

Pride

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- [0 : 00] This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it. This is the day that the Lord has made.
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Good morning and welcome to our church. We have a gift for our visitors at the Connection site. Please fill out your friendship card for any prayers or concern or just so we can get to know you.
It's fun to be part of the welcoming committee here at Hamilton Center. And we are glad to have you here this morning. We have two ministry opportunities on our clipboard.
- [1 : 12] The first is if you'd want to help with the rummage sale either by participating or by bringing your stuff. All your treasures you have at home you're trying to clear out. Put them in the back of our sanctuary anytime after service today.
You're welcome to bring those in. And that all goes to help raise funds for missions. And then the other one is our mission in Niagara Falls to help provide food for the dinners we do up there. If you can help with that we do put that to your attention.
Shall we turn our hearts and our souls to the Lord in prayer. Dear Lord we do thank you this morning for gathering us in this place. And we pray that you'll help us to focus our hearts and our minds and our souls completely on you.
That we might be here for you. That you would bless us with your wisdom and understanding. For it's in Jesus name we pray. Amen. The Lord be with you. And also with you. Take a moment if you will and greet your neighbor with the peace of the Spirit.
Like to invite our children to come up and join us now. If any of the kids want to come on down. You're welcome. You're welcome. Good morning. How are you all doing this morning? Any of you ever watch TV? What's your favorite TV show?
- [2 : 27] Legos? No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.
No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.
No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.
Ok. Alright. Anybody else have a favorite show? Spongebob? You know I've heard of this guys's? Yes?
Girl Meets the Wor-Boy? The world? Girl Meets World. See I don't know all of these, I really don't.
- [3 : 21] I know some things like dog with a blog or something like that, but I don't know all these. And you guys know these things, so you know stuff I don't know. Did you know that? Yeah, I've been around a little longer than you.
I've gone to school longer than you, and some people actually figure I know some stuff, but the truth is I haven't got a clue what you watch on TV. The only way I find out is by doing what? Asking, spying on you.

Yeah, that would be pretty weird, wouldn't it? Yeah, no, we're not going to spy on you. I figure I could just ask you, right? So if we don't know something, the best thing to do is ask. You know God gives wisdom to everybody?

God gives the wisdom to even little children. God gives wisdom to people we wouldn't expect it in. And all we have to do is to seek out what God wants to teach us, and we'll learn from Him, okay?

What do you guys thankful for this morning? Raise your hand if you want to share something. My mom and dad, my family. My friends and family. Friends and family. My mom and dad.

[4 : 23] My cats. Mom and dad. My friends and family. My dad.

Friends and family. My family. Dad. My dad and mom. My friends and family.

My brothers and sisters. Mom and dad. All right. Lord, we do thank you for our parents and our friends, our families, our sisters, brothers, and for you, Lord, and all the wisdom you give to us.

Bless us always. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You guys are all about to go down to church school now. All the kids are welcome to go to church school if they'd like to. Thank you. Good morning.

How thankful I am to see the beautiful sunshine out there and to have this opportunity to worship with the family of God. Isn't that a blessing? Amen. And I do see lots of faces that are to me.

[5 : 42] Please do. They asked you earlier on to remind you to fill out a friendship card. Please go ahead and do that and just drop it in the offering plate as it comes by in a minute. Because we really do want to know who you are.

We really do want to be able to connect with you and find out more about you. Just help to be a blessing in your lives as you're a blessing to us by joining us for worship.

And as we lift up our tithes and offerings before God, let's remember this is an act of worship, isn't it? It isn't just that it's time to give. It is that God has blessed us so richly and so abundantly that we want to return back what he's called us to return back.

Amen? Amen. Dear Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks and praise for this day and for the opportunity to worship you. Lord God, we thank you for all of the gifts that you have so richly blessed us with.

And we ask that as we return this portion, that you would bless it, Lord. And that you would give us wisdom to know how to best use it for the furtherance of your kingdom.

[6 : 45] By your Holy Spirit, Lord, draw many to salvation in Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please be seated.

We do have some joys to bring before you. Amen. Amy and John Huber have twin baby girls.

And that's a blessing. And Anna Kay and Dick Anderson are great-grandparents. Again, Phil is grandpa and it's Jessica.

Jessica had a new baby girl. And her name is Aria Grace. And we are very, very excited to be in prayer and celebration with that family as well. Joy and a concern, kind of both.

We're going to be missing them very much. Bob and Mindy Campbell. Bob has taken a job in Pennsylvania. And he's going to be leaving shortly to start that new job.

[7 : 56] And they're going to be working toward moving nearer to their family too. So we want to pray, keep them in prayer as he makes this transition and she follows soon.

The Fritz family. We need to pray for Diana and her family. Diana's mom died last week. And that family has been in New Jersey making arrangements and taking care of each other.

And we do want to keep in prayer all of those who have been affected by the shooting in Wheatfield this past Friday for the family and friends of all the folks who are directly involved in that for all of the people that it impacts on for the law enforcement officials who will be investigating.

And just that whole situation and how something like that can shape a community. We need to be in prayer for this as well. These concerns and these joys and all of those that are on your hearts as well.

Let's turn to the Lord in prayer. Heavenly Father, you are such an awesome God.

[9 : 11] There is none like you. You have created us. And you watch over everything that we do.

You watch over every moment of our lives. Knowing when we are in joy and knowing when we are in sorrow. Sometimes we are both at the same time.

And in all things, you are with us. You rejoice when we rejoice. You are in sorrow when we are in sorrow. You are with us. You comfort us. You bring us peace.

Lord God, we just pray for all of those who are in joy right now.

We thank you and are grateful for the abundance you pour into their lives. And that you have poured into our lives too. We pray for those who are having troubles, Lord.

[10 : 22] Whatever kinds of troubles they are. For the sick, we pray for healing. We pray for the caregivers of those who are infirm and unable to care for themselves.

We pray for wisdom and patience for them. We pray, Lord God, for all those who are grieving losses. Dear God, pray, bring comfort.

Bring comfort into each life. Heavenly Father, we just pray that you would teach us.

Teach us and transform us. Help us to be the people you've called us to be. Help us to set aside trivial matters that pull our attention away from you.

Help us to serve you better, Lord God. Help us to serve one another. Lord God, we pray in Jesus' name as we hear your word read to us, spoken out loud, Lord God, that it would be transforming.

[11 : 42] That it would cleanse us and help us to know how to walk as Jesus walked. To be the people that you've called us to be. Be with Pastor Tom as he brings the message.

Anoint him, Lord God, to deliver it. Lord God, let it be a blessing to him and a blessing to us.

Help us, Lord, to be a blessing to our communities. As we are transformed, help us to become those who bring transformation to the people and the situations around us.

Work in us and through us. Make us able, Lord. Father, we just ask that all of our worship this morning be a blessing to you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord?

[12 : 50] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Good morning. Our scripture lesson is taken from the book of James, chapter 1, verses 9 to 18.

Hear these words of the Lord. The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position, but the one who is rich should take pride in his low position because he will pass away like a wild flower.

For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant, its blossom falls, and his beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away, even while he goes about his business.

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. When tempted, no one should say, God is tempting me.

[14 : 06] For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

Then, after the desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when in its full groan, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. I have to catch someone off guard. Professor, what exactly are your degrees?

Well, I have a B.A. from USC, a B.S. from UCLA, an M.A. from SMU, and a Ph.D. from TCU. Well, I don't know anything about your education, but it sounds like a marvelous recipe for alphabet soup.

[15 : 08] Thank you. He's got a B.A. from the University of Southern California, and a B.S. from UCLA.

His M.A. is from Southern Methodist University. I don't know if you caught that. And his Ph.D. is from Texas Christian University. Kind of an interesting collection of degrees he has.

Everybody knows that the professor on the island was the smartest guy there, right? I mean, it was pretty simple. He was smart. And on top of that, if he didn't know something, he had a book about everything to look stuff up.

Because if you went on a three-hour cruise, you would take a whole suitcase full of books with you, right? Isn't that what you would take along if you were going on a tour of the harbor? The professor.

We're talking about the seven deadly sins. We're walking through the book of James, and each character in the Gilligan's Island actually represents one of the seven deadly sins. And the first one is the professor who represents pride.

[16 : 15] Pride. You know, I've got to be real honest with you. When I saw this one, I thought, Oh, really? I don't want to do this one. Can't somebody else do this one? I don't like this one. I've got a few degrees.

I've got a B.A., and I've got an M.D.I.P., and I've got a title in front of my name. And I have probably about 4,000 or 5,000 of those books. Pride.

Pride is a difficult one because in many ways it leads to a whole lot of problems that we don't even see coming our way. When James is writing this passage, he talks about evil and good.

He talks about pride and humiliation, temptation and truth, light and shadow, death and birth. It's as if he's saying to us, throughout life, you have a choice to walk this way or this way.

And we've got to figure out what's the right way to go. So the ultimate question is, what's good? What's true? How do we know real knowledge?

[17 : 22] How do we know what God really wants? We live in a world of conflicting truths. Has anybody noticed that? One group believes this.

Some other group believes that. One is on this side. The other is on that side. And many of us feel like we're on both, right? Not sure what we're supposed to think. My grandson came home with his homework from eighth grade the other day.

And it was history homework. Now, not to brag, but I have seven years of history in high school. Plus, I have a bachelor's degree in history. And I took history in my master's degree.

So I kind of have an idea about history. I figured eighth grade history, there shouldn't be too hard, right? Here's the interesting part. History doesn't change much. The events were all the same.

I knew exactly what each of these events were about. What was different was the interpretation. You see, because what we were taught years ago in high school is the opposite of what's being taught today.

[18 : 22] I'll give you a couple examples. When we were coming up, we were told the Crusades were a good thing, where the Muslim world was terrorizing the Christian world, invading the Christian world, and Christians had to rise up to stop this and rescue and save the Christians in that part of the world.

Today, our young people are told that the Crusades are an evil thing, where the Christians went into the Muslim worlds to slaughter and destroy and terrorize people. Anybody ever hear of something called Manifest Destiny?

That was on his homework. When we were coming up, Manifest Destiny was considered something good. What it was is that the United States was going to spread to the world all these wonderful ideas about democracy and goodness and graciousness, and we had a destiny.

We had an expectation to spread this to the rest of the world so they would be better off. Now, in my grandson's report, it says Manifest Destiny is the United States trying to push their will on other nations, trying to impose their ideals on a country that believes entirely different than them.

Everything is the same event. The conclusions are all different. As soon as we think we know something, sometimes we find out we don't know very much at all.

[19 : 40] In this passage, it says, The sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant. Its blossom falls. Its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

People who are wealthy seem so powerful. People who we call successful seem like they're doing so well, and yet the truth is is that their downfall usually happens right in the midst of their growth.

I preached a whole sermon once about it in Genesis chapter 4 where God said to Cain, If you do what's right, will you not be accepted? But if you don't do what's right, sin is crouching at your door.

It desires to have you, but you must master it. Sin, the devil, evil, is waiting to destroy whatever we build up. And really, ultimately, we need to stay one step ahead of the devil.

And that's not easy. The largest retail store in the world when I was growing up, anybody remember what it was? Sears and Roebuck's. Yes, you older folks remember that.

[20 : 47] Sears and Roebuck's. We all went there to get our clothes on Main Street, which is now part of Canisius. It's frightening. Sears and Roebuck's seemed invincible. It had been the largest retailer for a hundred years.

Certainly nothing could change that truth. until some fellow in the Midwest named Sam started some goofy store that had the wrong philosophy entirely about business, and everybody, especially places like Sears, ignored them, until all of a sudden now we have Walmart as the largest retail store in the world.

And you know who bought Sears a couple years ago? Kmart. Now I want you to just think about that for just a minute. Just let that sink in. Kmart bought Sears.

And the guy who bought Kmart didn't buy Kmart because he understood real, you know, selling stuff. What he understood was that the property that Kmart was sitting on was worth a fortune and that these people had no clue.

Did you notice there's no Kmart on Niagara Falls Boulevard anymore? But where there was a Kmart, there's this huge, incredible complex. All he did was buy Kmart to develop the land.

[21 : 56] What do you think he's doing to Sears? He doesn't care about the store. So what we think is great and powerful, Sears seemed like it would be the indisputable leader of retail forever.

While it's on its way up, the seeds of its destruction have already been sown. And that's what life is like. So it's hard to find what's good, to know what's true, what's light.

In verse 17 of this passage, it says, Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly light, who doesn't change like shifting shadow. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth.

The only definition of good is what God calls good. That's the only definition of good, what God calls good. What we call good is what gives us temporary pleasures or makes us feel like we're doing well for a little while.

But as it says in here, that's like a shifting shadow that changes all the time. What God does is true forever. We need to learn it, seek it, and understand it. And sometimes it's hard for us to accept that.

[23 : 07] Jesus was talking to some people and Mark, and he said, No one is good except God alone. Let that sink in. No one is good except God.

Which means, you're not. I'm not. None of us are good. That's hard.

Because we want to be. We want to be seen as good. We want to be seen as doing the right thing. We want to be seen as the ones who understand the world and are leading things the right way as examples for our children, for the people around us.

But it's hard because there's temptation all around our lives. When tempted, no one should say, God is tempting me, James says, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt everyone.

You see, God could not possibly participate in the act of temptation because it's an evil thing. It's imbued with evil. It's imbued with destruction. So God doesn't tempt us.

[24 : 14] Even though the prayer says, lead us not into temptation, if you really read the original words, what it says is, don't allow us to be presented in situations where temptation will happen.

God keeps us away from evil. It's not God's design. The devil does it. Circumstance do it. All sorts of possibilities are out there to tempt us.

Not God. Because God is good. And we're not. I know, you wanted to say all the time, didn't you? Sorry about that.

We're not. We have evil within us. Verse 14 says, each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire.

And they're enticed. And what comes from within us? That desire to be the center of the universe. That desire to be the ones that everybody's pointing to.

[25 : 17] That desire to have our needs met, our dreams fulfilled. That desire to be God himself. James says, don't be deceived. In verse 16, in deception, that's what the devil works with the most.

To make us think that we know when we don't really know. And self-deception, which is often caused by pride.

It's the worst deception of all. The difficulty is when we think we're right about something, and then somehow we find out we're terribly, devastatingly wrong.

Have you ever had that happen? It happens to me a lot. A number of years ago, I would talk about things that happened when I was a teenager.

I had heard the preachers who would tell about how they were changed by God and saw the effect it would have, so I thought it was good for me to share about my teenage years and how God has changed my life. But I had somebody point out to me that this wasn't helpful to our teenagers.

[26 : 20] It was giving them all kinds of bad ideas and helping them to think that these kind of things were okay. And I thought, no, I know what I'm doing. This is the right thing to do. Finally, someone said to me a couple of three weeks ago, the problem is when you tell these stories, you're smiling as if you're bragging.

I'm bad. Look at me, man. I'll be bad. See, that's not talking about how God transformed me from somebody who was broken and messed up and doing bad things. It makes it almost sound like I want to show off that somehow I did things wrong.

That's like a 15-year-old boy, isn't it? And I shouldn't be doing that at my age because what I did when I was young was hurtful.

I was a bully. I took from people and I physically and emotionally hurt people. That's not a good thing.

That's not something to be proud of. That's not something to smile about. That's something to be terribly embarrassed of. I was trying to do something good but I was doing it in a terribly wrong way.

[27 : 40] Do you see the problem? Even when we have all kinds of good ideas in our minds, we might be missing the very thing that's the key to making this stuff work.

The professor knew about everything. The man was amazing. He could produce electricity out of coconuts and bamboo working into a bicycle. Did you notice this? How did he do that?

He could make things come out of anywhere. He could accomplish almost anything necessary on that island but somehow he didn't know how to fix a two-foot hole in the minnow so they could get off the island.

You get this? Patch the boat with a two-foot patch and they're off the island. Hello? Hello? Mr. Genius? Use a few of your books to patch the hole instead of saying how you know.

Do you see the problem? Because we only see what we see and we get caught up in who we are and what we think and what we're focused on and sometimes we're just truly wrong.

[28 : 45] Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 18 says simply, Pride goes before destruction. A haughty spirit before a fall. The beginning of wisdom is humility.

It's remembering what we are and who we are and realizing what we don't know. I asked the children this morning what they watched on TV.

I have no idea what they watch on TV. I could have guessed and said Teenage Mutant Turtles go bunker dude. I would have shown like I'm like 20 years in the past, right?

I don't know. How could I possibly know all the things that I might need to know in life? Any of you ever ask questions like in a class and the whole class goes, are you just like, I can't say the word, you know what I mean.

Are you truly just ignorant that you are asking all these questions? People who ask questions are people who learn answers.

[29 : 58] But it takes a little humility because it's admitting you don't know everything. and you have to be open to the idea that God can download answers to anyone.

See, pride creates destructive situations in our lives. It's what James is talking about, hurtful situations. And we get so caught up with being determined to be right that sometimes we'll even argue that we're right when we know we're wrong or we know we're being hurtful and all we do is create a wall, a barrier between us and the people that we need to be closest to.

Our anger, our hurt, we won't admit our fault. And so things fail. The professor was clearly the smartest man on the island, no doubt about it.

But sometimes Gilligan would come up with something. In one episode, Gilligan came up with a jewel. He had found it on the beach or something. And the skipper said, that is a special jewel.

You get three wishes with that jewel. And of course, the professor said, that's just utter nonsense. But Gilligan tried it and he wished for a gallon of chocolate ice cream and you know what popped up in the lagoon right then and there?

[31 : 22] Gallon of chocolate ice cream. The professor said, that's just coincidence. That's a bunch of nonsense. That can't be true. It's not possible. A little later in the show, Gilligan wished for a vanilla ice cream.

You know what time? Gilligan's mine. And guess what came? Loading up to him. Later on, they finally cornered Gilligan and they got him in a little piece of land and they all stood together and Gilligan was supposed to wish that they'd be off the island and the piece of land they were standing on slid into the lagoon.

And they were off the island. All three of Gilligan's wishes came through. even though the professor said it was impossible. And so they sat down at the end of the show to discuss this episode.

Just forget it. What are you? You know, digging that bait trap loosened that little peninsula of land and floated us out into the lagoon. You have no faith, professor.

Not in fantasy or wishes. Everybody's mad at me, huh? Oh, no, not exactly. We just felt that you let us down into the lagoon as a matter of fact. But it wasn't your fault, Gilligan.

[32 : 27] Of course not. You did what the skipper asked you to do. He told you to wish us off the island and you wished us off the island. I didn't say into the lagoon. He knows what it really is, this. You know, Gilligan, I never did think that Sammy Precious Stones did a thing for you.

That would be any more trouble. But it's a great idea, Gilligan, but it's a waste of energy. You already had your three wishes. Well, I hope whoever finds it has better luck with it than I did.

Hey, that's right. Whoever finds it next gets three wishes. See you later, Gilligan. Professor, I didn't think you believed in that wishing stuff.

Oh, I don't. It's completely unscientific, absolutely absurd, violates every rule of common sense, and is completely contrary to the rules of logic and intelligence. But just in case.

The skipper says, Professor, you have no faith. Because it's completely unscientific. Goes against all the ideas of reason. It's irrational and it isn't the right thing to do.

[33 : 33] But maybe I'll give it a try. Maybe I'll try this thing that doesn't make sense, this backwards, upside-down idea, because maybe there's truth where I didn't read about it in a book.

In the early days of the church, the disciples stood before something called the Sanhedrin, the ruling committee of Israel. And they were going to condemn him. And a man named Gamal got up and said, let me suggest something to you guys.

If this is just a human endeavor, it's going to fall apart like a lot of other things have fallen apart. But if this is of God, we might find ourselves opposing God himself. Maybe in our pride, we're actually ignoring what God wants us to do, what God wants us to hear, what God wants us to see, wherever it might come from.

There's only one thing that Christians do that doesn't happen in any other part of our society, particularly, and that is we worship. You can go somewhere and learn things.

You can go somewhere and have social activities. You can go somewhere and put on fish dinners. There's lots of places you can do pretty much everything we do, except this.

[34 : 49] This is what defines people of faith, is that we worship. And what do we do when we come to worship? We really come here to remember who we're not. We're not God.

We're not God. God is God. And we're not God. Believers in humble circumstances, James started out by saying, ought to take pride in their high position, but the rich should take pride in their humiliation, since they'll pass away like wildflowers.

That just sounds so completely and entirely backwards. People in low circumstances should take pride in their high position. I've got friends in low places.

I listened to the first part of that song. It was about a guy who showed up in cowboy boots to a black tie event. You ever do that? You ever think you're doing the right thing and you end up wrong?

You ever be dressed wrong for a party? My wife got an invitation to a wedding a little while back and it said black tie. When was the last time you were invited to a black tie event? That's not too common.

[35 : 57] I know what it means. It means I wear that little tuxedo I wear on Easter and Christmas, right? I can do that. So I put on the tuxedo at my wife's encouragement and we headed off to this wedding in Rochester.

The only problem was the only person in the place that was wearing a tuxedo. Not even the groom was, excuse me, waiter, could you bring me a drink?

Really? I went from being the best dressed to being the waiter. Kind of frightening that the best dressed people in the restaurants are the wait staff, you know? We should do something about that.

Another story. See, we can think we're doing the right thing based on the information we have. We might find out that we're completely wrong.

Humility. Humility tells us that we need to be open to hearing wisdom wherever it might come from. That God wants to teach us.

[37 : 01] And wisdom from God is given to us. It can come from anywhere. It can come from the littlest of children. It can come from people we don't think understand anything about life.

It can come from anyone. If we're open to hearing it, God is not limited in who he can pour his wisdom out to. And I've learned a lot from the people I'm supposed to teach.

The rich will fade away like flowers. They look so amazing one day, and the next day they'll be gone. I want to be going back to you.

This stuk of people will run into thezil. If we ever tell you of Hertzberg ini will hang out to Jesus. This oktober of things from the source of the earth who can really be in a very region.

When we say you took to sing there's, the thing you through the■ they call you of your fundamentally yah. Did you know that? Look him up. Jacob Puger, richest man who ever lived on the face of the earth, who was not a king, and none of you know who he is.

[38 : 06] That's kind of scary, isn't it? That tells you how much money really matters in the end, how much it fades away quickly. We think money is the answer to things.

We think that if we could just get position, if we could just get popular, if we could just get this, if we could just get the A on the test, we would somehow have a successful life. Anybody remember J. Paul Getty?

Yeah? Richest man in the world? The whole world for a while? His wife was asked, is money by happiness? She said, well, that's ridiculous. Of course not. Money doesn't buy happiness, but it's a lot easier to be happy with money than without.

I like that. I like that answer. But you see, it fades quickly, quickly, quickly away. The things we think are so important, they really aren't. And if we humble ourselves, we can get the answers we need from God himself.

Pride leads to destruction. Some of the greatest problems I've ever had in life is when I start to think I'm somebody.

[39 : 14] I start to think I know the answers. I start to believe that I have some sort of position or I've got something locked up. Years ago, I used to believe that I was the best person working for Chem Lawn Lawn Care Company.

I could produce more work than anybody. I could score higher on all their tests. So certainly, I should get the promotion. My friend had a different approach.

He fixed the boss's car. They'd go out together. He'd invite them over to the house. I learned real quickly, it's not what you know, it's... Yeah? Yeah?

He wasn't wrong. He got the promotion and I didn't. Once we think we've got it all together and we stop listening, we start losing. John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus, he said, He must become more, I must become less.

And that's true for all of us. The only way we're going to gain what really will satisfy our soul is if we become more, we become less and God becomes more. Because temptation, temptation leads to destruction.

[40 : 21] Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desires and enticed. Then after that desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin. And sin, when it's full grown, gives birth to death.

Romans says the wages of sin are death in this world and the world to come. It's a progression. Once we start giving into it, little by little, it rips our hearts out and destroys our souls.

God says we need to go in a different way. This passage speaks to us about evil and good, pride and humiliation, temptation and truth, light and shadows, death and birth.

A choice between going the wrong way or going the right way. And so the first thing God calls us to do is change, repent, turn around. You're going the wrong way. Humility leads to life, leads to real success, leads to genuine joy, leads to something Paul calls contentment.

In life, there are people who become so obsessed with what they're accomplishing that they forget what the goal and purpose of life is about altogether.

[41 : 41] I rode on a plane with a fellow one time on Southwest Airline. You know, back in the back seat where the rows are like this close and your knees are like that and you're all squished in?

Where the poor folk ride. You know what I'm talking about. And I was actually talking to the fellow next to me. He didn't, like, put headphones on and stick a plug in his pocket and pretend that he didn't want to talk to me.

He wanted to actually chat, right? And so as I'm talking to this fellow, I asked him, well, what did you do for a living? And he says, well, I own a company up in Canada. I said, really? And he told me a little bit about it.

It's a company. He had about, I don't know, 75, 80 employees. It built it up from the ground up. I said, so you must have a pretty nice retirement. What are you doing in the back of Southwest? I mean, you know, seemed like a reasonable question.

Rude, but reasonable. See? Have to be careful. And he said to me, well, when I retired, I realized that the people who work for me built that company as much as I did.

[42 : 40] So I told them if they gave me \$50,000 a year, they could have the company and it could belong to them. So I gave them my company. And I went, dude, really?

Are you Jesus? I mean, really? Because he did what he should do, right? St. Francis of Assisi was wealthy.

He gave away all his worldly goods and changed the world. And we know his name now, but I bet you couldn't name one other famous person from his time. The difficulty is, is what we think leads to success can simply lead to destruction.

What matters the most? Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

We've said it before, the purpose of this life is to get to the next life. So why do we do this? Why do we do it? Why do we get caught up and puffed up and worried about what people will think of us and all walking around strutting our stuff trying to be somebody?

[43 : 53] And I'll tell you why. Because deep down, we don't feel so good about us. Deep down somewhere, we just want people to say they like us or they admire us or we're smart or we're okay.

We're still back in high school in our teenage years trying to compete with all the other kids hoping that maybe somebody will say we're all right. That's true of you.

And that's true of me. And that's why this last verse in this passage is the most important of all. God chose to give us birth through the word of truth.

That we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created. I don't know if that is so obvious to you because it wasn't to me at first. God created the universe.

The stars, the moons, the suns, the worlds. He created the nations. He created the environment and all that we see around us. He created every single thing there was.

[44 : 54] He set it all in motion. God has a whole universe to keep track of and pay attention to. And yet the most important thing to him, the first issue of creation in all that was ever created, what God cares about the most is you and me.

He thinks we're okay. He thinks even in our brokenness, we're all right. He wants us, even though we're messed up, confused, and don't understand everything we're supposed to understand.

And if God thinks that we're that much of a priority, what we need to do is give him that priority too. We come to worship God.

Remember, he's God. We're not. And in that, we will find life, wisdom, all that God wants to give to us.

You know, sometimes when I get up here as your pastor and I just tell you everything wrong with me, I start to wonder if you're going to think, well, maybe we should just ship you out and get somebody who knows somebody who's got it together, not so messed up.

[46 : 10] Good luck with that, by the way. I'm just not very good at hiding my flaws. We all have mistakes. We all have problems. I don't claim to be perfect.

I know I mess up. I don't intend to, but that's, I guess, the worst ones when you don't think you are, but you are anyways. God has put into this whole thing we call Christianity.

Christianity, the whole reason why we come here, the ability for us to change that, repent, confess, turn around, and move in a new way.

So let's begin by confessing our brokenness so God can fix us. Dear God in heaven, I have sinned. Sometimes I get caught up in myself.

What I want, what I think, my worries, my insecurities.

[47 : 13] Forgive me, God. Open up my heart. Open up my mind. Open up my ears. Hear the wisdom you sent.

From wherever it comes from. Whisper in my ear. Whisper in my life. Who you are.

And bless me with your forgiving love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Beginning of wisdom is humility.

To repent and turn to God and let God whisper into our lives the things we need to know. That wisdom might come from a pastor, but it's just as likely to come from your daughter or son.

Or somebody you didn't think might share it with you. Someone you found the truth from unexpectedly. God is speaking. We need to open our hearts and listen.

[48 : 14] And then we'll be healed. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Glory to God. When we come to the table, we remember that promise.

We remember and we participate in it because God invites us. God invites us to take part in coming back to him.

We can't do it ourselves. There's nothing we can do. We have to go by the blood of Jesus. We have to approach the throne of grace in the way God has called us to do.

Everyone is welcome at the table. If you love God, earnestly repent of your sin and seek to live in peace as a disciple of Jesus Christ. You are welcome at the table this morning.

It doesn't matter if it's your first time here in the church. It doesn't matter if it's the first time you're in any church. It only matters that you come seeking God.

[49 : 21] That you come desiring to be in relationship with God through Jesus Christ. So come this morning. Come and receive all that God has for you.

The Lord be with you. Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. Blessed are you, our Alpha and Omega, whose strong and loving arms encompass the universe.

For with your eternal word and Holy Spirit you are forever one God. Through your word you created all things and called them good. And in you we live and move and have our being.

When we fell into sin you did not desert us. You made covenant with your people Israel and spoke through prophets and teachers. In Christ your word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn. Holy, holy, holy Lord. God of power and might.

[50 : 33] Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you and blessed is Jesus Christ who called you Abba, Father. You embraced a people as your own and filled them with a longing for a peace that would last.

In Jesus' suffering and death you took upon yourself our sin and death and destroyed their power forever. You raised from the dead this same Jesus who now reigns with you in glory.

And poured upon us your Holy Spirit, making us the people of your new covenant. On the night before meeting with death, Jesus took bread and he gave thanks to you.

He broke the bread and gave it to his disciples saying, Take, eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

[51 : 37] And when the supper was over, he took the cup and gave you thanks and praise and gave it to his disciples. And he said, Drink from this, all of you. This is the cup of my blood.

The blood of the new covenant. Poured out for you. Poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin. Do this as often as you drink it.

In remembrance of me. And so, in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice.

In union with Christ's offering for us. As we proclaim the mystery of faith. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here. And on these gifts. That in the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this wine, we may know the presence of the living Christ.

[52 : 34] And be renewed as the body of Christ for the world. Redeemed by Christ's blood. As the grain and grapes once dispersed in the fields are now united on this table in bread and wine.

So may we and all your people be gathered from every time and place into the unity of your eternal household. And feast at your table forever.

Through Christ. With Christ. In Christ. In the unity of the Holy Spirit. All honor and glory is yours, almighty God. Now and forever.

Amen. Shall we pray together? With the confidence of children of God. The prayer Jesus taught us. Our Father. Who art in heaven.

Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

[53 : 33] And forgive us our trespasses. As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom. And the power. And the glory. Forever and ever. Amen. You know the thing is. Is when we come to understand our failings.

Jesus said go and sin no more. We need to learn to do our best. Again. And again. And again. But even in the midst of that. We're going to fail.

Last night for our worship service. We made a series of things. What they would call worship bloopers. Mistake after mistake after mistake. I won't tell you who messed up. Because it was me a lot of the time.

And other people. And I've learned. You don't care about when other people mess up. Right? Learned that one. We didn't. Some of the people thought we did it on purpose. They thought we were trying to show how you can mess up on purpose.

[54 : 28] Like I would mess up worship on purpose. Right? You see. We are who we are. We are creatures imperfect. But we can be better than we've been.

We can change. We can be transformed. And when God makes it apparent to us. That we need to turn around and change. And live our lives different. The real question is. Do we do it?

Do we move our lives? And repent and go where God is calling us. So may God wash over you with his wisdom. May God send you messengers. From places you at least expect. May God give you the humility to hear God's word.

And may God change you and transform you. And give you a life that is blessed and filled with contentment. Go in his peace. Amen.