne is doing, but every time I get a haircut, there's more gray hair that ends up on the floor.

What's going on? Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day from momentary light affliction.

It's producing for us an eternal weight of glory. Paul is talking about circumstances that are every bit as difficult as what you're going through. If you don't believe me, sit down with me, shoot me a text, and I will show you.

Paul can identify with what you're going through. And he calls it momentary light affliction. Why? Is he belittling the hardship of life? No. He sees the value. He sees the value of pursuing God.

God, do you see that? You are valued. You are so loved.



[ 33 : 10 ] And the offer that's being made to us is literally mind-blowing. We have to be changed. This is the essence of Paul's prayer in Ephesians chapter 3.

We have to be changed to be able to handle how awesome it is, how powerful the scenery we're going to enter into when we step into heaven. We need to be fundamentally changed to even handle it.

But we get a foretaste of it now. So we're going to wrap up with a few questions. Do you agree with my premise that your best interests are nested within God's interests?

Do you believe it? That's an easy question to say, well, yeah, I believe it. So I'm going to make it harder because that's what I do. What would change about your approach to the Bible?

What would be different if you truly believed what I've talked about this morning? What would be what would change about your prayer life? If you believe that this life that God is offering to really was on offer, this wasn't platitudes, this is God's plan for you, how would you pray differently?

[ 34 : 27 ] Even in the midst of hardship and confusion and uncertainty. What would be different about your relationships here with a community of saints? You know that's what you are.

If you're in Christ, you're a saint. Keep that in mind. What would be your difference here? What would be, how would you regard one another if you believe that?

And then what about in the world out there, your sphere of influence? What are you bringing to the table as you meet people? How could you possibly, possibly, not tell people that you hold the answer to their problems?

They're all here. How could you keep that to yourself? What would be different? I want you to think about these things this week.

And like I said, I'll be sending out to you just kind of unpacking those three elements of Jesus' message and some questions.

[ 35 : 36 ] My prayer this morning as we head into prayer is that you'll be convicted but moved through your conviction to seek God.

This isn't a you should feel bad sermon. This is a sermon of oh my goodness, I am missing out on everything I could possibly have. What am I thinking? Step into that.

Pursue that. the psalmist said taste and see that the Lord is good. That's what we want to do. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, words fail me.

to stop and think of the depth of your love for me, for us, to come to grips with the fact, the magnitude of what you offer to us when we're in Christ.

Words aren't enough. Poetry, tries, music fills some of that gap but you are truly beyond words.

[ 37 : 00 ] God, I pray that you would fill us with a vision for you, a hunger for you that would fundamentally change how we approach life. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.