

St. Louis Area Bible Chapels | 2018 Conference | Seeing the World Through Jesus' Eyes | Session 2 of 3

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 March 2018

Preacher: Nate Bramsen

[0:00] All right. I need to make sure that your attention is focused, because I'm not going to start off with a joke or start off with anything light.

I'm going to start off with something extremely heavy, and I need you to think. I'm going to read you a newspaper clip from a week and a half ago.

Okay? It's not a newspaper that you've read, most likely. It's from the Pyongyang Times. All right? So, capital of North Korea.

And before I read you the clip, I want to ask you the question, okay? And so here's the question. After I read this clip, what are your immediate thoughts?

Okay? Don't answer out loud. Just answer in your own spirit. This comes from one of my friends who sent this to me. He and his wife and child live in Pyongyang, and they're from my local church.

[1:07] The Trump clan is advertising that tourists should write their wills before going to the DPRK, North Korea.

If the United States starts a war against the DPRK, the service members and people of the DPRK will wipe out all Americans so that no one will be alive to keep their wills and bury their coffins. What are your thoughts? Hang on. Think. Now, I'm going to say something more powerful than that. And watch out.

Some of you are not going to like me at all. It's okay, though. I didn't come for that. A bunch of North Koreans, especially one North Korean, would love to see all of you dead.

Okay? That's fine. Spiritually, they're blind. And most of them have never heard the gospel one time in their life.

[2:19] Now, my mother taught me a lot of things in life, but one thing she never taught me was not to slap blind people. I just never did it. I never slapped a blind person.

I was that good of a kid. Okay? Hang on. North Koreans haven't heard the gospel, most of them. They're blind. In our world today, over 20,000 people per day die from malnutrition and hunger-related causes.

Over 20,000. To give you an idea, that's about how many have died since 9, 11, 2001 from every terrorist attack in the world combined. Not wars. Every terrorist attack combined.

From universities to trains to planes, anything. All right? So, in one day, in two days, way more than that. Okay? So, just take two days. Actually, I think that's the proper stat. So, we'll say today and tomorrow, Saturday and Sunday, more people will die from hunger-related causes in the world than since 9, 11, 2001 combined.

All right. All right. Now, you and I have the answer for eternal life. We know the gospel and we know what saves souls, but the descendants of Anak are in our way.

[3:38] So, we're scared. I want to ask you who the problem is in the world today. Or what the problem is. Is the problem terrorism?

Or is the problem materialism? And who really are those perpetuating terror?

Those who are blind and have no hope of eternal life? Or those who have hope of eternal life and don't care about the blind? Now, I really don't expect that I've earned any votes if I ever run for public office.

In fact, I think I lost anyone I may have ever had. And that's okay. Because as I read that quote, I'll tell you what comes to my mind.

There are precious, precious souls that Jesus Christ died for that have never heard of him. And you don't say that kind of stuff unless you're really scared.

[4:47] And they're terrified. And do you know how many of us would actually rejoice if we heard tomorrow that North Korea was obliterated?

When I moved to the Middle East as a 22-year-old, I was told by one gentleman in my local assembly, you don't need to move to the Middle East.

They just need an atomic bomb dropped on them. That was in the church. I just wonder, what do we see? Do we see what Jesus sees?

Or do we see through the eyes of temporary things? Now, hang on. The world will fight. I get that. Governments are established by God. I get that.

But I also get the fact that Philippians 3.20 is in my Bible. I get that too. And that tells me I am a citizen of heaven. That does not mean I don't honor those placing authority over me because I do.

[5:47] That means that when I start preaching messages that the United States government doesn't like and they say we have to arrest you, I'm not going to change my message for them. They can arrest me. I will submit.

I won't fight the police officers. I will be very accepting of the fact that I now get free lodging in a prison cell and you will pay the bills. I get that.

That's okay. Romans 13 is also in my Bible. So it's totally fine. But what does Jesus see when he sees the United States?

What does Jesus see when he sees North Korea? What does Jesus see when he sees a soul?

That's what I want to talk about. Because I believe our entire life agenda way of thinking is going to be completely I don't want to say change because I think that we all have aspects of absolute truth that we're already practicing.

But I do think a lot will change. Let me just go ahead and say something straight out just so you can all like rest super easy and we can just be done with this part of the conversation.

[6:56] I don't have to bring it up again. I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. Sometimes being a follower of Jesus Christ looks exactly like a Republican.

Sometimes being a follower of Jesus Christ looks exactly like being a Democrat. Sometimes being a follower of Jesus Christ looks like neither of the two. But I am a follower of Jesus Christ. I am not trying to come with any small fragment of any political party.

I am here solely, solely to preach the word of God. So, whatever comes out of my mouth, may it be of the word alone. If you're offended, let it be the word that's offending you.

I say that in so much love. So this message is about souls. Turn to John chapter 4. John chapter 4. And we're going to see what Jesus Christ sees when he sees a soul.

Now, I'll go ahead and say right out that Jesus doesn't see the same thing that the disciples are going to see. Alright? And he doesn't see the same thing that a lot of us might see.

[8:01] Now, John 4 is a chapter very well known for the first 20, 27 verses, 28 verses. But we're going to focus on the part that comes right after that. I'll start in verse 27. We'll read down to verse 38.

But the first part of the chapter is about this woman that finds a Jewish man waiting for her at a well. And when she shows up, of course, we know the story.

He asks for a drink. And there's just so much beauty there. That's another message in itself. But really what God's showing here is his love for this woman. And how she's part of a love story bigger than her own life.

But when we get down to the chapter 4, verse 27, look at these words. Just then, his disciples came back.

And they marveled that he was talking with a woman. But no one said, what do you seek? Or why are you talking with her? So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did.

[9:05] Can this be the Christ? Verse 30. They went out of the town and were coming to him. Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, saying,

Rabbi, eat.

But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about. So the disciples said to one another, has anyone brought him something to eat? Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Do you not say there are yet four months and then comes the harvest? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest.

Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, one sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored and you have entered into their labor. This is the word of the Lord. Father, thank you for your word. Thank you that it's true.

[10:06] And Lord, I ask, change me. Change my heart. Change my eyes. And may I see souls, including these ones, right in front of me, the way that you see them, with the love of Calvary, the love of eternity.

I pray this in your name and I pray that you would watch over everything said that nothing might be of the flesh. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Alright, so souls, souls, souls.

My friends, think about this. And it's such an easy, simple thought. There's two things that last for eternity. Two things. The word of God and people.

The souls of mankind. So when we're talking about assets on earth that are of utmost importance, it is without doubt the word of God and souls.

And so when we talk about souls, the question is not so much, it's not so much like, you know, are they worth a lot? We already know that. But the question is, why don't we see them that way?

[11:10] Because if I'm honest with you, I don't see souls the way I should see them. Now, I know what God wants me to see in a soul, but it doesn't mean I constantly see that in a soul.

And clearly, we're blinded by so many things that society and even our past will put on it. Now, when these disciples come up to Jesus, he's talking to this woman, but it's not just any woman, right?

A, the fact that her gender is a woman and a Jewish rabbi would be talking to her is significant. We know that in that day, the Pharisees would pray a prayer and they would say, God, thank you that I'm not a Gentile.

Thank you that I'm not a slave. Thank you that I'm not a leper. And thank you that I'm not a woman. Those were the four things they prayed. So right away, Christ speaking to this woman is significant. But then in addition to that, she's a five-time divorcee.

And the guy she's with now is not her husband. So we also have a woman who does not have a reputable reputation even within her own community, let alone with a rabbi.

[12:17] And we also know she's a Samaritan. This woman doesn't have much going for her. And so when Jesus comes into this situation, the disciples naturally wonder, why is he talking to her?

And so the first thing I want us to see, because it comes out of this passage so clearly, one of the first things, and I'm saying this before I give you the point, one of the first things that will blind you from seeing souls the way Jesus sees souls.

I mean, like literally, if this is in the way, you will not see a soul like Jesus sees the soul. Okay? And this is a label. Write that down. Number one, labels.

If you have labels on souls, you will never see them the way that Jesus sees them. I have used some labels in this message already.

I use labels of North Koreans. And if I just said North Koreans, we have thoughts. I use the label of terrorists. Although maybe I called myself a terrorist more than those who we would normally call terrorists because I have the truth and I keep it to myself.

[13:26] That's wicked, Nathan. But we use labels all the time. I use a couple other labels. Intentionally. Because I wanted to use some labels. So we have examples here.

I use the label of Democrats. I use the label of Republicans. I use a lot of labels, right? Like, we use labels all the time. In fact, when we want to get to know somebody, it's amazing how labels help us put them in a box, in a certain bracket, and now we assume a lot of things on that person when, hang on, does the gospel assume that in that person?

You see, you could put labels on me. I bet one label you wouldn't put on me, but it's actually completely correct identification. I'm African American. You say, are you joking?
No, no, no. Every form I fill out in the United States, I put African American down. I am African American. I'm from Senegal, West Africa, born and raised there. I moved to the States when I was 16.

I have citizenship in both places. I don't know. Like, I'm African American. But see, you didn't have me in that bracket. You didn't put me in that. Why? Because guess what? When we divide over external differences, we're not going to get to the heart level ever.

[14:42] Praise God for differences, because we have a creative God who created us in his image, and he's so creative that he didn't make us all look like Olivia. Now, I'm not going to say praise God for that, because she's beautiful, but praise God now everyone looks like me.

That's a good thing. Imagine a world like this. No hair? That's awful, right? Jacob's thinking, man, I pray I'll never become like Nate. And that's okay.

You can keep praying that. But guys, differences are just, yeah, the Lord's showing his creativity, but when we let differences identify someone, we're actually missing the point, because it's actually not about our differences.

It's about what's the same for every single soul. And when we come back to what's the same for every single soul, that is when we're finally going to start seeing lives the way that God sees lives. Yeah, he sees the differences. He loves many of these differences. But it's really about what's the same. And that's where I want to go right now. Now, I saw at the beginning, some of you guys raised your hands.

[15:46] You've heard me speak before. And if you've heard me speak at Turkey Hill, or if you heard me speak at the Believer's Bible Conference, you may have heard me say what I'm about to say for the next five minutes. Don't tune me out.

You need to hear it again. And I need to hear it again. And those that haven't heard it need to hear it for the first time. Because I believe that this may be the most important part of the entire day for you. I really do. This has changed my life so drastically, what I'm about to share with you.

It's how do I get rid of labels? Well, I get rid of labels by getting down to the foundation of truth. And so what I'm going to do is I'm going to do something really random here.

But first I want to tell you that I call it a game. But it's not really a game. It's life and death. But I call it a game because I started playing it in airports. I realized that thousands of people go by me every day.

Now you say every day. Well, I travel on average of a thousand miles in the air per day. That's my average. And so I'm in airports about 105 days a year. So at least last year I think that's how many it was. And so I have a lot of time to look at people in airports.

[16:47] A lot in the Delta Lounge. And so here I am with someone sitting next to me. And I think, man, all right, what can I know about them? And you know, at first my game was a little bit, not sleazy, my game was a little bit creepy, I guess you could say.

Because at first my game was, oh, this was like years ago, like probably seven, eight years ago. I'd like see their luggage tag. I'd like see their address. I'm like, okay, I got five minutes. With social media and all the internet, how much can I find out about this person in five minutes?

Isn't that, you're like, what? Are you stealing people's identity? No, I just want. Now all of a sudden I like know where this guy went on vacation last year. That's creepy, okay, guys? I mean, seriously.

So then my game went from being creepy to spiritual over time. Because I stopped thinking, what do I want to like just find out about him?

To what do I know about him? And God told me that. So he told me three things I can know about every person. And let me tell you that when I started doing this, I literally will weep over people I've never met.

It's weird, but it's powerful. Someone in the airport I've never met before, I literally just start crying thinking, I love that person so much. I'm going to play that game with one of you. I'm going to choose, I'm going to go 12 rows back, and I'm going to go three people over this way, all right?

[17:55] So it's totally a random person. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, one, two, three. Now, guys,

here's the thing.

Don't worry, we'll let them answer their phone first. And that way, because I don't want you to be all distracted. Because you know what? The enemy actually really wants you to be distracted right now. I truly believe that. I truly, truly. All right, so is everyone paying attention?

Okay. So I chose randomly this individual. And I happen to see that he has a name tag on, so I know his name. But for a second here, let me just say, I don't even know if that's his real name. I don't know anything about him, okay? I really don't. But I want to suggest to you that if this was simply a random person at an airport, I could safely say I know more about that person than they know about themselves.

And I'm going to tell you what I know about him. That's going to blow your mind. In a minute, no, in a minute, guys, seriously, in a minute. You're going to realize that who we have here is this absolutely ridiculous treasure.

[19:04] Like treasure. And in a minute, you're going to see why it means so little for me to say I'll die for him. That's what's going to happen in just the next five minutes, so watch out.

First thing I know about him. First thing. In Psalm 139, just listen. In Psalm 139, when I get down to verses 13 and 14, it says that before you were born, when you were in your mother's womb.

This is crazy. God knit him together. Okay, wait, wait, wait, wait. I don't think some of us are getting what this means. I wear these caps all the time.

If you know me at all, in the summer at Turkey Hill, I'm wearing this in the side. I mean, I just wear it all the time. It keeps my head cool during the summer. It keeps it warm during the winter. It's just a gift of God from my grandmother.

Now, she makes them for me, and she's 87 years old, I believe now. Now, the thing about her making these caps for me is this. A, I mean, I love wearing them. But B, I love the fact that it's from her.

[20:08] But here's the thing I notice about them. That when I finally get the cap, it's amazing. Like, you guys can check it out. Like, it doesn't have mistakes. Now, the reason it doesn't have mistakes is if you've ever knitted before, knitting was not my specialty.

I learned to, like, crochet and cross-stitch and do those, like, pattern designs with the plastic, you know, whole thing. Okay, you guys know it. I don't even know what it's called, right? I did all that. I grew up in the desert in the middle of Africa.

Okay, come on, guys. Have a break. There wasn't that much to do, right? Watch the camel walk. I mean, come on. Yeah, okay. So I learned it. But I didn't learn to knit. Knitting was hard. But I've watched her knit. And the thing is, if she makes a mistake, she has to pull it out until she gets to her mistake.

And then she picks back up and keeps going. That's my 87-year-old grandmother, right? I'm talking about God right now. That guy right there, it says that God knit him together.

Knit him. That guarantees that when God stitched every fabric of his DNA, every atom in his body, it guarantees that God did not make a mistake when he made sand.

[21:17] None. Zero. It even says, just in case you miss verse 13, the next verse says, he's fearfully and wonderfully made. So the first thing I know about that random person, he's perfectly made.

That doesn't mean he's not a sinner. We're all sinners, but that's not God's fault. That's our choice. We're born into sin because of Adam, but Adam chose to sin.

So what I know about Sam is, God didn't make a mistake. Second thing I know about him, that's enough. I mean, already I'm like, wow. I'm really respecting him, but I'm not nearly done. The second thing I know about him is this.

This is wild. This guy is loved with an everlasting love. In Jeremiah 31.3, and hang on, you might be like, well, that's written to the children of Israel.

Guys, come on. Have you read 1 John 4? Have you read 1 John period? Have you read John? I mean, it's very clear that God's love is eternal because God is love, and he's also the same yesterday, today, and forever.

[22:24] And then he says, I've loved you with an everlasting love. Listen, if God's love this guy that's perfectly knit together with an

everlasting love, let me ask you two very hard questions, and I don't want you to answer out loud, but I want you to answer.

Are you ready? Question number one. If you're loved with an everlasting love, when did God start loving you? He didn't. He didn't.

God never started loving you. Literally? This is so crazy. I don't understand it, okay? But I just know it's true. He's always loved you. That's wild.

But the second question is actually crazier. When is God going to stop loving you?

Never. But wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. What if he rejects Jesus Christ? He's going to go to hell, right? Yeah. He'll go to hell if he rejects Jesus Christ.

[23:31] That's his choice. Hell wasn't made for him. He's made for Satan and his angels, but yeah, he'll go to hell if he rejects Jesus. But how God's love doesn't change God's love.

Love demands a choice. In America today, we should get this concept more than ever before. We have this hashtag Me Too campaign going on. I mean, we've heard about it from everywhere, from Hollywood to politics to your own community.

And this whole thing of abuse scandals. But what's this abuse all based off of? A guy doing to a girl, or maybe vice versa, what they didn't want.

They called it abuse because it was love so-called, not really, love imposed. God does not impose his love. He shows his love that while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

But, what are you going to do with his love? So I know that you're perfectly made. And I also know that you've been loved with an everlasting love.

[24:34] But the third thing is the thing that seals the deal for me, and all of a sudden says, Okay, my life's got to change. My life's got to change for people like Sam.

And this is it. The third thing I know about Sam is, I don't just know that he's perfectly knit together, and that he's loved with an everlasting love. I know just how much you've been loved.

Are you guys ready for this? This is crazy. This is so crazy. God, the almighty God, the one who, like, we're grasshoppers in his sight, right? Okay? That almighty God.

Watch out. He literally chose his son to become a man, to live in this broken, hurting world.

That's all. And then because of someone like Sam, Jesus went all the way to death on a cross, because he says, I love Sam, and I want him to be mine forever.

[25:49] Now guys, I don't know about you all. I don't know about you, but I know my heart right now. How can I lay a hand on this guy in any malicious way? If anything, I just want to stand in front of him and protect him.

If anything, I just want to love. If anything, I just want to serve you. If anything, it's like, man, what can I do to push you closer to Jesus? What can I do to help your life? What can I do just to love you?

I don't know him. I really don't know him. But I might know him better than he knows himself. Now I want you to stop and take these thoughts and go to the person you like the least.

It might not be somebody you know personally. It might be somebody you see on the news.

Whoever it might be. Put whatever name in there. I think about a year and a half ago, basically all of you could pick one of two names.

You could either put Hillary Rodham Clinton in there or Donald Trump. Go for it. You're all like, okay, now I get it. No, put that person in there right now. Whoever it is for you.

[26:56] Jesus Christ became a man for Hillary Clinton. He became a man for Donald Trump. He became a man for Kim Jong-un. He became a man for you. And then he died.

And listen, if my Father in heaven would love you so much as to not spare his Son, how can I not see the world differently?

How? And the answer is only if I want to ignore the Gospel. Do you want to ignore the Gospel, really? Isn't it by the Gospel that you were saved?

Isn't it by the Gospel that the power of God has been revealed? My friends, when we put labels on souls, we lose the person. We lose who they are in the eyes of God.

Years ago, when I say years ago, I'm talking way before I was born, all right? I think we're talking like 1960s. You're like, I was alive back then. I was not. I wasn't even alive in the 70s, okay? I came into the world in the mid-80s.

[27:57] But all that to say, I think it was like 69 or so, it may have been 70, there was a terrible, terrible, terrible train wreck in my country of Senegal, okay? Now, this train wreck is significant because one of my dear friends was in that train.

And his name is Henri Henri in French. And what happened was two trains hit head-on, a mess up on the tracks and terrible devastation.

Hundreds of bodies thrown from the train. I forget the death count, but it was in the three digits. And my friend was one of the bodies thrown from the train. Well, as an EMT, we learned to do triage.

And when we do triage, it can be three, it can be four different tags, whatever it is. And triage is handling a crisis situation in a fast kind of way. Because obviously, you've got bodies strewn everywhere, and so you've got to decide, how do I respond?

And so you have these tags, and what you do is you go up to the body, and you're going to check for their vital signs. You're obviously going to be checking their breathing, which is part of that. And then external injuries.

[29:04] And what you're doing is you're doing a quick assessment to see, are they going to survive, and how serious are the injuries? And if it's not overly serious, I'll put a green tag on somebody, because that tells the medics when they arrive in the hospital that, hey, that guy's going to be okay, it's not that serious, so go to other people first.

Then you've got another category, and the other category is a little bit more serious, and it's yellow or red, depending on the system. But the next one, let's say, all right, they're hurt, they're going to need medical attention, but honestly, they're going to survive too, so help them out before the green, but they're okay, and we'll put a yellow on them.

But then we've got a third category. This third category is they are in serious, critical condition, and that person's going to die if they don't get help very, very, very soon. And so, after assessing their situation, you put a red tag on them, and that means that when the medics arrive, all they're looking for is red tags.

Because red tags are the first ones that have to be helped. And then there's a fourth category. And that fourth category is the black tag. And you can guess what that's for.

The black tag is when you check the vitals and there is no breathing, there is no pulse, the injuries are severe, that person's already dead or dying. And with a lot of solemnity, you put a black tag on that body, so when the medics arrive, they don't waste their supplies or their time.

[30:31] Well, my friend Henry was thrown from the train, and when the medic came around to him, it was a black tag. They checked him out, and there was no life in him, and they put the black tag on.

And the way we do burials in Senegal, it's an Islamic nation, so we try to bury people the same day. It's just their practice. But because it was late in the day, the morgue or the cemetery, they didn't bring the pickup trucks until late.

And so when they brought the pickup trucks to collect all the black tagged bodies, it just wasn't the right time to go throw them in the ground. And so they put them in bags and took them to a freezer, I think at the hospital, where there was a morgue.

And they put my friend in the drawer, along with all the other bodies. Well, they called his father, and they said, Your son died, and he'll be buried tomorrow.

And Henry's father responded with great urgency, as most fathers probably would. And he immediately did not want to believe the report, and he came to where that train wreck was, into the local hospital where Henry was lying in state, where he was lying dead.

[31:36] And when he arrived, he said, Show me my son's body. And so he went to this morgue area, and they found the drawer with Henry's body. And when they pulled the cover back from his face, Henry's dad, this is such a weird story.

It's just true, though, but it's such a weird story. Henry's dad just lifted his arms up, cried out with a loud voice, and threw his arms over Henry's head onto his chest.

And when he smacked his chest like that, Henry sat up. He sat up. This guy's still alive today, so if you need to hear the story firsthand, you certainly may.

And when he sat up, obviously, that changed the whole game. He got taken up to the hospital from the morgue. Long story short, Henry did not know the Lord Jesus at that time. In fact, he had rejected Christ, very much so.

He rejected Christ many times after that until two of his boys came to know Christ. One died of a brain tumor. Singing in a hospital bed, praises to Christ. He died. Funeral was in my house because these were like my brothers.

[32:44] The very next year, another one of his sons died as a United Nations peacekeeper in Rwanda during the crisis between the Tutsis and Hutus. And it was at his second son's funeral that Henry finally gave his life to Christ.

Today, that was 23 years ago. Today, Henry is an all-out follower of Jesus Christ. He's giving all the years left of his life to Christ, going to unreached villages.

He goes to prisons every week, multiple times a week, sharing with young juvenile prisoners along with older men. And this guy is just passionate on fire for Christ. But let me tell you that at one point, he was dead in a morgue in a body bag, marked black and ready to be buried.

A label was put on him. And I've got to ask you, right now, just be honest before the Holy Spirit. Have you put labels on anybody? Because this is your opportunity to confess and repent and take a label off. You're still alive. This is your chance.

[33:46] Maybe it's somebody that you love and you say they're too far gone. They're not going to be saved. And you've quit praying for them. Or you've quit investing in them, saying they don't want to hear anymore.

Maybe you've quit loving them. I don't know. Or maybe it is somebody that you look upon and you say, they're the problem. No, the gospel's the answer.

It's not that they're the problem. The gospel's the answer. That's actually it. See, here's the thing. The gospel is more powerful than man's wickedness. Do you believe that?

I do. I believe that there is not one life on earth that the blood of Jesus Christ can't access and forgive. I believe that wholeheartedly.

And that is why we must preach the gospel. It's why we can still get excited about the gospel. It's the power of God, the salvation. It saves. And it will still save.

[34:42] And so, what we see here is we see labels. We're keeping the disciples from seeing the woman as Jesus saw her. But it wasn't just these labels that prevented them. There was something else that prevented them as well.

And look at this. It was the lusts of their flesh. Now, when I say lusts of their flesh, we're kind of thinking sin, right? Like, oh, I'm lusting.

No, no, no. Lusts of the flesh does not have to be something that's inherently sinful. It's something that found a sinful place in our life. The word lust in Scripture is normally the word *epitumia*, which basically means an over-desire.

It's just an over-desire. Something which is out of place. What is their lust here? It's not bad. I mean, I think some of you guys are lusting for it right now. Stop it.

Listen to the message. They were lusting for food. Nothing wrong with food, right? Like, it's good. I mean, we probably should eat sometimes.

[35:41] But food got in the way of the mission. And I wonder what good things in our life are preventing us from seeing souls because we're so focused on what we think we need.

I'll give an illustration. I was having a great talk with a friend, and I won't reveal who it was, but a friend from Turkey Hill, and we were just chatting today.

And I was honestly learning from them, so, like, it was a blessing. But it's so easy, in this case, this individual goes to university, and it's so easy to think, oh, I'm there to study.

I'm there to gain knowledge. No, no. Maybe you're going to university to study and gain knowledge. Maybe I go to work because it's, you know, the responsibility of a man or a woman.

But is that really our primary focus? No, that's the things that are necessary. I eat food because, let's say, food sustains me to a degree.

[36:48] But at the end of the day, what ultimately is the food the Father has given us to do? Well, if you're at university or you're in high school or you're at a job, the food is to do the work of him who sent you.

That's your food. And to finish that work, Jesus Christ finished the work of salvation. Now we get to finish the job that he's given us to do. Like Paul said, I have finished the race.

I've kept the faith. Now, what does that mean? Here, the disciples were focused on something temporary. They were focused on feeling good, on satisfying these cravings, when in reality there was a more emerging need or emergency.

And that's what I wonder with us. When you, I can use a lot of illustrations here, but I'll just try to say really simple. When you go out to eat, are you so focused on what's on the menu that you miss this treasure that happened to come up to you and say, can I get you something to drink?

She's going to live or he's going to live forever. That food's going to be digested quickly and passed. Did you miss it?

[38:03] It's so simple and yet so subtle and so easy to let pass by. Every day, whether you live in St. Louis or whether you live, I was born in St. Louis too, but the other St. Louis, Senegal, whether you live in St. Louis, Missouri or St. Louis, Senegal, our mission's the same.

To know him and to make him known. But so often the lusts of the flesh in the simple ways of life simply intrude.

Nothing wrong with food, but everything wrong with it when it gets in the way of vision. And so my prayer for myself, and you can make it the prayer for yourself, is, Lord, show me the simple things of my everyday life that are in the way of seeing what's eternal.

And maybe we need to take a minute to think about that. I'm going to give you guys a minute at the end because I know we have a couple announcements after I finish. I'm not done yet, guys, so chill. Like, don't close your Bible or anything because I'm not done. Not even on the third point yet.

But at the end, we're going to have like a couple minutes of silence before I pray because I don't want someone to come up and just give announcements and let that seed be removed like the birds when it's thrown out in Matthew 4.

[39:25] Not Matthew 4, Luke 4, yeah. So please, think on these things. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what is it.

But there's something else. It's not just labels. It's not just lusts. But it's also our logic.

When I say our logic, what do I mean by this? Well, keep going in the passage. Jesus says to them, and this is so clear, so clear. 35, he says, Do you not say there are yet four months and then comes the harvest?

Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest. Because if ever the Son of God did not want you to miss something, it is John 4, verse 35.

Ever. Because, let's just, Joanna, let's just say that you're really like just, you're hard-headed and things don't get through to you, all right? And so, the Lord says right away, he's like, Hey, I want you to notice this.

[40:25] Like, just notice this. And you just like, don't pay attention. Well, that's what he said here. He said, look. All right, you missed it. He said, okay. You're not looking, so let's do the next thing. Lift up your eyes. Okay?

You lift up your eyes, but you're still not seeing. And see. Do you see what that? He's telling us three things here. He's like, look. Lift up your eyes. See, my mom.

She had to do something. I was one of those, you could, yeah, I know it's hard to imagine, but I was a distracted kid as a kid, all right? Like, so my mom would do this thing. When she, like, wanted me to look at something, she'd take my head and she would turn my head in the direction in which I had to look.

Very nice and gently. But she would just turn my head and be like, Nathan, focus. Maybe your mother's done that to you too. And the thing about it is because I was distracted by so many other things, kind of like talking about Martha, remember?

You are distracted by many things. But notice here, when you talk about these, this logical approach, well, what the Lord wants to show us is we're missing what's obvious, but it's not logical.

[41:28] What I mean by that is this. He says, are there not four months, and then comes the harvest. And he also says, see, the fields are white for harvest. When you say white for harvest, like, that's not the color of those fields when they're ready to be brought in.

But there would have been another truth there, and that truth would be that actually, and this is kind of an interesting observation. This is not something, this is not what the message is based on at all. But they said that people in that area, especially in the desert, they would tend to wear white. And so even when Jesus is saying the fields are white for harvest, it was very likely that based on the fact that she just went to her village, and you can see that it says the people were coming, right? And as the people were coming, this is when Jesus says to the disciples the word about, hey, look, look.

He's probably pointing at the people coming. Look, the fields are white for harvest. Like all these folks dressed in white are coming towards you right now. But I want you to think about this aspect of logic.

Because when we think about the call of God for us, when we think about what he's put us on mission to do with him, not for him, but with him, the question is, do we find it logical?

[42:37] Probably not. Do we find it as our primary duty, our primary responsibility? Probably not. But I'm going to guess the problem is not because it's not logical, it's because we're distracted.

So let me give you an illustration of what I mean by that. When you learn about prayer, like in Matthew chapter 6, when Jesus outlines how he wants us to pray, right? So the first like seven verses or so, and then you go into the prayer that the Lord taught the disciples, right?

But those first verses, it talks about that when you pray, when you pray, when you pray. And the word pray that's used there, if you break the word apart, the word is to turn your face toward God. Now, I think that this is what's significant, because as we turn our face toward God, we're also turning our face away from the things that distract us.

Because the reality is our world is wicked. The reality is it's full of sin and corruption. I get it. I'm with you. When I look at the world, when I read the newspaper, I'm thinking the exact same thing probably a lot of you think.

[43:39] Man, these people need to be wiped out. These people are a huge problem. Like, I'm seeing the same thing. Yes, yes, yes. Until I lift up my head.

Until I change my perspective. Until I look at my God. And when we lift up our head, all of a sudden, our prayers change.

It doesn't become prayers like, oh God, how much do I have to give? No, Lord, Lord, how much can I give so all of these might know? Not questions of like, man, I'm in a relationship, but like, how far is too far?

No, no, you're not looking down anymore. You say, no, no, I'm in a relationship with God. How holy can I be? You don't ask questions like, man, where do I have to go?

No, Lord, can I go? Please? Isaiah 6, 8, here I am, send me. You want to see the person jumping at the bit to serve their God and be poured out as a living sacrifice?

[44:58] It's simply the person that's lifted up their head and seen their God. That's who it is. And so we have a privilege to lift up our head and even today we can do it. Today, I don't know what's bombarding your attention.

I don't know what's bringing anxiety and worry. I don't know what you complain about most recently. But what I do know is the Lord comes alongside you today and he offers you that chance to lift up your head.

Let me tell you a story. Guys, and many of you know the story. Oh man, if you've ever heard me tell any story, you've heard me tell this story because this is my favorite one other than outside of the gospel. But it changed my life of prayer because what I realized about prayer was prayer is not about me just like turning towards God and being like, hey God, I need your help.

Prayer was about God showing me what he's doing and letting me be the answer to my prayer. Letting me be part of it.

When I think about all of you, I think, wow, do you want to be part of what God's up to right here and beyond?

[46:02] Like, do you want to jump into where every word you say, every thought you think, every action you share becomes used for eternity?

I do. I don't do it, but I want to. And so, you know how God taught me this lesson? He taught me this lesson through two little girls. Two little girls that changed my life.

I was 19. I was 19 and living in the Middle East, in Cairo, Egypt. And in Cairo, Egypt, it's a big city, way bigger than St. Louis. We have about 22 million people.

If you don't want to count a lot of suburbs, if you want to count all the suburbs, we'll go all the way up to 30 million, all right? So let's just say 22 for the sake of not exaggerating. So, a city of 22 million people. And I was there at 19 years old, and I had the chance to work in an orphanage, in a children's home.

And for some reason, they decided to give the 19-year-old guy six newborn babies to take care of. I had five girls, and I had one boy, all two to six months old. And so my job was pretty straightforward every day.

[47:05] Not simple, but straightforward. I had to feed them, I had to burp them, I had to change their diapers and put these babies to bed. And so, you know, rocking three kids at once became a norm. And now if I babysit one kid, I'm like, what do you do with one kid?

Like, this is like, two arms, one kid, this ratio, this doesn't work. But anyway, it is fun though. You can really cuddle them and love on them, right Tom? But, but, these kids stole my heart, as you would imagine, right?

And two of my little girls, their names were Merna and Jacqueline. Beautiful, beautiful little girls. I have their picture in my Bible. If you want to see them afterwards, you certainly may. But, what was really special about them, aside from just how sweet they were, is every time you look at them, they would just beam.

They would just smile. Which is not overly common for newborns just to constantly do that sometimes. And that's a bull, when you're taking care of six babies and you have two that are just like automatic smilers, that's really nice, okay?

Because like, I could take care of the first four and then put them to bed and then take care of Merna and Jacqueline. Well, one day, two months into the stint, I arrive at the children's home and my little girls are gone. Merna and Jacqueline are gone.

[48:07] And I remember going up to the ladies that ran the home and I said, where are my babies? And she said, well, they're strong enough to survive and they were not true orphans, so they've gone back to their family and that meant somewhere in a city of 22 million people, my babies were in that city.

Well, I remember being quite, devastated is a correct word. It might sound melodramatic, but it was true. A lot of tears shed. So, after I put my four babies to bed, I would go by their empty crib and I would kneel down by the empty crib of Merna and Jacqueline and as I kneeled there, I would just ask God for two things.

God, bring somebody in Merna and Jacqueline's life who will love them and bring somebody in their life who will share the love of Jesus with them. I want you to note that prayer, turning your eyes off the world, looking to God, just looking at Him and saying, you love them more than I love them, I can trust your love.

Well, I kept praying it over and over and then finally, I went back to university in the States to finish my education. I studied two more years and on the wall of my dorm room was just plastered in pictures of babies so other guys that came in my dorm room, they're like, this is strange.

I'd be like, yeah, these are all my children actually, which is even stranger, but whatever, they embrace my strangest. And then I graduated at 21, a month later, I moved to the Middle East.

[49:25] Well, when I was moving, I was going to Lebanon. I wasn't going back to Cairo, but bombs started falling with a war between Israel and Hezbollah near Beirut and long story short is the school shut down where I was supposed to go in Beirut.

So I found myself stranded in Cairo where I had been just studying Arabic for a couple months. Well, now that I was stranded in the city of 22 million people, I said, okay, God, you put me this far, I'm going to stay right here until you show me the next step.

I ended up being there, based out there for six years, but I'm just going to start being faithful here. So I started working with street kids and refugees and international youth and coaching swimming and one day, as I'm just living there, I've been there six months now, this story, by the way, it now started 35 months ago, almost three years, okay?

I decided one random day, I'm just going to walk a street in Cairo. Now remember, 22 million people, big city, I'm just going to walk a random street. So I chose a random street and I just started walking the streets.

And as I walked the streets, just greeting people, making friends, that was kind of the idea of going out, you know, you have a free afternoon, make friends, right? But, as I'm walking, a 10-year-old girl comes out of a house, her name is Lobna, and she calls out to me in French.

[50:34] Now that's strange because it's an Arabic-speaking country. So when she calls out to me in French, she said, *est-ce que tu par français?* Do you speak French? And of course, I'm a French speaker from Senegal, so I was excited that I had a fellow Francophone.

We became friends and she said, look, I study in French, my sisters study in French, it was a girl school, that's why it's only the sisters that did, the brothers didn't. She's like, come meet my family. So I went in, I met her family, and her parents were all excited, they only spoke Arabic, but they said, would you come and tutor our kids because we can't help them out with their homework because we don't speak the language of their school.

So I started tutoring about 15 kids, not all their kids, they're like their cousins and cousins' cousins, you know. You start tutoring one kid and they're like, oh, this is a good idea. And so I had a whole class. Well, now March of 2007, the story's been going on for 38 months.

You're like, it's felt about that long. It's worth it. The school, March of 2007, I'm tutoring these kids in a gutted out room.

It's in a slum of Cairo. And I remember chickens would fly over our heads as we learn, scalding hot tea, these plastic chairs that are like, you know, missing one corner of a leg.

[51:44] And as I'm teaching French that day, all of a sudden, something happens. Now, I don't know if you've noticed today, but as I speak to you all, I look at your eyes a lot. In fact, when I look at you, I almost always, you probably notice, our eyes met.

Now, that's very intentional. It's everywhere I go in the world, I always look at people's eyes and there's a reason for that. And I won't tell you the reason right now. But, you say, another thing that's creepy. No, it's really not. It's actually a prayer. It's a prayer I'm praying.

You can ask me later. But, I always look at people's eyes. So, I know people's eyes. Well, as I'm tutoring French that day, a couple little girls wandered in the room and I looked over and I stopped teaching.

And I said to Lovna, the 10-year-old, I said, who are those two little girls? She brushed off my question. She said, that is my little sisters. I said, no.

What are their names? And she said, that's Merna and that's Jacqueline. And I knew, immediately, that in a city of 22 million people in a country I never planned on living in again in my life, not only had God reunited me with my babies, He had placed me inside their home with access anytime and He had made me the answer to my own prayer over all those years.

[53:07] Because that's how much He loves souls. And that's how much He wants you to be part of this journey of seeing souls come to know Him. Today, my little girls love Jesus and they know they're loved by Him and you can see pictures of them at 14 years old and you can see pictures of them as a newborn later in my Bible if you want to.

But what I want to tell you is God treasures lives He died for. He wants everyone redeemed. Now listen, and this is where I'm closing guys, I don't even know what time it is, I might be early, I might be way over my time, I don't know, don't worry, this is my closing thing.

When He says look up, what's He causing you to look at? What's He telling you to look at? You know, I think, just listen, you know the passage, you can verify it, spotcheckmesnopes.com, whatever you want, but in Mark chapter 12, verses 13 to 17, Jesus is approached by the Herodians

and by the Pharisees and they hate each other, okay?

Herodians, they like Rome, Pharisees, they're Jewish, like they don't like each other but they say, we hate each other but we hate someone more than we hate each other and that's Jesus. So let's work together here. You guys, you Pharisees, you want Jesus killed and we want Jesus killed so let's ask Him a question.

Let's ask Him, should we pay taxes to Caesar or not? Because here's the thing, if He says pay taxes to Caesar, He's not your Messiah. He's not for you. He wants Rome's oppression so you kill Him.

[54:34] If He says don't pay taxes, don't worry, we kill those people anyway so we'll kill Him. He's dead either way. Let's do it. So they come up to Jesus and they say, oh, they butter Him up.

You can read the passage. They butter Him up. They say, oh, teacher, we know that you are from God for nobody can do the things that you are doing except God is with Him. And they say one little question.

We've just been wondering. You know, we've been mulling over it and struggling. Should we pay taxes to Caesar or not? I would think it's a yes or no question but it's not. Jesus says, does someone have a coin?

And I don't know who it was but they're like, yeah, yeah. Whose image and inscription is on that coin? Now I want you to focus on the word image. Whose image is on that coin? And everybody knew the answer.

They didn't need to look at a coin for that. Well, it's Caesar's image. And then Jesus says something and in verse 17 it says everybody marvels after Jesus says this. It's kind of crazy because we're not marveling, right? But he says, okay, give Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

[55:34] Give God the things that are God's. And everybody is just like stunned. Why are we not stunned? Because we're missing something. You've got to connect this with Genesis 127. You are created in the image of God.

God did not send Jesus to earth to collect material possessions like Caesar's coins. He doesn't care. It's got Caesar's image. Give that coin to Caesar. Nobody cares.

But whatever has the image of God, you better bet God cares so much that he's going to die for that image. So if you see God's image on any life, you better be ready to give your life for that image because that image is priceless.

That image is eternal. That image is worth everything. So, I want to close by reading from the Pyongyang Times.

February 24th, 2018. The Trump clan is advertising that tourists should write their wills before going to the DPRK.

[56:46] If the U.S. starts a war against the DPRK, the service members and people of the DPRK will wipe out all Americans so that no one will be alive to keep their wills and bury their coffins.

I don't know about you, but I want to cry instead of be angry.

How shall they hear without a preacher and how shall one preach unless he is sent? And Jesus says right here in verse 36, 38, I sent you. Will we go?

Let's pray. Father in heaven, I want to say thank you that you love souls. Thank you that this is not about our effort. It's not about how hard we try. It's not about how much we love them.

It's about how much you love them and what you did. You finished the job. It's not about me going and doing some great act of mercy. The cross already acted in mercy. And now the question is, will they accept that justice was served at Calvary?

[57:53] Lord, I pray for us, not for, not for us to go to North Korea. That's not the point. The point is for us to love souls today right where we're at.

The point is for us to be obedient to the word right where you've placed us at this moment, knowing that as we walk in faith, you'll lead us to the ends of St. Louis and to the ends of the earth.

So Lord, I ask that whatever barriers we have in our life, whether it's a label we've been slapping on someone, whether it's a lust of the flesh we put before eternal things, or whether it's our own logic saying, that doesn't really make sense.

I pray that we would lay aside these things which entangle us, and that we would run with endurance the race set before us looking unto Jesus who is worthy.
So Father, it's only possible through you, I ask, do what we can't do, and that is change our lives today. I pray all this only for the glory of your name, because you are worthy.
[58:59] In the name of Jesus, Amen.