

Walking in the Light

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[0:00] Good morning. Good morning, everyone. It's good to see us all. Especially if you're here for the first time. Angel, Cherry, Cherry, and Cherry.

I appreciate you. You're like the least American American that I know. Grace, you're quite American. But it was a good time for us. But we missed you guys. We missed all the parties. We missed Kelly's birthday. Happy birthday.

We missed the New Year's Eve party that was here where there may or may not have been a Congo line and loud karaoke and Taylor Swift. Seems that whatever event Gabe organizes ends up with karaoke or scripture.

It could go... Or both. That's it. We need to invent a karaoke machine that just allows us to sing scripture. That's it. Oh, my goodness. He started us off last week, didn't he, right? On 1 John. A couple of months ago, we wanted to start with the end in mind. And we went through the Revelation, the letters that Jesus writes to the churches.

Because as we start this, whatever this is, we wanted to start with the end in mind. You never want to start something that ends up at a dead end. Or dead. So we wanted to kind of think what the future is and go, okay, actually, what's Jesus telling the church so that we don't end up kind of falling into the same traps?

[1:42] And admittedly, we're not perfect. And it's always just work in progress. But that's what we started. And now in January, we wanted just to actually start. And we wanted to start with 1 John and Gabe, as he often does, was so true to the scripture and just teaching us about what's the one thing?

What's the one thing that John, in his older years, is trying to write to the church? What's he trying to tell them? And he's trying to tell them one thing. You need to know God. You need to know God. That's the most important thing.

And he's talking as someone who was with him in verses 1 to 4. He talks about that. He says, actually, I was there. I looked upon him and touched him with my hands. Hey, I know this guy and I want to tell you about him and I want you to know him.

That's what John is writing. And as we think about that, and we know that, we want to know him. We want to enjoy him. Because when we know him and enjoy him, a couple of things happen. We start to have fellowship with one another. We start to bond well.

And then when we know him, it then seeps into our actions, into the way we live. And we all know that. Who wants to know God more? Put your hand up if you want to know God more. I'm genuinely hoping that you're here because you want to know God more.

[2:58] And you're not here just for the ladies like Nathan is. Sorry. Did I just say that out loud?

Sorry, it's the jet lag. It's the jet lag. Oh, my goodness. I'm sorry. I repent. You know what? I'm just going to repent right now. I'm sorry. That came out wrong.

It was right, but it just came out wrong. Oh, my goodness. Let's start again. But you see, John here is doing something more than just being a teacher.

He's not wanting just to tell you, hey, you must know God. Mark, you must know God. Know him and enjoy him now. That's not what he's trying to do. He's not just a teacher. He's actually a pastor. So what he's trying to do is say, hey, we all want to know God. We all want to enjoy him. We all want to have fellowship with one another. But what's stopping us? Right? Those of you who put your hands up and say you want to know God.

[4:00] Well, actually, then what's the thing that's actually stopping us? And this is what John is trying to now address. He's going to go, OK, I know you want to know him. I want you to know him because I was with him. And I want you to know him. But let me address why it's hard.

And we all know it's hard. And this journey with God, trying to know him, is not the easiest one. So for us, it's how do we do that? And then so he jumps into the second part here. And we're going to go through 1 John 1, verse 5 to 10.

And we're going to go through, actually, what is the practical application of this? And we're going to really just go through it. And we're going to just keep it very simple and really ask ourselves the question, what does it actually mean to walk in the light?

So as is our usual tradition, we're going to read the word of God now, which we believe is precious to us. This is the thing that gives us life and is appropriate for any circumstance that we have.

And we believe that this is the word of God that can pierce right into the depths of our souls. So I invite you to stand for the word of the Lord as we receive it together today. Sorry if you're on the beanbags.

[5:02] That's just some good exercise there. So Holy Spirit, we ask you as we open up your word. And we know that your word gives life.

Can you just shine a torch on it? And the bits that we don't understand, can you? Can you enlighten us with your truth? We want to know you. That's our single wish, as we just sang.

In Psalm 27, there's one thing we ask for, one thing we'll seek after. And that is you. To dwell in your house, to gaze upon your beauty, to inquire in your temple. We are here for you.

We are hungry for you. So as we read your word, allow it to go from your heart straight into ours. In your name we pray. Amen. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you.

That God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

[6:08] And the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. This is the word of the Lord. Please take a seat. So he starts off and he says, this is the message we have heard and we proclaim to you.

So this is John who say, hey, I spent time with Jesus. I know him and I want you to know him. And this is the message that we heard and now proclaim to you. What is the message? The message is this, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

That is the message. And where did he hear that from? You see in John 8. John 8, Jesus declares himself, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but he will have the light of life.

So that's the message that John, sitting at the feet of Jesus, would hear Jesus say this. And now he's saying to the church many, many years later, this is the message we have heard. That we proclaim to you now that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

[7:20] This is probably the most comprehensive description of God that we can find. God is light. And now we've heard that and we sang that and Kelly read another part of scripture in John talking about that.

But to you and I who have been in church for a long time, what does that actually mean when we hear and say God is light? If I'm telling you it's the most comprehensive description of almighty God, then the question is, what does it actually mean?

What does it actually mean? What does it mean to you? I'm going to start picking on some people here. So just have a think now. Now, when I say God is light, what does that mean to you? There's no real wrong answer.

Well, I guess there are, but don't worry. I'll be nice. Florence is laughing. God is light. What's the first thing that comes to mind for you when we think about God is light? The one that illuminates. The one that illuminates. And it's light reveals. It shows things. That's good. I mean, at the beginning, Genesis. What does God say? Let there be light.

[8:25] And it reveals creation in some ways. What else is there? When I'm thinking about what God is light, what am I thinking about? Uday, I haven't picked on you for a while. What is God is light to you?

Freedom. Wow, it liberates. Wow. Wow. Good job. Good job, Uday. Nice and loud. Standing up. That's great. It was so good meeting your sister, by the way.

It was so, so good. I asked her whether there was a chance where we could swap and you could go back to India and she could stay here. Yeah, she is so cool. But clearly that didn't happen.

We'll keep praying for that. One more. One more. Joseph Tang. Joseph Tang. God is light. What does that mean to you? God is light. God is light. God is light. God is light.

God is light. God is light. It's the light of the world. We can see everything. Did you just quote the Bible? Okay. Quote Joseph Tang.

[9:27] Quote Joseph Tang. Okay. What does that mean? What does that mean to you? In light of him, I can see everything clearly. Oh. Especially when it gets dark. Especially when it gets dark.

When there's death. When there's suffering. When there's death. When there's suffering. It's like that crack in the door. It's dark in the alleyway. You see that glimpse of light. That's when you see it. And you can keep walking. Woo.

Round of applause for Joseph Heyman Tang. There's a quote that was attributed, we think, though there's not certainty, to Anne Frank, which is Anne Frank, who's the Jewish girl who lived through the Nazi era, who said, look how a single candle can both defy and define darkness.

And it's in that darkness where we can see a lot of light. St. Francis is the one who said, all the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.

When we think about light and we think about darkness, he says, God is light and in him is no darkness at all. He's talking about light, something is often used to refer to deity, to life.

[10:33] The word light has packed with so much meaning. And we often pitch the two forces. We have light against darkness. But in truth, it is not really a fair fight. We know that, right?

Do you know that? If you have darkness that you're facing in your life and you think, oh, am I going to choose light or darkness? Hey, it's not actually a fair fight. Albert Einstein was the one who said, actually, what is darkness? It's the absence of light.

How does a scientist measure how dark a room is? It has to, they can only measure how much light is in the room. This is where we have to understand. When John's saying, hey, I want you to know him.

I want you to know something about him. And the thing I want you to know about him is that he is light. And in him, there is no darkness at all. He is completely holy and completely different.

And the darkness trembles. It is not a fair fight. They say, right, in James chapter 2, the darkness trembles at his name. It's not a fair fight. And I hope that's an encouragement to you.

[11:33] The moment light enters a room, darkness disappears. It's both defied and defined. That is an important thing for us to know as we know more about God. Because John here is then starting to apply all of this.

The quote that Joseph Hayman Tang just kind of referenced to here is one from C.S. Lewis, which says, We believe in God like we believe in the sun. Not because we see the sun, but because by the sun we see everything else.

We believe in God like we believe in the sun. Because through the sun we can see everything else. And here's the problem, though. We know this. Light gives sight. It illuminates. And so we can see the road ahead.

The problem here is this. Why do we still not know God? Because something's getting in the way. Because we don't recognize that actually light not only gives sight, but it also has to show us how to live right.

Now, that's why Jesus says, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness. Here's the problem then. Here's why I think a lot of us really struggle in really knowing him, really enjoying him, really having fellowship with one another.

[12:37] Because we haven't truly grasped the concept yet that God is light and in him there is no darkness. Another science thing. You think about the solar system. The solar system revolves around the sun.

The sun is the thing that gives life to everything. And everything is only in harmony because we're revolving around the sun. The moment a planet breaks formation, that planet will not survive.

And so often for us, we're not doing well in life because we're not revolving our life around the one thing that gives us that life and that is God himself. We've become the center of our own worlds.

And when we become the center of our own worlds, we wonder why there is disharmony. We wonder why we're disconnected from people and we've got ourselves. Because we've chosen a different way. Instead of God's way, we've chosen our own way.

What does the Bible call that? Simple three-letter word? Sin. Sin is simply just us saying, hey, God, I don't trust you. And I'm going to choose my own way.

[13:36] I'm going to revolve around my own life. Everything is going to revolve around me. And then we wonder why there is disharmony. And then we wonder why there is dysfunction.

And this is what John then goes into. Verse 6, he says this, if we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. We may know the way.

We may know where we want to go. We may have been given sight as to going that way, but we have not chosen right and we live in a different way. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, then we lie and do not practice the truth.

What is that? Is that hypocrisy? What keeps people out of the church the most these days? As you talk to your colleagues and friends and family, hey, why don't you get to show? Oh, I used to. But then, yeah, I got to know some Christians.

And Christians are worse. They're no better than the people outside. They're hypocrites. So we're not going to go. And John's just tackling that straight on. He said, hey, if you say that you follow God, if you say that he really is your son, that your world revolves around him, then don't live in a way where it's not actually true because actually then you're doing more damage than good.

[14:47] So people look at you and go, oh, you're reading this Bible and you say this Bible is truth and it gives you all the life. And yet your life is more messed up than mine. Why should I read the Bible and follow the God that you say you're following when your life is more messed up than mine?

John's saying, don't do that. Don't do that. God is light and in him is no darkness at all. There is no compromise. See, that's the problem. Often we see the way that we go, but we don't go there.

We know how to live, but we don't live in that way. Now, we're not alone in this. And I don't want you to feel too bad about yourself. The Apostle Paul has the same thing in Romans 7. What does he say? Hey, I know what I need to do. I just don't do it.

And I know what I shouldn't do. And yet I do it. Every time I want to do something good, evil darkness is right there with me. But if we truly understand, know God and know that when we follow him, there is no darkness at all.

We will commit to living in a way that actually is true to us revolving around him. That he truly is the light. We were in L.A.

[15:51] And we went to a church there. A couple of us were there. And there was this one moment. And I don't know the people there, so it's okay to shame them right here. And I got to experience something that was a really interesting experience.

We had two people sit behind us. Americans. Pause for dramatic effect. And they were arguing. They were arguing. Like just a couple. They were just arguing. I don't know what they were arguing about. They were just constantly talking. And then the guy goes away. Probably just to get a coffee. And then he comes back.

And then I hear the woman say, don't sit next to me. And then the guy was like, wait, are you serious? Don't sit next to me. She's like, get away from me. I'm just in the back here.

Just like clearly not focusing on the worship. Just listening. Whoa. Oh, no, she didn't. Oh, yes, you did. And I was like, what's he going to do? And then he was like, oh, fine.

[16:52] And then he just walks off. And I was like, just that snapshot moment there. I was like, man, that's sad. Isn't that just so sad? She's singing these songs.

And it's all about forgiveness and unity and love. And yet she's not going to let her husband sit next to me. Now, of course, he probably did something stupid, as all husbands do. And I, and I, and I, and I, whoo.

And Grace is like, amen. Preach. Preach, James. Danny, listen. James, preach. Okay. But I'm just like, man. Have we just missed the point?

Have we just missed the point? When we go to church and we're singing about these songs, we're going, God, you are like, we're just recipients of your grace and mercy. And yet we can't show it to the people next to us. That's hypocrisy.

When we say that we are with God and yet we live a life that is completely different to what he wants us to do. John's saying, don't do that. It's a bad look. God is light.

[17:52] And in him is no darkness at all. And I look and I see so many people sat in the pews in a church whose lives look nothing like followers of Christ. And I look and much has been said.

Okay. This is where I'll stop joking just about Americans. Because there's a lot that has been said about the American church in its decline. How people have just become cultural Christians. They're not even thinking about their faith. They just go to church because that's what they do.

That's what their culture permits. But they don't really live a life that is genuinely following Jesus.

They are still choosing their own way as soon as service finishes. Or in this case, even during service, they're still choosing themselves over the unity of two people together.

And just before we trust the American church anymore, don't we realize that actually that's simply just the church worldwide. That actually the Asian church has the same thing. There are people who are sat in this room right now who still harbor bitterness with someone else.

And we're sat here and we're like, oh, I'm going to go and turn my Jesus on. But Jesus says, no, you turn back around and you go and sort out the issue that you've got here. Because God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

[18:53] And you cannot live in this way and live and stay in this church if you are constantly choosing him. There are people in here who as soon as they leave this service, they'll go back and they'll go back to dwell in the same sin that they've been dwelling in all this time in the afternoon, in the evening.

And they're living a life that's completely different to what Jesus is telling you to do. John's saying, don't do that. Either do it properly or don't do it at all.

Isn't that the issue that we face here? Our church, our people have been compromised. I've been compromised every day. I have to look at myself and go, what is in me that is not you, Jesus?

What is in me that isn't light that actually I have let darkness come through? And remember, darkness is not a thing. Darkness is simply just the absence of that light. The moment light comes in, we're good again.

But which parts have I blocked the light from going in? Which parts of my life have I, oh, Jesus, no, not that room. That room you can't touch. That room is just my room and it has to stay dark. God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

[19:59] Verse 7 says this, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin. He's saying if you walk in the light as God is light, then actually it does a couple things.

One thing it does is it actually binds you to the people around you. Has anyone sinned or chosen their own way and then wondered why everyone else feels so distant? When you've decided, hey, I'm going to go choose and do the thing that I know is destructive for me, but I'm still going to do it. And then you look back and you realize that you've drifted from everyone who's loved you. And you're just isolated. Isn't that what sin does? It leaves you in this place where you are completely isolated.

But God says if you walk in the light as he is in the light, that actually keeps you together. So we came back from L.A. two days ago and one of my main enemies in life is something called jet lag. It kicks my butt seriously lots and lots of times. And to the point where I'm desperate, I'm like, OK, you need to Google, James, how to avoid jet lag. And then you get all these websites that tell you how to prevent jet lag.

[21:08] Those of you who travel a lot, you probably know how to do this. What are some of the ways how we overcome jet lag? Tony, you travel to L.A. a lot. Don't sleep on the plane.

Oh, really? Oh, I failed on that one. Don't sleep. Any other ones? Melatonin. Melatonin. Yes. It works really well.

I've always heard about that. Just pop some pills. We found some little kids' melatonin chewy things. I felt like such a bad human being. I was like, children, I'm going to sleep.

I'm going to sleep. I'm going to sleep. I'm going to sleep. Oh, my goodness. There's one way that you do it. There's a jet lag calculator. Because what they're saying is the few days leading up to before you fly and the few days after you fly, there's different times of the day where you expose yourself to light.

Have you heard about this one? So there's sometimes, let's say you arrive in the morning. Do not spend the afternoon in darkness. Do not hide in a room. Do not take a nap. That's longer than half an hour.

[22:11] But some of us succumb to that and we just close the curtains and we sleep for four hours and we wake up, we feel like we've just died. We've been there. But it says, keep the curtains open. Get yourself out into daylight.

Why? Because when you expose yourself to light, it impacts the way your body lives. When you expose yourself to light, it impacts the way your body lives. Something happens in your body where the hormones respond to the light and tell you how to live.

Tell you what kind of time of day it is. Tell you when to stay awake and tell you when to go to sleep. It's the same for us in our faith. If we are walking in the light as he is in the light, then we will have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son, will cleanse us from our sin and we will know how to live.

Do you expose yourself to the light? Well enough. When you expose yourself to the light, it actually changes the way you live. Growing up in England, there's a lot of us, myself included, and our friends.

You know this, especially in Manchester where the sun comes up for about two hours a day and the rest of the time it's just dark. We have something called seasonal depression, right? SAD, where actually a lot of our friends, you get these lamps to kind of help your body just kind of absorb some light just because it's really affecting your mood.

[23:27] And it's really affecting the way you live and the way you feel. Don't underestimate the power of light. Don't underestimate what light can do to your life and how it can impact the way you live.

Just one more thing about sin. When we don't live in the light, when we walk in darkness, that's when we feel most distant from God but also with other people.

Eugene, you'll probably have had the same thing as you pastor as well. Over the years, the amount of young people who they know what they should do and then they don't do it.

And usually it's about a girl or a boy. And then we say, hey, that's a bad idea, man. That's poison. That's toxic. Don't do it. And then they're like, oh, but I have to.

Because that person doesn't know Jesus, I need to flirt to convert. I just need to go to the party with them because otherwise they won't be safe. I have to be the one that carries them home.

[24:26] We've all heard that bit there. And then, of course, they do it because they're stupid because we're all humans and we're all stupid. And then it's, you know what, it's uncanny. It happens the same every time.

After a few months, that person's like, oh, they've chosen that way. And then they're like, yeah, just don't feel connected to the people in the church anymore. Church people are just so judgmental. They're just so judgmental. They're always just looking at me, looking at me, and I just feel so judged by them.

And slowly they drift away. Slowly they stop attending. And slowly they feel completely isolated.

See, if you walk in the light as he is in the light, then you'll have fellowship with one another.

Because you see, sin here is this. Sin is, I'm going to choose my own way. But if we're to make this work, it's all about not our own way. It's all about choosing someone else.

It's all about saying, hey, my way is this. My natural inclination is this. And it's to ignore you. Or to stay away from you because you're just more trouble than you're worth. But Jesus Christ commands me, compels me to spend time with you.

[25:28] So for me to not choose myself, but to choose you instead. If we are walking in the light, then we will have fellowship with one another. Just to ease the pressure off you a little bit, though, we're not called to be the light.

We are not the source of the light. It says walk in the light. So often we're trying to be the one that carries the load. Saying, oh, I need to do this.

I need to make sure that everyone here is having fun. Everyone here is enjoying God. Saying, God, look, that's not our responsibility. Our job is each two to do our own thing. To keep our eyes on God.

To walk in the light. And by doing so, we will be bound together. We're called to be walking in the light, but not actually need to be the light. Because Jesus is the one who is that.

So you don't actually need to be perfect. If you're saying, oh, Jesus is light and in him is no darkness at all. Does that mean I have to be completely perfect? No. It's not about perfection. It's about the pursuit of perfection.

[26:26] It's about the progress of getting there. It's about saying, hey, God, I'm a sinner. I have a problem. I can't get there myself. Albert Einstein was the one that said this.

It says, no, problem can be solved by the same consciousness that created it. The problem has to be solved by an external force. If you are the source of the problem, it's more than likely that you

won't be the one that is able to solve that problem.

Because you yourself are flawed and broken. So therefore, whatever solution you have is also broken and flawed. That help, that solution has to come from the outside.

And that's where we jump in to the next bit. He says this, verse 8. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. He's saying, don't lie to yourself.

If you're sat there thinking, oh, I'm a good person, James. You're not really talking about me. I don't have any obvious sins anymore. At least not any that you can see. I'm okay. That's the problem.

[27 : 27] You see, John here was actually talking to a group of people. The reason why he even wrote this letter was saying, hey, I spent time with Jesus. I know Jesus. But I'm hearing amongst you there are people who are starting to spread something different.

Which is this. Hey, your spirit and your body are separate. You can do everything you want with your body. So you can choose whatever you want to do. Satisfy all the desires of your flesh. And it's okay. Because it is separate from your spirit.

From your soul. So as long as you believe, you can do anything you want. Just pause there for a second. Because that sounds stupid, right? And then have a think about our own lives.

And go, actually, is there any ounce of that in our own lives? Where we say, hey, I believe you, Jesus. You're my God. You're my Lord. And then the rest of your week looks completely different. Don't we all have a little bit of that in us? Well, we're not truly walking in the light. There's still something that we're holding on to. We're saying, oh, yes. I do believe. But I still need to live in the same way.

[28 : 29] That's the problem that John is trying to address here. And so he's saying here, you have to admit that you have a problem. Any kind of solution, any kind of redemption has to start with the fact that you realize that we are sinners.

Sinners, which is a horrible word only in the sense that the church has talked about it so much or outside society has heard us talking about it so much. Sinners, repent. And you see the guy with the board standing in the middle of the street saying, shouting out, repent.

The kingdom of God is near. You are all sinners. So we have these connotations in our minds about what a sinner is. And it's such a religious word. But the truth is we are all sinners. And until we truly realize that, then we won't actually be able to have the solution.

There was an article written in a major magazine that was talking about the decline of Christianity, especially in the West. And one thing that it said about the Western church was that there's a form of Christianity that has evolved.

And it's called the pick and choose Christianity. Christianity is a pick and choose Christianity where actually we use God to, when we look at this Bible and, okay, so I've highlighted it. So basically we look at this Bible and I highlight the bits that I like and I follow those bits.

[29 : 43] And then the other bits that I don't highlight, I don't have to follow. That I don't really need to. And one of the things about the pick and choose Christianity, especially in the West, is the issue of sin. When it's talking about the issue of sin, I tell you what the Western church, myself, I put myself in that category that we are at risk of doing.

We have a pick and choose kind of Christianity, which is this. Why do you believe in God? Let's just pause there. I've asked this question before. Why do you believe in God? Some answers that come out are, okay, I believe in God because he gives me purpose.

He gives me meaning. You've heard these? These are good things to hear, right? Because he's a loving God. Because he makes me feel all warm and fuzzy inside. So whether I make mistakes or not, whether I make a thousand mistakes in today, it doesn't matter because God loves me.

Jesus loves me. This I know. For the Bible tells me so. But then we don't address the issue that is really at hand here.

We're using God. We're saying, actually, we don't follow God and worship God because he gives us purpose and meaning. We follow and worship God because he is the meaning. There's a difference. If you're going, actually, I'm following Jesus because he finally makes me feel good about myself, then you've only got half the way there.

[31 : 00] You've not completed the journey yet. Jesus isn't here just to serve you, just to make you allow you to kind of satisfy all your ambitions and goals so that you would live a happy life.

No, Jesus is saying, hey, I'm here to serve you so that you will have life and life to the full. And that can only be found in me. The world does not revolve around us.

God is light and in him is no darkness at all. But I think for the West, it is about God is love. It's warm and fuzzy. It's all good. But I think for us in the East, I think there's an added dynamic that maybe we struggle with, which is this.

I don't even know how to experience God's love. I don't deserve God's love at all. So you or Westerners might be like, oh, I'm so great because God loves me. The East is like, I've never felt love that the white kids talk about.

My parents never, never loved me in the same way. Of course, it's not just a race thing. We've all, whatever culture, have this trouble.

[32:06] And this is where the gospel is so important. Whether it's a Western culture mindset you come from or whether it's an Eastern mindset you come from. Tim Keller says this, the gospel is what? That you are far worse than you imagined. So whether you are super prideful and you think that you're God's gift and everything revolves around you.

Or whether you feel like you're dirt and that you are useless and that no one deserves, no one loves you. The gospel is basically, actually, you are even worse than that. You are far worse than you imagined.

But, that but is the most important, crucial but that you'll find. But, you are far more loved than you ever dare dream. You are far worse than you imagined. But, you are far more loved than you ever dare dream.

Tim Keller, by the way, that's not James Tang. And that is the gospel. So, you can't pick and choose Christianity because it says here, you can't say that you have no sin.

We all have sin. And, well, at which point, which point do we start being sinners? Because a baby is so cute and so pure and so perfect. I'll tell you, and anyone who's had a baby will tell you, babies are not perfect.

[33:08] Babies are sinners. Like, sinners. Like, John, am I right? Sinners. Nigel is looking at you, John, and going, yep, sinner.

Why? Because babies just want their own way. And when they don't get their own way, what happens? What does EJ do? Scream. Scream. It's wired into us. Sinners.

Until we realize that. Until we realize that. We might not be truly able to understand what it means to be saved. And so, I'm here to tell you today.

And to break the bad news to you. Yes. Oh, it's just Gabriel. Gabriel. Gabriel. Actually, I didn't realize.

I'm talking about the Christmas Eve service here just for a second. And there were guests who didn't realize how funny these two were. Because their names are actually Gabriel and Gabriel. But well done, you two. It was so good. And I'm here to break the bad news to all of us here.

[34:08] That we are sinners. That I am a sinner. That every day, every day, I wake up and I'm so tempted just to choose my own way. I was convicted recently.

Every day I wake up and I reach for my phone. And I read the Bible. No, I do not read the Bible. I check the ESPN. I check the scores that are happening there. All the news and all the injuries. Because that's important.

Because if I don't know, the world's going to stop. So, it's very important that I'm clued in to what's happening in the NBA and the Premier League. And then I check social media. Because it's also very important.

Because if I don't check social media, socializing in the whole world will stop. Completely. Exactly. Every day I have to sit and choose. Actually, how am I going to fill my mind? How am I going to fill my life?

Every day. Every day I have to make that choice. Because every day my flesh tells me one thing. Every day someone tries to cut in front of me in the queue. In the MTR.

[35:04] There's one thing I want to do. And then there's one thing that I know I should do. Every day I know there's a good way. There's a way of choosing light. And there's a way of...

Actually, it's not choosing darkness. It's just not choosing light. Right? So the bad news is this. We are all sinners. You are a sinner.

And I hope you recognize that. I hope you recognize that you are far worse than you imagined.

That's important. Because unless you realize that, you won't truly appreciate and enjoy the good news.

Which is that you are far more loved than you ever dare dream. That is the gospel there. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

See, Christianity is the only religion that takes sin so seriously. But it's also the only one then that offers a morally satisfactory solution to this problem.

[36:05] Okay, let me just say that again. Christianity is the only religion that takes sin seriously and then offers a morally satisfactory solution. Which is this. You cannot save yourself.

You are in debt, my friend. You are in debt, my brothers and sisters, from the way that you have lived. Because you have allowed darkness into your lives. And you have no way of paying it. There is no money in your account to pay this.

But someone paid it for you. Someone paid it for you. And that's what Jesus is saying here. That's what scripture is saying here. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, to wipe away that debt and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness because of what Jesus did.

That is the solution. That in a land of deep darkness, Isaiah 9-2, he steps in. He recognizes there is darkness. He recognizes there is an absence of light.

And Jesus, the Prince of Heaven, migrates himself into earth and brings the light in. And offers the solution that we all need. He pays the debt by going to the cross and dying there for us, for all of our sins.

[37:08] What we have to do is acknowledge that actually our hearts is the land of deep darkness. I want to spend today doing that. Because when we truly recognize that our lands are deep darkness, that's when the light can shine.

That's when the light can shine. And that's when we can have hope even in the darkness. That's when we can deal with death and still have hope. Death itself is not a thing, right?

Death itself is simply just the absence of life. But when we truly understand that actually death is not a thing, that because of Jesus, we have life that is eternal. The death itself has been defeated.

That it is only just a stopgap. But if we are to take the step of faith and recognize who Jesus is and he shines that light into our lives, then we shall never die. The letter to the church in Samaria says, the one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.

That's the hope that we have. That's the life that we have. That there is a light that shines in. And when that light shines in, there is no darkness and there is no longer any death. But it starts with this. We have to confess.

[38:15] If we confess our sins. You see, this whole passage, verse 5 to 10, it keeps saying if. If we are walking in the light. If we say we have no sin. If we confess our sins.

If we have said we have not sinned. What does that tell you? That tells you that there is a choice that you have to make, brother and sister. That every day you have to make that choice. Because if you do this, if you choose option A, this will happen.

If you choose option B, this will happen. My hope for you, my prayer for us, is that we would choose Jesus. That we would choose him.

And we would confess our sins to one another. And when we say confess our sins, I want us to confess what's actually deep that's going on. If you have unforgiveness in your heart, or let's say the sin is I'm angry at so and so.

There's actually a deeper thing there that we confess. It's not just the symptom at the end. It's not just, oh, I'm angry at this person so I should confess my anger. No, it's that you don't realize that you are a sinner too.

[39:22] That you feel violated and offended by that person, when in truth you were the one that violated and offended Christ himself. That he was on the cross for you, yet you ignore him and you go about your day completely unaware of his presence in your life.

Or you might confess, oh, I succumb to lust all the time. That is the symptom at the end. But what's the deeper issue there? What's the thing that we actually have to confess?

God, I'm lonely. God, I'm lonely. I don't think you're enough for me. So I need to find satisfaction through a computer screen.

I need to find satisfaction through other human beings. Because Jesus, essentially what I'm saying is that you're not enough. And that you're not the thing that I delight in the most. That's the confession.

I'm doing these things because actually I don't truly believe that God can be trusted. I'm doing these things because I don't actually really know God. And I'm just craving all these other things in an attempt to fill this gap in my heart in reality, which can only really be filled with God you.

[40:32] That's what I'm confessing. That I have put a different God in the center of my heart. And if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins. And he will cleanse us from all that unrighteousness.

Remember, we are not supposed just to be the light. We simply walk in the light. It is not just about perfection. It is about progress. I'll finish with this.

The Apostle Paul says, Not that I'm already perfect, but I press on to make it my own. Because Christ Jesus made me his own. Brothers, I've not obtained this, but I press on toward the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

That's the goal that we have. We're not perfect. None of us are perfect here. But we're pressing on. We're trying to walk in the light every day.

If, if, if, every day present ourselves with that question. If I choose this, I'll go this way. If I choose this, I'll go this way. Can I just invite us to spend a moment now?

[41:33] Well, we don't do this all the time. But I think one thing that the church has missed, that we have picked and chosen, is we've lost the art of confession. We've lost the art of actually coming to terms of who we actually are.

And we approach this throne knowing that there is darkness in our hearts, that light needs to expose. And I want us to spend a time of just confession before the Lord.

Again, rest assured, Romans 3.23, we all fall short of the glory of God. If you're sat here going, oh, but I have so many. We all have so many. For we all fall short of the glory of God.

The beauty is that we are all justified freely by his grace as a gift. So even though it is a throne that we approach, and we must never forget that. We must never think that God is just this warm and fuzzy guy who's willing to hang out with us, who's always waiting for us to call.

God is high on his throne. He deserves reverence and awe. So we approach his throne with fear and reverence and trembling. But we do it confidently, as it says in Hebrews.

[42:41] Why? Because there is grace and mercy that awaits us. Because the book of James says, confess your sins to one another and be healed. I asked you at the beginning, who here wants to know God more?

The question really becomes actually then, actually how can we remove those obstacles? Who here wants to be healed? Who here wants to be healed from the things, the stumbling blocks that actually block us from knowing God, from enjoying him, from having fellowship with each other? That should be all of us. If that's what you want, I invite you into a time of confession now. Just in your own heart. If you're not ready to share it with people around you, then don't.

Nothing is forced here. But then I'll tell you now that the reason why we gather here in this tight space, in this intimate time, is that we want to be able to share it.

Because it says, confess your sins to one another and be healed. And if the Spirit leads you to, actually there is something that you want to share. Whether it's someone that you've known a long time, or whether it's someone you don't know at all, and you're just visiting, that's the beauty of the body of Christ.

[43:48] You can step into anywhere in the world, and have brothers and sisters who are saved by grace, just like you. And let's respect this space. And actually, if there is something that you need to share, and actually you just need to get out. You might not see the person next to you ever again, but just in the act of confession.

You just name it, just to call it out. Then that's the beginning of the healing. That's you choosing the right if, and going the right way.

Can we spend some time now, just in a solemn reflection, and in confession, and really asking God, the Holy Spirit, is there anything? Is there anything in me? Psalm 139, what does it say?

Search my heart, test my thoughts. If there is anything in me that is offensive, lead me in the way everlasting. Let's just spend a moment now. C.S. Lewis, in the Chronicles of Narnia, in a book called The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, he talks about a cousin.

A cousin of a boy called Eustace. An awful and nasty boy, that gives a lot of grief to those around him. So much that he turns into a horrible dragon.

[45:02] And he wants to change. He's desperate to change. And the layers on his skin, he's trying to peel them off. He recognizes that everything that's dark and horrible inside has come to the surface, and he's this horrible dragon.

And he tries to pierce it off. And each time he takes off one layer, another scaly layer appears. And he's just getting more and more desperate, more and more helpless, because he realizes, man, there is so much darkness and so much sin in me, essentially.

The solution, in the end, was actually Aslan, the lion who represents Christ himself, is the one who comes to address this.

At first, Eustace tried to change himself by scratching and peeling off layers of his dragon skin. But for every layer that came off, another layer of wrinkled, scaly skin appeared underneath. Finally, Aslan stepped up to the job.

With one painful swipe of his powerful claws, the lion cut to the heart of Eustace's dragon flesh and peeled it away. And Eustace, the boy, stepped out. We can't save ourselves.

[46:11] Regardless of how hard we try, how many layers, our sin runs deep. But Aslan, Christ himself, the ultimate surgeon, has the ability to come in and pierce right into the heart of that and bring us back out again and bring us into the light.

But I'll tell you this, it's painful. It's painful because the things that we've held on to that make us who we are, all those choices that we've gone the wrong way, they keep building up and before we know it, we are so far off from the destination.

The light seems so far away. But through Aslan, through Jesus, who's the one who offers to be the physician, the great physician that pierces all of that, we can be healed.

Now, we're not going to pierce ourselves here because that's not, it's only a metaphor, but we will do something slightly painful and awkward, which is I want us to share with the person next to us about if there's anything that you need to confess.

And again, please, if someone shares with you, don't as soon as service finishes, just go off and share it with other people. Can we respect the space that it is, a holy space where the Lord is present?

[47:24] But if we're not good for this, and again, share only as much as you're willing, but if there is something that actually you want to start today and just to confess to someone else and be healed, I encourage you to do that. And it is awkward. It can be painful.

But I truly, truly believe from the bottom of my heart it's worth it. So can we spend just two minutes? Again, introverts, don't worry. This won't be a forever discussion.

Two minutes. The one thing that you feel the Lord is asking you to confess. And let's share that and then we'll finish with a song and we'll wrap up the service then. Is that good? Two minutes.

Just turn to the people next to you. What's one thing you need to confess? Three minutes. All right. Okay. 30 seconds. Nice hat.

[48:24] Thanks. We're going to respond through a song now.

The song has a simple message. Lord, I need you. Every hour I need you. My sin runs deep. Just one final thing.

This small discussion that we've just had, if you're in a midweek group, this is where you go deeper. If you have something that's more that you need to share, we believe that it's not just here.

It's through the people that you're dealing with life with and that's not just on a Sunday morning.

That's in your midweek gatherings. This is the message we have heard and proclaimed. That God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and the truth is not it. We do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin.

[49:35] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and he will forgive us of our sins and he will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Brothers and sisters, that's what we're hoping for. That's what we're praying for, that we would walk in the light.

So Jesus, we choose you. There are many ifs in life from the moment that we wake up. We choose, I choose to not reach for anything else but you.

You, Lord, are the one that cleanses us from our sin, that forgives us of our sin. And it's your light that ultimately, as Uday says, gives freedom.

After Eustace was freed from the skin of a dragon, there's the roar of Aslan and that is the roar of freedom that we declare as well. That we are sinners, that we are far worse than we imagined. But we are far more loved than we ever dare dream and through one incisive piercing on the cross, all that shame, all that guilt, all that fear, all that sin was dealt with.

[50 : 54] And so we declare with one voice, Lord, we need you. We come to you, we bow down, we confess, we need you.

You, Lord, are our righteousness. Yes.