

Bad News, Good News

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

Date: 17 April 2016

Preacher: Sean Paton

[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, if you would, turn with me to John chapter 3.

And as you're returning there, I want to give you a little bit of context about the sermon this morning, how it came to be, and kind of where we're going, so it may help you better understand the sermon. Some of the points that are going to be made, so it may be a minute before we actually read the text, but you can go ahead and be turning to John chapter 3 and verse 14.

But this morning's sermon really started out as a devotional. It's a devotional that I wrote for Good Friday. And what I did on Good Friday, since that's the day that Jesus hung upon the cross, was really looking at the cross to see what are we to see?

What does the cross show us? What are we to feel and understand when we look at the cross? And as I developed that devotional and put it down on paper, I realized that three out of the four points that I kind of developed in that devotional were not good news.

In fact, it was bad news, when you really think about it. When you look at the cross, there are some things that are shown to us that are shown to be bad news.

[1 : 22] And I realized in that that in order for us to understand the good news of the gospel, there's some bad news that we have to grasp and internalize and understand.

Sometimes we're not as good at telling this bad news as maybe we should be. You know, there's been a time in our history and the culture of this country where people had a biblical literacy.

They understood some biblical concepts about themselves, about sin, about righteousness, about God and who he was and his justice and his holiness. They understood concepts of heaven and hell.

But that just isn't the case anymore. There used to be a day when maybe you could say something like, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life and tell people the good news and people understood the context of the bad news.

But we're living in a post-Christian world, as they say, and people just don't have the context anymore. The good news doesn't make sense to them because they don't understand the bad news.

[2 : 25] If you were to say something like, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life to a person today, most likely they would say something like, which God? Or God?

I don't believe in God. Or maybe they even say something like, well, that's great because I, you know, I love myself and have a wonderful plan for my life. So if God loves me and has a wonderful plan for my life, great. We're on the same page.

That's good. That's just where we are in our culture today. And so I want us to understand that this morning. The good news is not good news if we don't understand the bad news.

Let me give you an illustration for a minute. Imagine a young couple and they are having their first baby. And the baby actually comes a few weeks early.

It's unexpected. Middle of the night. The parents have to scramble. They rush to the hospital. They get to the hospital room and the baby is delivered. But the baby comes out blue from lack of oxygen.

[3 : 26] It's clear right away that something is terribly wrong. The doctors and the nurses, they take the baby. They rush it into another room. And they begin life-saving emergency procedures on the child.

In the meantime, the parents are in the room. They're distraught. They're in shock. They're trying to process what has just happened. And about that time, or a little bit of time later, the grandparents, not knowing what has happened, arrive at the hospital.

And they come into the delivery room. And at the time the grandparents come into the delivery room, the doctor comes back into the delivery room as well. And he says, folks, good news. Everything is going to be okay. Now that news lands on those two sets of people, the parents and the grandparents, in completely different ways, doesn't it?

For the parents, that is relief. It is joy. It is tears. It is tears. All of this emotion comes because they had already internalized the bad news, and the good news was truly good news.

[4 : 35] For the grandparents, how do they respond? What went wrong? I mean, maybe they're confused. Maybe they're troubled.

But the good news does not land on them in the same way because they did not know the bad news. There are some disturbing truths that the scripture says about us that we have to understand if we're going to understand the gospel.

If we're going to place our faith in God, we must know who God is and what he has done for us on the cross. But if we're going to repent of our sin, we must understand who we are and what we have done against a holy God.

So this means that there are deep, disturbing truths about the nature of man, about our love for our sin, about our enmity towards God.

And we must repent of these things if we're going to receive a new nature and if we're going to escape what scripture says, the wrath of God. Well, when we turn our gaze to the cross, what do we see?

[5 : 41] Well, let's look this morning in John chapter 3. I'm going to begin in verse 14. We'll read down through 21 and then also include verse 36 at the end.

So let me read this. We know this scripture and love it, don't we?

This is the judgment.

That the light has come into the world and men love the darkness rather than the light for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

But he who practices the truth comes to the light so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God. And then skip down to verse 36 at the end of chapter 3.

[7 : 12] It kind of summarizes all that has been said. And that it says, He who believes in the Son has eternal life. But he who does not obey the Son will not see life.

But the wrath of God abides on him. Let's pray together. Father, I pray this morning that your Holy Spirit would come and teach us from your word.

Lord, may your word prevail as we have sung this morning. May it prevail over unbelief. Speak to us, O Lord. And Lord, I pray that we would repent where we need to repent.

That we would see Jesus this morning as more believable and beautiful than ever before. Lord, may we embrace the truth of the gospel. May we understand the bad news that we might love the good news.

Lord, come and help us this morning. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. What do we see this morning when we gaze at the cross?

[8 : 14] When we look at the cross, what does it show us? And the first point this morning is that the cross shows us how much people hate God. The cross shows us how much people hate God.

Now that may seem a little abrupt. It may seem a little abrasive to say that people hate God in their fallen state. But look at verse 20. It says, For everyone who does evil hates the light.

Everyone who does evil hates the light. I don't know if in your text the word light is capitalized. It's capitalized in my text. Because obviously the light is referring to Jesus, who is the light of the world, who stepped down into darkness.

And what happened when Jesus, the light of the world, stepped down into darkness? We hated him. Something we often fail to consider when gazing at the cross is the very blackness of our own hearts.

And it's shocking to think when God the Son took upon himself flesh, when he drew near to us, we killed him. God crucified at the hands of sinful man proves with unmistakable clarity just how much man in his fallen state hates God.

[9 : 31] It's testified to here in the scriptures in our text. There are numerous texts in the Bible that state the same thing. Probably one of the more potent texts, it comes out of Romans chapter 1.

Romans 1 is that chapter that sets up the gospel in Romans by telling us who we are and our sinful nature and our depravity. If you look at the end of Romans chapter 1, you don't have to turn there, but I'm going to read this.

Romans 1.28. There's this long catalog of who we are and our sin. And it says, And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice.

They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God. Haters of God. It goes on to say many more things about who we are and our sinful state, but we are haters of God at the core.

Jesus goes on to say in John 15.24, He says, If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen and they have hated both me and my Father.

[10:59] The Scripture testifies that we are God-haters in the flesh, that we are God-haters according to our sinful human nature.

It's not just evidenced by Scripture. It's also evidenced by the hatred that people have shown towards God's prophets, God's very messengers. I was reading recently in Numbers, and it just struck me as incredible that in Numbers, you have Moses who has just led the people out of Egypt. They've crossed the Red Sea. God has shown signs and wonders to the people. He's given them water from the rock. He's given them manna from heaven and led them all the way to the brink of the Promised Land.

They're at Kadesh Barnea. They're about to cross into the Promised Land. They send the spies into the Promised Land. The spies come back, and of course you know some gave a bad report, some, Joshua and Caleb gave the good report.

But the people at that point, even after all that they've seen, even though being right on the very verge of receiving the promise, of going in to the land of promise, the people become angry.

[12:11] It says they picked up stones, and they were about to stone Joshua and Caleb and Aaron and Moses. About to kill him, about to stone him, the man of God who spoke with God face to face and was God to the people that were about to kill him.

Why? Because they hated God. Jesus talks about this in Matthew chapter 23 when he talks about the parable of the vineyard. If you remember the parable of the vineyard, he told the story of a vineyard owner, the master of the vineyard owner, who went away, and he left the vineyard with those who were going to tend it.

And it says he sent back servants to receive some of the produce, some of the fruit of the vineyard. And he sent one servant back, and they beat him. They sent another servant back. They stoned him, sent another servant back.

They killed him. And he said, finally, the master sends back his only son. If I send my son, they will listen to them. Of course, what happens when the son is sent?

They kill him as well. He said, if we kill him, then he is the heir, and we will receive the vineyard. So let's kill the son. But what was Jesus talking about there? The servants in that parable represented the prophets, God's messengers.

[13:27] And he was saying to the Pharisees, your fathers have always killed my messengers when I've sent them to you. Because you hate me, and therefore you have hated my messengers. And now I've stepped down as the son of God to come draw near to you, and you're going to hate me as well.

And you're going to do to me the very thing you've done to all my messengers who have been sent before me. People hated God's prophets. They hated his messengers. It's also evidenced by the fact that people hate God's church, God's people.

Why do people persecute the church? Why do they persecute God's people? We see this all throughout the world today, and they do it because they hate God. Of course they're going to hate God's people.

Of course they're going to hate God's church. And some of these will even do this, saying they love God as they end up persecuting people.

We see this all the time in the Middle East, where people out of love for the false God, Allah, they will kill people out of hatred of the true God of the Bible.

[14:33] Jesus warned us of this in John 16, too, when he said the time was coming when whoever kills you will think that he was actually offering service to God. I read recently this weekend

about a Hindu yogi, a yoga guru.

And of course this is one of these guys, you know, who sits cross-legged and he has the long hair and the beard and he looks all peaceful and he teaches yoga around the world and how to attain to inner peace and all of these things.

Very, very famous yoga teacher. And he came out this week actually calling for the beheading of Christians. Now, why would he do that? Well, because India is actually, the nation, the very country of India, is itself a goddess.

And what he wants is he wants all of the children in school to basically say hail to Mother Goddess India. And if people don't praise Mother Goddess India, if they don't give her the worship that is due to her, then they should be beheaded and killed.

Now, he went on to say that, that unfortunately there are laws in our country and we actually can't behead and kill people. But it would be good if there weren't and that we could go ahead and carry this out. So people will make a god out of their own country.

[15:47] They'll make a god out of their own culture. We make all kinds of false gods and then persecute the people of God in order to protect the false gods that we've accumulated for ourselves.

It's interesting, we even see this among atheists. The atheists are militantly opposed to the church and opposed to God's people. One of my favorite pastors has come up with a saying that I think is very clever and very accurate about atheists, which is this.

There are two tenets to atheism. There is no god and I hate him. And if you've read very many atheists, you see that come out pretty clearly. I absolutely hate and cannot stand this god that I don't believe in.

But that's where they're at and that's the position. There's militant atheism out in the world today. In fact, some people have given up on the whole idea of pretending they don't believe in God and have come out and called themselves misio-theists.

Misio comes from the Greek word to hate and of course theist comes from the word God. They are God-haters. They're calling themselves God-haters. I actually read a piece, I think it was out of the New York Times, that was celebrating this whole new category of people who called themselves misio-theists, who called themselves God-haters, about how courageous these people were that they finally had come out and bucked all the religious tradition and were brave enough to actually stand up and shake their fists in the face of God and say, we believe in you, but we hate you.

[17:17] We hate you. God. People hate God. And this is no more clearly evidenced by the fact that we murdered the Son of God.

Nothing demonstrates our hatred of God so vividly as the murder of Jesus Christ. When God came to the earth in the flesh, when he lived and he walked among us, when he expressed himself most fully and most perfectly in the person and work of Jesus Christ, when we got, as it were, a very close-up of who God was, what did we do?

We murdered him. Why did we murder God? Because we hated him. And why did we hate him? We hated him because we love our sin.

And that's our next point. The cross shows us how much people love their sin. The cross shows us how much people love their sin.

If you look at John 3, verse 19. This is the judgment that the light has come into the world and men love the darkness rather than the light.

[18:37] Why? Because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come into the light. Why? For fear that his deeds will be exposed.

How can people hate God? How could a good, loving, holy, perfect God end up being crucified by the hands of an angry mob?

And the Bible tells us how. The Bible tells us why. It's because we love our sin. Jesus came into the world to make an end of sin.

And because we love our sin, we made an end of him. Do you hear that? Jesus came into the world to make an end of our sin. And because we love our sin, we made an end of him.

The reason people hate the light so much is because they love the darkness. They love their sin.

And light and darkness cannot coexist at the same time. When light comes into the room, darkness must flee.

[19 : 45] And if the darkness is not going to flee, then you have to turn out the light. And that's exactly what happened, right? The light of the world stepped down into darkness. And what did we do? We turned off the light.

We killed him. Why? Because we love our sin. A popular bumper sticker tells us to coexist, right? But light and darkness just don't mix.

They do not coexist. And so we are like Gollum and the Lord of the Rings, right? We hold on to our sin like it's that precious ring that Gollum would hold on to.

And if anybody threatens that sin, if anybody tells us that we must put that sin away, what do we do? As Gollum would say, kills them, we must, right?

Kills them, we must. And that's exactly what happened in the case of Jesus. And it's why people go to hell. It's people go to hell because they can't let go of their sin and won't let go of their sin.

[20 : 47] It's like if you can imagine a ship full of treasure and the ship is sinking. And as the ship is sinking, somebody grabs a bag of gold. And as they finally sink down in the water, they're holding on to that gold.

And they will not let go of the gold. But the gold is starting to drag them down. And all they have to do is let go of the gold and swim to the raft.

And they get on and they will be saved. But rather than be saved, they hold on to that gold because they love it and they cherish it. And they cherish it all the way down to the very pits and depths of the ocean.

And that's a picture of us, folks. We love our sin and we hold on to it even though we could be saved. We won't let go of it. And we let it sink us all the way down to the very pit of hell because we love our sin.

C.S. Lewis made an interesting observation. He said that hell was locked from the inside. Many scholars have debated whether Lewis was actually right on this or not.

[21 : 52] But what was Lewis saying? Hell is locked from the inside. He was saying that people love their sin so much that even in hell, it's not like they're being forced there and held there captive against their will.

They actually love their sin so much that they've locked the door from the inside and they want to be there. They want to be in hell. Why? Because they hate God and they love their sin. And I think Lewis may be on to something.

There was an apologist one time who was debating an unbeliever and was talking to them and finally the unbeliever just said to this apologist, so you're saying I'm going to hell then?

Is that what you're saying? To which the apologist replied, don't you want to? And the unbeliever was taken aback a little bit. What do you mean don't I want to?

And he said, well, you hate God, right? So why would you want to go to heaven where God is? And you love your sin, so why would you want to go to that place where there absolutely is no sin whatsoever?

[22 : 54] Why would you want to go to heaven? Why wouldn't you want to go to hell? And it landed on that unbeliever in a unique way. And I think that Lewis, again, is on to something when we think about this.

In fact, when you actually look in Luke 16, one of the most vivid pictures we have in the Bible of hell, when Jesus is talking about the rich man and Lazarus, and if you remember, both of them die, and Lazarus goes to be with Abraham in Abraham's bosom, and the rich man goes to hell, and you remember he asked for some water to come and cool the tip of his tongue.

And Father Abraham says there's a great chasm between us and you, and we can't cross over to you, and you can't cross over to us. But the interesting thing in that story is that the man in hell never asked to go to heaven, never asked to cross over to Lazarus.

He asked for Lazarus to come to him. I don't think we can build a full doctrine of hell out of this, but I do think it's interesting. If people really hate God, if they really love their sin, then it does make sense that they wouldn't want to be where God is, where his truth reigns, where righteousness is, where there's a complete absence of sin.

Folks, ultimately, our problem with God in our fallen state is that he has a problem with our sin. And this is why we have militant atheism or militant homosexuality today or why we have persecution.

[24 : 35] People do not want to let go of their sin and they will fight to the death to keep it. And in fact, in order for people to continue in their sin, they committed the ultimate sin, which was killing

the very Son of God.

And it's something we have to embrace and it's something we have to declare boldly. You love your sin, you hate God, and you must repent of these things if you're ever to escape the wrath of God that's spoken of in the Scripture.

I think it's interesting. Some of you, if you do explore the Bible, you probably noticed this in your lesson this morning about how boldly the apostles preached this very thing. They stood up and declared boldly, you killed him.

You killed God. Acts 2.23, they said, this man delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put him to death. Acts 3.14-15, but you disowned the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you. But you put to death the prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.

[25 : 47] Acts 5.29, Peter and the apostles answered, we must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging him on a cross.

Or even Stephen when he was about to be stoned to death and martyred. You men who are of a stiff neck and uncircumcised in heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Spirit, you are doing just as your fathers did.

Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become.

The apostles declared this plainly and boldly, that men hate God, that men love their sin, and that men, in fact, are murderers who killed the God and Son of God, the God of glory, when he came down to earth in their midst.

We hate God, we love our sin, and therefore we kill them. If we think of the most horrific things that have ever been carried out in human history, when you think of that newsreel that maybe plays in your mind of holocausts and pogroms and tortures and mindless brutality and all the ugliest sin of this world, none of these remotely compare with the fact that we executed God.

[27 : 13] Worst sin ever committed in human history, and we do it because we love our sin. Well, the next thing, what do we see when we look at the cross? We see that the cross shows us how much God hates sin.

John chapter 3, verse 18. He who believes in him is not judged. He who does not believe has been judged already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Verse 36. He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

Scriptures tell us here that Christ did not come into the world to judge the world. He didn't come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. The mission of Jesus was not to come and bring the wrath of God in his first coming.

That was not his mission. The mission of Jesus was actually to come and not judge, but himself to be judged. Not to condemn, but to have himself condemned. To not bring the wrath of God, but rather to receive the wrath of God upon him in order that we might be saved.

[28 : 27] But when we look at the cross, when we look at Jesus, we look at the fact that he who knew no sin became sin for us.

And when he who knew no sin became sin for us and took our place upon the cross, the scriptures say that God was pleased to pour out his wrath upon him.

The Father was pleased, it says in Isaiah 53, to crush him, that he was stricken, that he was smitten by God, that he was afflicted, he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquity.

Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and by his wounds, we were healed. When the God of glory was hung upon the cross, the Father was pleased to pour out the fullness of his wrath upon Jesus.

Many times when I've tried to share the gospel with somebody, I realize that traction is not going to be made unless we start getting to some of the bad news.

[29 : 43] One of the most helpful things for me has been a way of sharing the gospel, it's called Way of the Master, developed by Ray Comfort. And what I love about that is it really gets to the heart of the bad news really quickly so that you can start getting to the good news.

And the way the presentation starts off is something like this, do you believe yourself to be a good person? I've never asked that question to anybody who didn't respond. Of course, yeah, I think I'm a pretty good person.

And then you start going into the law of God, showing them their sinfulness according to the law of God. So you just ask them questions like, well, have you ever told a lie?

And most people will say, yeah, I've told a lie. Usually ask that person, what does that make you? To which that person usually responds? Makes me human, right? That's the way they typically say it, right?

But then if you ask them, yeah, well, what would you call me if I lied to you? Well, I'd call you a liar. Okay, well, so what are you now that you've admitted that you've lied?

[30 : 45] Okay, okay, well, I guess I'm a liar, right? And that's an important part of getting people to understand their own sin. You know, a lot of people have said if you don't name something that doesn't exist, well, in this you start naming something, right?

You start calling yourself, you have to name yourself as a liar, you have to name yourself as someone who's hated other people, as a murderer, as an adulterer at heart. When you have to name these things, it starts making an impression.

And so many times I've actually been able to share this and have someone come to the conclusion that, yeah, I'm a sinner. And if I were to stand before God and be judged according to God's righteous standard and according to His holy law, I don't know.

But there's enough Christianity that they've heard in their lives that they always come back to go, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But God's a merciful God. He's a good God.

I'm very confident that God, I'm going to get in. God's going to overlook all of this sin that I've committed. And I think one of the most potent things that we can do at that point is to point people to the cross.

[31 : 51] on the cross, Jesus, when He took upon Himself sin, God poured out His wrath upon Jesus. And if God will not sweep sin under the rug, if He won't overlook it, if Jesus wasn't able to get out of this through some kind of special relationship with His Father, who do we think we are that somehow we're not going to have to abide the wrath of God?

Do you see it? If Jesus, if Jesus had to endure the wrath when He became sin, if we hold on to our sin, we should fully expect that God is going to do what God did on the cross, which was punish that sin because He's a holy, He's a righteous, He's a faithful God.

The fact that God hates what we love and hates it enough to crush the sun for it should scare us silly folks. It really should. It reveals to us our absolute need for true repentance in the gospel because we cannot continue to love what God hates when we can't continue to love the very thing that put the Lord of glory on the cross.

Hell is a demonstration of God's wrath against sin. Hell is a demonstration of God's perfect justice, but it's not as potent a demonstration as the cross is.

We could maybe look at hell and somehow construe that hell is vindictive or it's cruel or say to ourselves, how could God punish the sins of men in a place called hell?

[33 : 36] But God the Son being punished by God the Father for sins He Himself didn't even commit on the cross cannot be seen as anything but perfect justice married to perfect love.

That leads us to our last point. The cross shows us how much God loves us. Amen. It shows us how much God loves us.

And of course, there's that beautiful verse in our text, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

As Romans 5.8 says, but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While we were still sinners, while we were enemies with God, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

And that's why the Gospel is truly good news. Something I think it's important for us to understand is that it was the Father's love that pursued us in this as well.

[34 : 44] You know, sometimes we have that tendency or the misconception to think that God the Father is a wrathful, angry, cruel, vindictive God who's sitting in heaven angry all the time and that Jesus is the loving Son who comes and as D.A. Carson said, comes and mollifies the Father.

God's implacably opposed to us. He's full of wrath and Jesus comes and He mollifies the Father because Jesus loves us. But the fact is we can't separate the love of God from the Father.

In fact, we see in this very text, who does it say, love the world? It says the Father loved the world for God so loved the world that He gave who? He gave His Son, Jesus, the only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish.

In fact, 1 Timothy 1, verse 1, Paul says, I'm an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God, our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope.

Again, that God the Father is Himself also the Savior. So we have to realize that as we look at a Trinitarian God, that God is not bipolar, He's not tripolar.

[35 : 58] He loves us. The Father loves us, the Son loves us, the Holy Spirit loves us, and in the same way, when He comes back to judge the world in righteousness, that judgment, that wrath, will be the wrath of the Father, the wrath of the Son, and the wrath of the Holy Spirit.

God is three in one. We see here in our text that no greater love has a man than He laid down His life for His friends, and God laid down His life for us.

If God laid down His life for us, what would God not do for His people? I wanted to tell you just a story about my own testimony.

One of the things that was very difficult for me, even after I became a believer, was the fact of God's love towards sinners.

There were three stories in the Bible that I really did not like. One was the story of Jacob and Esau. I mean, I did not like that little trickster, Jacob.

[37 : 00] I mean, that's what his name meant, that he was a trickster. And here you had Esau, kind of a manly man, he's a hunter, and Jacob, this little mama's boy, he said he's always running around in the kitchen with his mama, this little mama's boy tricked Esau out of his birthright, right?

And it says in the Scripture that Jacob hath I loved and Esau hath I hated. And I thought, what in the world? That's messed up. Why didn't God love Esau?

Why didn't He hate Jacob? Why the trickster mama's boy? Another story in the Bible that gave me trouble was the story of David and Uriah. Here you have David, the king, sitting in his posh palace. Uriah's out fighting on the battlefield. David commits adultery. He has Uriah killed. And even after all of this, it says, David was a man after God's own heart.

How in the world can that be? God loves David and calls him a man after his own heart after he's done all of that? Why didn't God bring down David and raise up Uriah?

[38 : 05] Why didn't Uriah receive the king? That was a man after God's own heart right there.

Another story I hated was the story of the prodigal son. Here you have a faithful son who stays at home.

He serves his father faithfully. Then you have the prodigal who asks for his inheritance. Basically saying he wants his father dead. And he runs off with that inheritance. He spends it all on sinful living.

And then he comes back to the father. And he's just received back as if nothing ever happened. And yet the one who was there at home the whole time seems to be pushed to the side.

Whoa, what is that? I really struggled with these things. And then it kind of came to me one day. It should be so obvious, right? It should be so obvious in the scriptures.

And yet it came to me one day that all along I'd misplaced myself in the story. You see, I still felt myself in some way to be righteous, to be a good boy, right?

[39 : 06] And so when I read the story of Jacob and Esau, I was always identifying with Esau because I saw myself as Esau in the story. When I read the story of David and Uriah, I always wanted to identify myself with Uriah in the story.

When I read the story of the prodigal son, I always identified with the son that stayed at home and did what he was supposed to do and served his parents. What I came to realize in the scripture is I'm a sinner.

I'm that Jacob. I'm that trickster mama's boy. I'm that murdering, adulterous king named David. I'm that prodigal son that hated my father and ran off and spent all of my inheritance on things that displeased him.

that is who I am at the very core. And when I understood that, all of a sudden those stories became good stories. They became good news that God would love sinners and love sinners enough to pursue us and to die for us despite the fact that all we've ever done is hated him and loved our sin. Thank you.