



## The Heart of the Matter

### February 20th, 2022

I want to begin with a brief experiment, and I'm going to show you this image. So here's an image of two circles. It's not from Twister, although that's what somebody said in the first service. I love that game. Now, these two circles probably look like they're similar in size, but they're actually not. And I need you to help me determine which of these two circles is bigger.

So wherever you're at—if you're watching online, in Columbia, or here in the room—raise your hand if you say that the blue circle is bigger. Raise your hand. Okay, a lot of love for blue. A whistle for some reason.

Okay, now raise your hand if you say that the red circle is bigger. Okay, decent love for the red. Now, before I say anything about these circles. What was your instinct about them? The instinct was that they were equal, right? They looked equal.

I mean, they look equal, right? The reason they look equal is because they are equal. They're the exact same size. And in about 10 seconds, I convinced not all, but most of you that one was bigger than the other, and you even voted with your hands.

And I show you this exercise to show how quickly it is, how easy it is for us to believe lies that aren't actually true. In fact, in this section of Scripture and the Sermon on the Mount that we're going to unpack today, Jesus says one of my most favorite phrases of his. He says, "You've heard it said, but I tell you the truth." He's combating what was common in that culture and that day, real statements of belief. He's saying, "I know that you've heard this. I know that not only have you heard this, you believe this. Not only have you believed this, this is now a part of our tradition and behavior. I know that you've heard this, but I tell you the truth."

Jesus is often doing this, isn't he? He's going after our presuppositions, the things, the lies that we have believed. And he goes way beneath the surface, often much more so than we're even comfortable with.

So I'm going to first begin reading Matthew 5. And if you want to turn there or swipe there or whatever you cool kids are doing, Matthew 5, verse 21. He says, "You have heard that it was said to

the people long ago, you shall not murder. And anyone who murders will be subject to judgment," which many of us hear that, we go, "Phew, alright, off the hook on that one. As best I can tell, I don't think I've murdered anyone recently."

But he goes on, verse 22. "But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister '*raca*' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool' will be in danger of the fire of hell. Therefore, if you're offering your gift to the altar and then remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to them. Then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly, I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."

So again, it would have been very common for a Rabbi of the first century to say, "You have heard it said..." And typically a Rabbi would then correct that doctrine and follow it up with the phrase, "Thus says the Lord." He would say something like, "You've heard of this, but it's actually this. Thus says the Lord."

Jesus, you'll note, doesn't do that because he is the Lord. Everyone would have paid attention to that. That would have been very obvious in the first century context. "You've heard of this, but I tell you the truth." He is putting himself in the position of the divine, of God himself.

"You heard it said, but I tell you the truth." Now, he's referencing Exodus 20:6, of the Big Ten, the Ten Commandments. And again, it's easy for us to think, "Phew, alright, good. Finally, an easy one."

But then he goes on and says, "I tell you something different." He's saying, you've had this popular interpretation, but you're not actually understanding the full depth of what this actually means. Now, just to be clear, anger is not a sin. Jesus himself gets angry.

To be fair, we only are given two examples in scripture of Jesus getting angry. Sometimes I feel like we overemphasize. Like, "Well, Jesus was flipping tables..." Jesus was also saving souls and healing blind people, so why don't you pump the brakes on the outrage? But anger is an emotion, not an action. Anger is our natural response to having our will violated.

I have a four and three year old at home. I see this constantly, right? Like, they have these blocks they're playing with, and if the older one wants one of the blocks that the younger one is playing with... I should probably learn their names, but... I'm kidding. He'll often just take the block and the younger one will feel powerless and he'll start crying. It will often result in anger. And he'll sometimes kind of whack the other one. Sometimes we see this with really small, insignificant details. Sometimes they seem like catastrophic details. Either way, anytime that our will is violated, the natural response to many of us is anger. And it's not just in childhood. Someone does something or says something that we find egregious, our natural inclination is toward anger.

Now, there are two main words for "anger" in the Greek. The first is *thumos*, and it means like a temper, like a flare up. Does anyone else struggle with road rage? Is it just me? I think the most convicting that my road rage ever is if I'm listening to worship music at the same time. You're at that moment where I'm singing, and I don't listen to worship music all that often in the car, but I remember a couple of days ago, I was listening to worship music—my eyes were open—but I was just having a moment, and then someone cut me off in traffic. And what came out of my mouth was not very worshipful.

That's *thumos*, that's temper, that's flare up. That's not the word that Jesus uses here. The word he uses is *argue testai*. It means to brew over, to replay in someone's mind, to refuse to move on. Anyone ever experienced that kind of anger? Like something someone did lives rent free in your brain 24/7? You're just stewing over?

Now to go on, he uses the word *raca* here. And the word *raca* would actually have been a four letter word in Aramaic. In fact, you're supposed to say it like with all the phlegm you can muster. Let me hear your phlegmiest *raca*. Disgusting. Well done. Yeah, it's meant to be said that way. It's like an onomatopoeia. It should sound just disgusting. It should sound like, "Oh, I'm just so annoyed." It literally means "empty in the head". We might say something like "an idiot", or worse.

What *raca* is saying is not just, "Oh, I don't think very highly of you." It's moving from anger to contempt. It's not just this flare of "something happened and I'm angry." It's allowing my posture towards you to become toxic. Because ultimately, contempt seeks to dehumanize. Contempt seeks to see the other as less than.

Dallas Willard said it this way: "In anger, I want to hurt you. In contempt I don't care if you're hurt or not." In anger, I want to do something. In contempt I don't actually care if you're hurt or not.

And it's easier now than ever, isn't it, to dehumanize others? To dehumanize the person who doesn't think, or talk, or act, or vote, or believe like I do, is it not? And listen, I'm not one of those pastors that knocks on social media. I think social media, there's a lot of good with it, but there's also a lot of danger. There's a lot of formation happening on social media that we're not aware of. And when we can hide behind a screen, so often the person that we're arguing with is little more than an image on a screen.

We dehumanize them to the point where they're just simply "the doer of this evil", "the holder of this position". Do you ever ask someone about someone in their life that's no longer in their life, like, "Hey, do you know how so-and-so is doing?" And they're like, "Do you mean my ex?" They're no longer using their first name. They're just the doer-of, they're the person that did that thing to me.

This is what Jesus is getting at. Contempt seeks to dehumanize, to see the person as sub-human. Now he talks about a court here. The word court is literally just the Sanhedrin in Greek. It's like the Supreme Court in Ancient Israel. It was an earthly parallel to a heavenly reality.

What he's saying here is this kind of behavior, this kind of contempt, this kind of heart posture is something really serious. And then he goes on to use the word "fool". And the word fool is the word *moros*, which is—what modern English word do you think we get *moros* from? "Moron". And "moron", again, in our context is maybe easier to dismiss. But it's not just someone who's unintelligent, but it's someone who's immoral. It's moving from simply judging someone. It's moving from an insult to a judgment. It's not just an observation about someone's behavior, it's about someone's character.

And the scriptures are filled with all sorts of commentary about fools, how fools are to behave. Probably my favorite is in Proverbs 17:28: "Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent and discerning if they hold their tongues." Which is good news for fools, right? Just close your mouth. And if you just don't talk as much, people might think that you are wise. But this is moving from insult to judgment—not just behavior, but character. And we see this in America in particular, more and more.

You're not just someone with whom I disagree. You are a bad person. You are less than. I don't even want to be associated with you. And pick your points and pick the category. I'm sure we're all thinking of different people or people groups, but a heart indifferent towards those God creates is not someone's heart who is living in the Kingdom.

A heart that seeks to dehumanize one who is made in the image and likeness of God is not the posture of someone living in the Kingdom of God, because no one is invisible to God. No one is unworthy of his attention. And when we hold contempt, we hold over what God has declared about that person and say, "They're not even worth my time. They're less than." This is what Jesus is getting at.

Now I know that ever since I said the word "hell", some of you have not been able to pay attention, right? Like, "Is he going to talk about hell?" I'm not going to spend a lot of time here on this statement, but I do want to clear one thing up.

When you heard the phrase "fires of hell", how many people pictured Dante's Inferno? Anyone? Who's not sure what Dante's Inferno is? Okay, great. That'll be another series 40 years from now. The word "hell" here is literally the word *Gehenna*. And *Gehenna* was a real, physical place. It was in the valley just south of Jerusalem, and children were slaughtered on behalf of the gods there.

It was a mortifying place. In fact, King Josiah in Chronicles slaughtered pagan priests and then cursed that valley. And over the centuries, it also became a place where trash was burned. They didn't have a waste management system like we do. It's where trash burned 24/7. So this awful, heinous act was regularly practiced, and it's where trash burned 24/7.

And over time, this valley became a metaphor for the judgment both now and to come. That's the word that Jesus is using here. And I want you to pay really close attention to something that's really easy to overlook in this particular passage. He says, "If you give into this, then you're in danger of the fires of hell." Not "God sends you there." He says giving yourself over to this way of living puts you in danger.

He's asking, what life are you going to choose? Life in the Kingdom of heaven or something else? Giving ourselves over to this kind of living, this kind of contempt and bitterness, is hell on Earth. And he's saying, which path are you going to choose? He's saying, the anger that we carry around is a really big deal.

And just to be clear, this is a very real struggle for me. I know I come across like a kind of jolly guy. I don't know what this is supposed to indicate. My apologies. Anger is a battle that I still fight. I've been fighting for a long time. This is preaching to me as much as anyone. If you want to do further study, there's a couple of passages I'd encourage you to check out: Ephesians 4:30, Colossians 3:8,

James 1:9. These are just a couple of examples of how seriously Scripture takes carrying around anger.

Now, Paul does say things in one of his letters to the Church in Ephesus. He talks about, "In your anger, do not sin." So he's indicating there are appropriate times for anger. And we talked about this over the summer last year. Some of us need to repent for always getting angry. Others of us need to repent for never getting angry. There are things that are happening in the world that should cause us anger. Like, to say, "Hey, the injustice, the exploitation of the vulnerable and the marginalized... I'm fine with that." That should concern us. There absolutely are times and places where our response should be anger at injustice, anger that sin is winning in this relationship or this circumstance.

There is a lot to be done, but not through the vehicle of contempt. There is a lot of work to be done in the name of Jesus, but not with the dehumanizing posture that says, "Oh, you're less than."

So, then Jesus gives two really practical next steps. Verse 23: "Therefore, if you're offering your gift at the altar and then remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them. Then come and offer your gift."

Okay, so where is Jesus teaching from? He's teaching on a hill and he's in Galilee, up there in the north of Israel. And this is easy for us to miss because we live like six minutes from 147 churches here. But at the time that Jesus is giving this teaching, there was one temple, there was one altar. It was in Jerusalem. So imagine that you're a farmer and you travel the 80 miles to the temple to offer your sacrifice—and your sacrifice, by the way, it wasn't PayPal. They didn't have, like, kiosks and stuff. Typically, the sacrifice would be an animal. So let's say it's a goat. Some farmer travels 80 miles to the temple. He stands before the high priest, and all of a sudden it dawned at them, "Oh, shoot. Jedidiah and I have an issue that hasn't been reconciled."

Jesus is saying, leave your gift there, travel the 80 miles back to where you came from, and deal with the issue. He's again being a bit hyperbolic, but he wants us to understand how seriously Jesus takes reconciliation, how seriously he takes the issue of fracturing in our relationships. He's like, "I don't care how far you travel, leave the gift there. Go deal with that."

Some of us, just to put it bluntly, you're going to need to make a phone call this afternoon. You're going to need to cancel some plans and drive to someone's house. Not tomorrow, not next week when things let up. Now. Jesus says this is how seriously we should take this fracturing.

Particularly here, he talks about brothers and sisters, right? Which some of us might be thinking, "Okay, phew, he's only talking about Christian friends." But then he goes on in verse 25, "Settle matters quickly with your adversary." Some translations say "enemy", the one who is coming after you, the one that you actually don't wish to do life together. It's another hypothetical.

And it's actually worth stating every town had a court that was made up of village elders, and they had something that I think made sense at the time and originally was done away with. It was called debt prison. So if you owed someone money that you couldn't pay, they would put you in prison until you could pay it back. Do you see why they did away with this? "It's kind of hard to make the money to pay you back if I'm stuck here in prison", which meant a lot of people actually died in debt prison. They could never pay it back. Jesus here is saying, don't just settle it—settle it quickly. Don't just settle it, settle it quickly.

This is why Paul in Romans 12, he says, "If at all possible, live at peace with one another." He recognizes that it might not always be possible, by the way—I'm glad that he included that. If at all possible, as much as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Has anyone ever struggled with letting bitterness fester and take root in your heart, though? Does anyone remember those seasons or that practice as like a time of flourishing for you? Of holding onto that grudge, holding onto that bitterness?

I've often heard it said that bitterness is like drinking poison, expecting the other person to die. Have you ever realized that someone's living rent-free up in your head, and they haven't even given you a second thought, but it's plaguing your mind? It's wreaking havoc on your relationships, on your prayer life, on your intimacy, all of that. Don't just settle it. Settle it quickly to break the vicious cycle of anger. Do your best to make peace and do it quickly.

And the question we need to ask is, is that easy to do? No, it's simple, but it's not easy. It's sort of like my relationship with downhill skiing. I understand the concept. Like, I'm supposed to start up here and then end up down here and don't die. Right? But for whatever reason, though, like I strap on some skis, and I'm just a whole jumbled mess. I can't figure it out. I understand the concept, but actually doing it is so much more difficult.

There are things to fight for, but not with contempt. Whatever you think hate is accomplishing, love will do a better job. Whatever you think your bitterness is accomplishing, love will do a better job.

Whatever you think your contempt, your unforgiveness is accomplishing, I'm telling you, love will do a better job. And that's what it means to live in the Kingdom.

So then he moves on to adultery. Aren't you glad you joined on a Sunday? Matthew 5:27: "You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right-hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It's better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."

Nothing controversial there, right? That's good. And he connects these, by the way. I think we sometimes forget that this is a sermon. It's a collection of teachings, but they're connected in a very strategic way. Adultery often happens after anger turns to contempt.

So again, verse 27, he's saying what rabbis would often say, "You've heard it said, but I tell you the truth." He's referencing Exodus 20:15. It's command number seven of ten. And again, it's easy to think at the beginning, "Phew, alright, I got this." And then he takes it a step further. Jesus is about to pull back the veil, behind behavior and what's actually going on in the heart. Jesus is regularly doing this: "You're looking at just sort of these actions. Let me show you what's actually going on at the heart level."

He does this in multiple categories. You think it's ultimately about money? No, I'm telling you, it's actually about the heart. Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is. Out of the mouth, the heart speaks. He's saying, Jesus doesn't just simply want our behavior—he wants our heart. He wants our lives, not just our Sunday mornings, not just our small groups, not just our Christian activities, as if there even is a thing. He's saying, "I want all of you."

You think you can sort of check the box like, "Cool. I haven't had any adultery this week." And Jesus is saying, "No, it's way deeper than that." And at first glance, just to be honest, it seems impossible. Don't look at anyone ever lustfully, ever. At first, that seems impossible, which leads us to typically one of two conclusions: either just to write Jesus off entirely, or a downward spiral of shame.

But Jesus, just to be clear, he's not talking about the appreciation of beauty. Beauty was there in the garden. In fact, at the end of every day of creation, God steps back and says, "Oh, that's good." The word "good" there is the word and "tov", it has a lot of meanings, but predominantly it means "sight".

It's good to the sight. God, is stepping back from creation, saying, "Oh, that's *tov*. That's *tov*. That's *tov*."

He's also not talking about a momentary flash of desire. It's not sin, it's temptation. There's a neural, biological response. And I would say this: we can't control temptation, but we sure can influence it, can't we? We can't control temptation, but we sure can influence it. Martin Luther once said, "I can't control if the birds fly over my head, but I sure can control whether or not I let them make a nest in my hair."

I can't control if they're going to fly past my head there, but I can control whether or not they make a home in my hair. He's talking about when we gaze at someone to get gratification from their body. Now, I realize this might get uncomfortable in the room for a little bit. Just bear with me.

The word "look" in English is tough. This is always the tough thing with translations, because the word "look" in English means a number of different things, right? "Look" could mean like a glance. It could mean to stare intently. "Look" means a number of different things. Here, it's the Greek word for "gaze", like to look intently.

In fact, the preposition that follows is the word *prose*, and it means "in order to." The ESV translates it as "lustful intent". It's someone who sets out to see someone to fulfill sexual gratification.

This issue is not about beauty. It's not about the human body. In fact, if you're ready for it, go read Song of Songs, by the way. Students, maybe not you. Some of you are like, "Alright, Song of Songs. You got it." It'll make you blush. God has designed the human body and sexuality—it's his idea. It came from him. That's not the issue.

The problem is when we turn people into objects. That's the problem. It's all about that second look. You know what I'm talking about. It's the second look and the third look and the fourth look. Much like anger, it's about objectification. It is dehumanizing the other. And in fact, not only does it dehumanize the other, it also dehumanizes us. We become more animal, the more that we give into it. It doesn't just simply do something to the other person. It begins to do something to us.

This is why the phrase "follow your heart", I think, is terrible advice. Does anyone trust their heart 24/7? I've been invited to speak places, and sometimes I'll say, "What would you like me to speak on?" And they're like, "I don't know, whatever's on your heart." And I'm like, "You do not want that." That is going to be one weird conference. You should give me some guardrails.

The issue is because we're a mixed bag of desires, right? We know this to be true. We're a mixed bag of desires. And Jesus doesn't say, "Hey, manage them." He says to crucify them. So often we teach to do tricks what Jesus says to put to death. Don't let it, like anger, don't let it take root, don't let it fester.

It's deeper than just objectification. It's adultery of the heart, because here's what I know to be true: an affair doesn't just happen in an afternoon. It's never like, "Oh, the barista messed up my coffee and I had a long day at work, and whoops!" No one accidentally has an affair.

It starts way back here with that second look, doesn't it? With the subtle objectification of another, of dehumanizing them in our minds for our gratification. Lust does something to our heart, and we begin to confuse love and lust.

If you've ever been to a wedding, a Christian wedding in particular, I guarantee you've heard the 1 Corinthians 13 passage read—which don't even get me started on what that passage was actually about. That's a series for another time. But it's lovely, it's fine.

But what I find so interesting about love and lust is that they're opposites. And that very first description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 is "Love is patient." Love is patient. Love takes its time. Do you know what I know about lust? Lust is always in a hurry. Always. Lust always wants it now. I need whatever the thing I think will fulfill, I need it now. Lust is always in a hurry.

In fact, you read through 1 Corinthians 13, lust is the opposite of all of those. It's not kind. It's actually very envious. All of the opposites of 1 Corinthians 13—that's what lust is. Love, as we know, is putting the good of another ahead of your own. Lust is the opposite. It's the opposite of the great commandment. "Love the Lord of God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself." I can't love you if my whole goal and aim is to simply get something from you. It's using a person as an object, a body for your gratification.

Now here's what I want to make sure that we get, because the original command were like, guardrails. It was set in place for a good reason. There's guardrails, and like on the road, guardrails are good for keeping a car from flying off the road, but they'll never teach you how to drive like Mario Andretti. Jesus is saying, "I'm not just interested in keeping you from flying off the freeway," although that's a good start. That's a good start. He wants to do something in our hearts, in our

character. He's teaching us a new way to be human. He's saying, "The world will tell you this way. People of the Kingdom live differently." They look different.

So then Jesus talks about chopping off body parts, right? Sure, why not? Again, he's being hyperbolic for, I think, shock effect. He's saying, deal with it fiercely. He's not saying, "Oh, boys will be boys. We all struggle now and again." He's saying, "Don't manage it—cut it off." Don't pop an aspirin, take a nap—put it to death.

He's being hyperbolic. We get that, right. He's being hyperbolic, right? If he wasn't, by the way, he's mentioning the wrong body part to be chopping off, so either way, he's... Is that too far? I'm going to get emails for this one, aren't I? Okay, let's move on.

In church history, though, people actually have taken this too seriously. Origen of Alexandria, who was a third-century scholar, actually made himself a eunuch because of this passage. That was his choice. It wasn't until the Council of Nicaea that the church declared that that's not a good practice. Jesus is not suggesting self-mutilation to avoid sin. But what is Jesus driving at? Is he driving at the letter of the law?

I think what Jesus is driving at here is our tendency to line walk. You know what I mean, when it comes to sin? We would never say it out loud, but it's sort of like, "Jesus, how close to the line can I get before it's a problem? How close to sin can I physically be before technically it's an issue?" This is why the writers of the New Testament scriptures talk about fleeing from sin. Run the other direction. Don't even taunt it. Don't walk to the line.

The Pharisees believed that as long as the body was doing what's right, you're good. But Jesus says, "You're whitewashed tombs. Your outside looks all nice and pretty. You're the moral authority in this time and age, but inside you're like rotting carcasses." Jesus is not disinterested in our behavior, but he's interested in a whole lot more. He looks at the heart. Why? Because apart from Jesus, I could chop off every limb and still have my heart far from God. Right?

Maybe in a more modern context, I could behave all the right Christian ways and still have a heart that is bitter and angry and distant from God. Again, he talks about hell. Living this way is hell on Earth. It starts with a second look, and it does something to our hearts. And he's calling us to a new way to be human.

And we talked about this a few weeks ago, when it comes to unintentional versus intentional spiritual formation. This isn't just something—it's not just a prayer that you pray. It's going to take teaching and practice and community, all by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is possible.

The look-to-lust trajectory is a habit. It's not the law of gravity. This could mean joining a community group or being honest with the one that you're already in. This could mean joining a Pure Desire group. By the way, I love that we do that here. If you're struggling in this area, I can't encourage you enough to join a Pure Desire group. It will be absolutely transformative. Get people around you, though.

I heard it once said that we are the belated announcement of what we've been thinking about for the past three months. We are the belated announcement of whatever it is we've been consuming. And that includes the people around us. That includes TV and ads and music. What we're reading or not reading. We are all the belated announcement of whatever it is that we're taking in, myself included. He's saying, don't just pay attention to activity, to behavior—look to the heart.

And lust shows up in a number of different ways, by the way. It's wanting something that isn't mine. The Pharisees taught that anything short of physical adultery is fine. Jesus says no. And at the root of both of these is unaddressed anger that has turned to contempt. And we can put aside our anger because God, in Christ, has set aside his.

That's really good news for us today. And one of the best ways, honestly, to keep our soul healthy is worship. And worship isn't just simply the singing of songs, although that's part of it. It's seeing all of life as worship. It's seeing everything I do—it's eating and drinking, it's coffee and it's lunch, and it's commuting to work and it's answering emails and it's doing the dishes, it's playing with my kids, it's date night with my wife—all of that is worship. That's how we keep our soul healthy. And we remember and worship that we love first. Why? Because he first loved us.

If you're here today and you feel jacked up, you're in good company. By the way, if you feel like you're too far gone, that "God could never love someone like me", man, I've been there and you're not alone. But we love, and we live this love not because of how awesome we are or how diligently we've dealt with sin or how moral and upstanding we are. We're able to even be here at all because he first loved us.

He loves us in our brokenness. He loves us in our shame and too much to let us stay there. He loves you exactly as you are and too much to let you stay there. So what would it look like for us to be a

people of the Kingdom? To know that when we fall short, when we miss the mark—it's going to happen to all of us—the responses that God dismisses us, that he does away with us, but he enters into our brokenness and our pain and our bad behavior and our bad conduct and our evil thoughts, and he enters all of that with us and says, "I have a better way to live. Let me show you a better way to live."

The way of this upside-down Kingdom will often, to many, look very upside down. It might be strange to people, like, "Really? You went and dealt with that issue the same day? That's a bit extreme. Really, you got rid of your smartphone and got a flip phone? That feels like a bit much. Wait, hold on, you actually tell people, a community of people, like what you're actually dealing with and what you're struggling with? That seems a little touchy-feely for me." It will seem, to many, if not most, wildly upside-down.

But Jesus is saying that is the way to truly live and we're able to do it because ultimately he conquered sin and death. The tomb is empty, and he invites us to walk and live in this resurrected kind of life. Church, will we step into the Kingdom? And by God's grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit, may we live differently as a result? Would you pray with me, please?

God, my guess is that there's a lot of stories of heartache and struggle, pain and shame. God, would you remind us that there's no part of our heart that's hidden from you anyway, that when we might become really good at maintaining a front, an image, that you already see our heart fully and completely, and you call us loved? What a miracle. Help us to stop running. Help us to stop attempting to hide, cleaning ourselves up. Free us, God, from running to the line to see how much we can get away with. God, and show us the freedom that is found only in you—only in you, God. We thank you and we love you, God. Bring freedom in our church, in our hearts, in our souls—not because of our conduct, but because of your son. We love you, we thank you, God, for loving us. We pray all these things in the Holy, beautiful and powerful name of Jesus, and all of God's people said, "Amen."