

Humility in Words & Worship

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[0:00] We have been learning to look above the sun for the last several weeks, and we have been digging! We have been digging through this series on the book of Ecclesiastes. Listen, before we go any further, I want to introduce, I'm sorry, dismiss the children, kindergarten through second grade.

There's a little bit of a ring back here, if you wouldn't mind turning me maybe down just a smidge, at least in these monitors up here. Listen, so kids, kindergarten through second grade, you are dismissed to Children's Church. If you'd like to head to the back, you can do that now.

And before we go any further, can we stop and pray for our nation, for the nation of Israel, for the conflict happening in the Middle East, which, of course, our president just announced this weekend. So, if you wouldn't mind going to Lord in prayer, I'm going to lead us in a special prayer. I appreciate Joe Bill Brock, our deacon, leading us in that earlier, and I'd like to dedicate one prayer to that this morning.

So, if you wouldn't mind bowing your heads with me at this time. Father in heaven, conflict is a real part of our world. We look forward to the day when all strivings will cease.

[1:11] We look forward to the day when we'll beat our swords and weapons into plowshares. The Prince of Peace will rule. But until that day, we live in a broken world full of conflict.

There's a historic conflict which began, we read about it in the old, pages of the Old Testament, between the Muslim people, the Jewish people.

We pray for peace to come to that region. We pray for the peace of your people.

We pray for safety for those who are fighting on the other side of the world. We pray for those who are making decisions that they would be guided by wisdom from on high.

We always pray for a peaceful resolution to conflict. Sometimes history has shown us that war is necessary. But we ask that you would reign over it, and in your timing, you would cause a peaceful resolution to come.

[2:22] We pray for protection for the men and women who are serving in that part of the world. We ask your spirit to build a hedge of protection around them. We ask that we would be faithful to lift them up in prayer, to do whatever we can on the home front, to support and pray for you to rule over that situation.

Thank you for the hope we have in you, God, and that no matter what happens, whether things seem under control or out of control, we know that you're always in control. It's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Have you ever carried on a conversation with someone and you felt like they weren't really listening to you?

They were just waiting for you to take a breath so they could have their turn to talk? Or have you been the person who was waiting for your turn to talk and not really listening?

Look, we probably all find ourselves on both sides of that coin, but the reality is sometimes we're only half listening and we're just waiting to get a word in edgewise.

[3:30] You can always tell when somebody's not really dialed in to what you're saying. They might be nodding along with you. Maybe they're even smiling, but their mind is thinking about what they're going to say next.

If we're honest with ourselves, sometimes our prayers look a lot like that. We do far more talking and not nearly enough listening.

What would it look like to have a one-sided conversation with God where he's the one doing the talking? Let's think through that as we study in Ecclesiastes chapter 5.

So if you would take the Word of God with you, and if you don't have a copy, look on with somebody. Some of the verses we'll have up on the screen, but some of them I'd love for you to grab a copy of the Word of God in front of you or look on with somebody.

Or if you want to pull up the Bible app on your device, that's fine too. But we're in Ecclesiastes chapter 5 as we're making our way through this fascinating book in our series called Catching Smoke, Living Life Under the Sun.

[4:36] We read a lot of typology in Ecclesiastes as he says, chasing after the wind or trying to catch smoke in your hand, something that just seems like a fool's errand.

You're never really going to be able to achieve that. Nobody can catch smoke in your hand. Nobody can catch the wind. So how do we live this life under the sun?

Sometimes it feels like that. We're trying to do something that we really can't ever figure out a way to do. So when we're in chapter 5, the teacher, which we've identified as Solomon, the author of this book, says that as we come before God, how we come before Him matters almost just as much as that we come before Him, the manner in which we approach Him.

So let's look in verse 1 of Ecclesiastes 5. As you enter the house of God, keep your ears open and your mouth shut. Well, that sets a precedent right there. If we could all just do that, would we enter into the presence of God and keep our ears open and our mouth shut?

Would we come together? If we keep our ears open and our mouth shut, we'd all be a whole lot better off. That doesn't mean you can't say good morning to somebody. That doesn't mean you can't engage in fellowship or lift up your voice in praise to God.

[5:59] But sometimes we're way too quick to close our ears and open our mouths, and the teacher is teaching us, let's try it a different way.

As you come into the house of God, keep your ears open and your mouth shut. Then he goes on to say, it's evil to make mindless offerings to God. What is he saying? It's evil to make mindless offerings to God.

That means don't be so quick to offer the sacrifice of praise to God if your heart is not in it. God despises when we praise him from our mouth, from our lips, and not our hearts.

It's not praise to him. It's just noise. It would be far better to not sing the songs of praise that the church is lifting up if your heart is not in it.

I've talked to Jared about this, and he hasn't done it yet because it's going to weird some people out, okay? But one of these times, we might try a deal where we say, listen, you don't have to stand.

[7:08] Everybody doesn't have to stand and sing. If you'd like to stand, you stand. But if you're not really in the heart space to stand and sing right now, let's all remain seated.

And if at some point, the Spirit moves you to stand up and lift your praise from a standing position, that's fine. If you'd like to join in and sing, that's fine.

If you'd like to just sit there, and pray, and reorient your heart back to listening to the Holy Spirit, maybe that's a good thing to do in this moment.

We might try that one of these times and just see how that goes. I've attended services like that before, and it really moved me because sometimes, when we all just stand and do something together, it's like, man, if your heart's right, great.

If it's not, tough luck, because this is what we're all doing right now. And it almost enables this false sacrifice of praise before God.

[8:03] Solomon is teaching us, it's evil to make mindless offerings to God. Just do it just to do it. Just because everybody else is doing it, it feels like you should.

That's a mindless offering to God. Then he goes on and says, don't make rash promises, and don't be hasty in bringing matters before God.

You sense a theme here? Make rash and hasty promises? Like, God, I swear, if you just do this for me, then I'll do this for you. Now, these things should come from the heart, not bargaining with God or making a desperate, rash, or hasty promise.

He says, don't be hasty in bringing matters before God. Be intentional. Pray through it. Get your heart right first, and then pray through it.

Settle yourself. Be quiet. Sit before God. He says, be still, and remember and know that I am God. After all, God is in heaven. You are here on earth, so let your words be few.

[9:11] If you read through Solomon's other famous writings in the Old Testament, specifically the Proverbs, how many times does he warn us and give us advice that we should be quiet and let our words be few?

But what do we do? We mouth off. We like to talk. We love to get our opinion out there. And now we can get our opinion out there like never before through the miracle of the internet.

Everybody can know what we're thinking. Everybody can know what we have to say about a certain thing. I'm not sure the world is better off with all of us having a voice in that way.

You don't have to earn it anymore. You don't have to earn the platform. You can just go out there and broadcast it to the world. We don't always do that responsibly. We don't always do that from a place of wisdom.

Solomon says, let your words be few. When God gives you something to say, say it. Otherwise, be quiet. We all need to take that advice to heart, especially in 2026.

[10:20] Then verse three, too much activity gives you restless dreams. Too many words make you a fool. So he's using a comparison here, an illustration.

You go and you have a, you live a crazy life and you're out there doing all kinds of things. You're that are maybe out of the ordinary. Then your dreams might be a little crazier.

You go and eat a bunch of Mexican food at Hefe's the night before. You might have some crazy dreams. I don't know what it is, but sometimes we find ourselves with funny dreams after we've done something along those lines.

Then he says, just like that, too many words make you a fool. So he's using an illustration here. When you talk too much, the foolishness that's inside you has a far better chance of coming out.

Guess what? We're all a fool. We all have foolishness in us. Not one of us is exempt from foolishness.

[11:25] I know we try to present ourselves that we are wisdom, wisdom, wisdom all the time, but the reality is foolishness is in there. And it's only by God's Holy Spirit that it doesn't come out.

So let the Spirit prompt you when to talk, not your flesh. When your flesh does the prompting, foolishness is the result. So Solomon is giving us the same warning in different ways in the first three verses.

Then he says, verse 4, when you make a promise to God, don't delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools.

When you make a promise to God, this goes back to, don't be hasty in bringing matters before God. Don't make mindless offerings to God.

Be very intentional and very sober when you're dealing with Almighty God, the creator of the universe, the creator of you, the king of all kings, the lord of all lords. Respect him in your dealings with him.

[12:32] Now he's family. He is the father. If you're a child of God, you've made him your choice.

You've offered yourself as a living sacrifice to God. Then he is your father. But he's your father. And you don't just treat him like somebody else that you would approach casually and not respect the awesome power that God has.

So you come to him not with fear of what he might do to you, but out of respect for who he is and what he has done.

And then it says when you make a promise to God, follow through with it and don't sit around and wait. You know how many times I've heard people say, I'm going to get saved saved.

And if you're not sure about what that church kind of language means, it means placing your faith in Jesus to forgive your sins, make you his child, that he's the only way to be right with God.

[13:42] There's nothing you can do. So we call that getting saved. Saved from the punishment for our sins. Saved from a life without God. Saved from all of this apart from God.

And now you get to have a relationship with God. So becoming God's child. So if you do this, how many times I've heard somebody say, yeah, I want to be God's child, but I'm not sure about getting baptized.

And they'll delay for years. And if that's your story, I'm not shaking a finger at you or judging you or painting you in a negative light. I thank God because I've talked to people who've been years not being baptized.

Then they said, you know what? It's time. Enough is enough. I'm going to go get baptized. And I'm thankful for the work God did in your heart to bring you to that place. But if you're holding off, then take that into consideration.

Jesus set the example for us and he showed us how important baptism is in the life of a Jesus follower. He says, if you're going to be a follower of Jesus, this is what you do. We see that supported with the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip.

[14:45] There was a man who was steeped in religious knowledge and tradition and he had a high role in that and he knew the scriptures and he comes to the evangelist, Jesus follower Philip and he says, I want to follow Jesus.

What should I do? And Philip said, you got to get baptized, man. This shows that you're serious about it. This shows that this is the life you're chosen. You are following the example of Jesus. This is what you do. This is one example of making a promise to God that says, I will follow you but then delaying actually following him. It's not that that's the only way to follow Jesus.

There are many ways that you would follow Jesus in your life but that is an important one and that's what Jesus did himself and then said for us to do and it's part of the mission that he gave to his followers is go out, make disciples, baptize them, teach them what I've commanded you.

So this is one example of making a promise to God and then delaying in following it through. So if that's you, then don't delay any longer.

[15:53] sit with God, get alone with God and say, God, I've been delaying too long. Give me the courage, give me the grace to follow your example in baptism.

That's one way. What are other ways that maybe you've made a promise to God and you've been delaying in following through on it? keep all the promises you make to him.

Verse five, it is better to say nothing than to make a promise and then not keep it. Verse six, don't let your mouth make you sin and don't defend yourself by telling the temple messenger that the promise you made was a mistake.

Then you go back on it. Well, I wasn't really serious about it. I probably said that before I thought it through. Whatever the promise was, then we start hedging on it a little bit.

We start backing up. We start backtracking. I'm not sure I really thought that one through.

Meanwhile, God says, oh yes, you did. That was the right promise to make.

[17:00] That was the right decision that you made and now fear is getting in the way. Now uncertainty is getting in the way. Now reliance on yourself and not being sure that yourself can handle it.

Remember, forgetting the fact that God is there to give you the strength. God is there to help you see this through and by his power and not yours, this decision will come to fruition.

what you promised God can make reality but you can't start backtracking. So this is a powerful lesson that Solomon is teaching us.

He says, that would make God backtracking, going back and saying the promise I made was a mistake. He said, that would make God angry and he might wipe out everything you have achieved.

There are consequences consequences when we go back on our word with God. Does that mean God expects perfection from us every time?

[18:00] Of course not. He knows we're weak and he shows us grace. And remember, Solomon was living in this time before Jesus came, before he gave his life as the sacrifice for our sins.

But there is a lesson here that you and I as the followers of Jesus, and I'm taking most of you at your word that you have chosen to be a follower of Jesus. Some of you may not be in that boat right now and that's okay.

We're just glad you're here. We'd love to talk to you about what it means and how to become a follower of Jesus. So you come talk to me after the service, grab Jared, grab any of our deacons, just about anybody here and say, I would love to become a follower of Jesus and we'll get you on the right path.

We'll take you to the scriptures and show you how to do that. But as the followers of Jesus, this is a powerful lesson that we need to learn. We need to take our promises to God seriously. We need to take the decisions we make before God seriously.

Don't rush into them. Don't be hasty. Say, man, I'm in financial trouble so I need God to pour out the windows of, you know, the blessings from the windows of heaven and enrich my life because I'm hurting right now.

[19:05] So God, whatever you want from me, I'll do it, okay? Just hook me up with \$100,000. We'll be okay. Now that is a hasty, irresponsible promise to make before God.

It would be far better to not make that kind of promise and just say, God, my heart is open to you. You know the needs that I have. You know the situation I'm in that humanly speaking looks difficult or maybe even impossible.

God, please work and show me what I need to do. This is what decisions or promises from the heart looks like.

So there's a couple of truths here I want to share with you. First off, God is not impressed by performance, but he is honored by our listening. So taking our cue from what Solomon is teaching us in these first seven verses, God is not impressed by performance, but he is honored by our listening.

So listen. So listen. Listen to God. Listen to God's voice. God's voice can come to us in surprising ways sometimes.

[20:18] Most often it comes from the Holy Spirit of God. It comes from Scripture, from this book right here. We live in an age where we can carry this book around with us everywhere. If you've got this phone with you, then you can have the Bible with you everywhere you go.

But I encourage you to have one of these two. It's important. I like this one because it's got wide margins and you can write in it. But whatever works for you, get God's word and get in it.

And then let the Holy Spirit enlighten you to what you're reading. It's called illumination, shining a light on what you're reading. Because anybody can pick up this book and they can come up with all the wrong ideas about what it's saying.

And a lot of people do that. That's why you'll go on YouTube. Little rabbit trail here. If you get your theology from YouTube, it's a very dangerous place to get it.

Not everyone who's on YouTube is doing it wrong, but a whole lot of them are. So get your theology first and foremost from the Holy Spirit of God, but then secondly, from the tried and true doctrine that's been passed down from faith to faith, from generation to generation, from true Jesus followers whose fruit backs up what they're saying.

[21:45] I don't care. Talk is cheap. Hey, verse 7. Look with me. Ecclesiastes 5, 7. Talk is cheap like daydreams and other useless activities like scrolling YouTube to figure out what you believe.

Fear God instead. Solomon was before his time, man. No, I think human nature just hasn't changed that much. If they didn't have YouTube, then they had something else.

Talk is cheap, but I want to see what kind of fruit your life bears out with all the talk that you do.

Some of these people that will get on there and come up with these wild ideas that are so different than anything you've heard before about God or anything else, oftentimes, usually, the fruit of their life does not back up what they're saying.

Say, that's interesting what you're talking about. All the conspiracy theories or, you know, whatever, new illumination, new truth. Say, you know, I'm not really going to give you the time of day because I don't see the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life.

That's often the first litmus test that we can put against things that we see online. Far often, instead of talking so much, we need to stop and listen to what God might be teaching us.

[23:09] So, content creators or whatever other kind of performers are out there, I want to see how much you're listening to God and what He's doing through you that way, not by what you perform.

But let's bring it home to Henrietta and First Baptist Church. God is not impressed by how many weeks in a row you've been sitting in the pew on Sunday.

I am. I think it's great when you're here. I hate it when you're not, even though sometimes, you know, I get four Sundays a year. I've never taken all four Sundays a year that I'm not here.

But we all have times when we're out of town or we're sick or something like that. Somebody got baptized in another church recently and some of our people were up there. I think that was really, really cool.

So, I understand why you can't be here sometimes. But it impresses me when you're here. That's great. I love it. You know why that is? Because man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the what?

[24:19] Yeah, y'all know. God looks on the heart. So, he's honored when we listen to him from our hearts far more than when we perform for him.

So, you might have been teaching your Sunday school class for a long time and I'm so thankful you're doing that. And there's a lot of kids who are thankful you're doing that and parents probably who are even more thankful that you're doing that.

But far more than your performance for God, he's impressed by how much you're listening to him as you prepare to teach that class.

As you prepare to handle those children. Same thing in the school teachers. Same thing with our administration. Same thing with you and your workplace.

God's not so impressed with how you perform as to the heart motivations behind it. The heart motivations only change by listening to the Holy Spirit of God.

[25:17] You and I are not wired to do things for God from the heart. We're wired to perform. So, we have to let the Holy Spirit change our wiring.

Change our internal whatever you call it. Dits and dashes and zeros and numbers. DNA.

There you go. That was a terrible explanation of DNA. We got there eventually. God literally has to change our DNA. You know what it's called? It's called regeneration.

He changes the way we're made up. Say, well, that's just who I am. God made me this way. God wants to make you new. God wants to remake you.

We have to listen to His Holy Spirit. Listening is better than offering the sacrifice of fools. The teacher's not anti-worship. He's not even anti-performance if the performance comes from a place of the heart.

[26:21] I saw teenagers up here practicing this morning and then they got up here and sang. They performed and they performed beautifully. And I know that many of them and I hope all of them were singing from their heart.

I've seen Jessica in the way she pours herself into these performances. I know she's doing it from the heart because otherwise she would have quit a long time ago. And I'm so grateful when our hearts then produce a performance on God's behalf.

When you go out and perform a good work for someone, let it come from a time of listening to God and His Spirit. Not from this need to perform or need to impress or need to scratch your itch or make you feel better about yourself.

The motivation from the heart is the key. Habakkuk. We don't go to Habakkuk very often, do we?

Well, here's one. The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be, what's that?

Silent before Him. This is a consistent theme throughout Scripture. Let's be silent before God. Let's let Him speak to us before we hurry up and get busy and get loud before Him.

[27:34] Then in Isaiah chapter 30, that's supposed to say 30, not 3. In quietness and confidence is your strength. In quietness and confidence is your strength.

Not in loudness, confidence in who? One person said God. Confidence in who, church? God.

Confidence in God, not yourself.

Paul understood this. He said, I don't have any confidence in my own flesh. I could, and he even made the point, if anybody could have confidence in themselves and what they could achieve on their own, it would be me.

Trust me. It's not, Paul was teaching us, he said, it's not that I couldn't achieve anything on my own. He said, don't get this idea that I chose ministry because I wasn't good at anything else. He said, that's not what it was. I chose to follow Jesus and give my life to him because God changed me, not because it was my best option in life as a career. He said, I have the ability to be confident in myself, but I've learned that that's not going to get me anywhere.

[28:43] Meaningful. So I've learned that when I'm weak, then God is strong in me, through me. So, in quietness and confidence in the Lord, that's where you find your strength.

So if you're not always feeling strong, if you're not always on top of your game, by the way, when you are feeling strong, often that's an illusion.

When you do think you're on top of your game, just wait until you turn the corner and life hits you again. So regardless of whether you're up or whether you're down, in quietness and confidence in Christ, that's where your strength is found.

So here's our takeaway. Attention honors God more than activity. Attention to God honors God more than activity. How many of you your kids like your attention?

Anybody? Slip your hand up if your kids like your attention. I'm noticing a theme. It's the younger kids. Once they hit teenage years, they don't want your attention anymore, right?

[29:55] That's how it is. So think of us as little kids. We want God's attention, right? You know what the crazy thing is? You know what God wants from us? Our attention. How many of you parents want your kids' attention?

Anybody? How many of you would love for your teenagers to give you attention again? Yeah. God craves our attention more than anything because if our minds are fixed on him, he can teach us.

He can help us. He can guide us. He can change us. We've got to give him our attention far more than our activity. Sometimes we're so busy working for God, we forget to actually talk to him.

We forget to actually listen to him. Number two, peace comes. This thing's bouncing all over the place. Here we go. Peace comes from trusting God, not managing him.

How many of you are guilty? Don't raise your hand right now. How many of you are guilty of managing God? I'll raise mine because I have done that. I have tried to manage God. as long as I do this and this and this, God will be satisfied and I can go about my life.

[31:10] We're managing him like he's a difficult parent or a difficult client. We're managing him. Got to keep God satisfied.

Got to keep God okay so he doesn't complicate my life. Peace comes from trusting God. Not managing him. Turning over the keys. This is a theme that Solomon is teaching us in Ecclesiastes 5.

It moves from our words to our posture. Our heart posture. It says, when you make a promise to God, don't delay. You fear God. The issue is not commitment on our part.

It's giving up control. We don't make vows to God because God needs reassurance. He doesn't need to be managed by us. That's not the purpose behind making promises to God or decisions before God.

It's not that God needs to be reassured that we love him and it's all going to be okay. It's the opposite. We need to be reminded that he loves us and he's going to help it be okay if we stay in tune with him.

[32:18] We make these vows and promises often, unfortunately, because we want leverage. we bargain, we negotiate, we promise future obedience in exchange for present blessings or relief.

How silly is that? How pointless is that? So Ecclesiastes, Solomon, the teacher, invites us into something better, a faith that rests instead of manages.

A reverence before God that releases the illusion of needing to be in control and a humility that lets God be God.

Jesus tells a story about this. Would you turn to Luke chapter 18? Luke chapter 18.

We'll be done in just a moment but before we're done I want to share this with you. Now keep a finger in Luke 18 because we're going to go there and then go back to Micah chapter 6.

[33:30] Go back a few pages, Mark, Matthew and then keep going back. You see Malachi, you see some of these minor prophets, Zechariah, Haggai,

then go back to Micah.

Micah chapter 6 verse 6. Keep a finger in Luke 18, we're going to be there in just a second. Micah 6 verse 6. What can we bring to the Lord?

Should we bring him burnt offerings? Should we bow before God the Most High with offerings of yearling calves? Should we offer him thousands of rams and tens of thousands of rivers of olive oil? Should we sacrifice our firstborn children to pay for our sins? What does he want? What does he want from us? Does he want all our money? Does he want our bank accounts? Does he want our times? Does he want our volunteering in the church?

Does he want us to sit up there on the deck and struggle with that system up there trying to make everything sound good and the slides and all that stuff? Does he want us to get up and sing in front of the choir even though we don't like being in front of people?

[34:26] What does he want from us? It's kind of the point. Ooh, I like it. Good job, Bo. Bo jumped in there and said our heart. That's good. Okay, let's see what he says. Verse 8.

To do what is right, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God.

Fear the Lord if you are wise. To do what is right, to walk humbly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God.

That is a heart posture. You cannot accomplish those things. Without giving him your heart. So what he wants from you is your heart.

It's your desires. It's your motivations. It's the why. He wants the why. Now go to Luke 18. Hopefully you've got a finger there. If not, you've got to hurry and turn there because we're already there.

[35:25] Luke 18, verse 9. Here we go. Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness. There's nobody in this room that has great confidence in your own righteousness.

Right? Again, don't raise your hand. Just look in your own heart. These were the Pharisees. They scorned everyone else. So he teaches them something through this story.

He says, two men went into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee. The other was a despised tax collector. Boy, you couldn't get more despised or lower in that society than tax collector.

Everybody hated that guy. He was working on behalf of the Romans. He was the scourge of their existence. He was the one who was the physical manifestation of everything they hated about Rome, collecting taxes that they thought were unfair and shouldn't have to be paid.

So this guy is the despised tax collector. The other is at the opposite end of the social spectrum. You couldn't get more respected and revered than a Pharisee. She got two guys going into the temple to pray.

[36:28] The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer. I thank you, God. That's my fancy voice. That I am not like these other people. And I imagine he's kind of cocking his head over that way like this tax collector guy over here.

Cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I'm certainly not like that tax collector. He literally calls the guy out during his prayer. He thought that one was getting through to God.

I think that was bouncing on the roof. It wasn't going up to heaven. I fast twice a week. I give you, oh God, a tenth of my income.

And I imagine he went on and on and Jesus had the mercy to not give us the whole prayer here.

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He dared not even lift his eyes to heaven.

He didn't feel worthy. To lift his eyes up to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow. Now, I don't think he's doing like gorilla style.

[37:34] Okay? Back then, different culture, right? But what we can take away from this is he was sorrowful. He felt terrible.

He felt unworthy. Felt like he was wrong and he was a sinner. And he says, oh God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

That was it. It's the extent of his prayer. God, please just show me mercy. I'm a sinner. I've done terrible things.

Please show me mercy. Jesus says, I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God.

What does he mean by justified? Made right. He was made right before God. The guy who was the sinner, not the quote, quote, righteous man.

[38:38] For those who exalt themselves will be humbled. And those who humble themselves will be exalted. Can I repeat that to you, church? If you exalt yourself, God will humble you.

If you humble yourself, then God can exalt you. If I exalt myself, God has humbled me. When I've humbled myself, God's often chosen to exalt me.

He does that for all of us. I know that's the testimony that many of you share. You know the greatest example of this? Jesus humbled himself.

Took on the form of a servant. Was made in the likeness of men. Common, lowly, sinful men. And at the right time, God lifted him up and set him on the right hand of the throne of God.

And he says, someday, every knee of all those sinful men and women, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus, the one who humbled himself, he is Lord over all.

[39:53] He set the example and he says, this is the rule in my kingdom. You humble yourself and then I can exalt you. So, this is where we're finishing.

Peace begins where self-importance ends. Peace begins where self-importance ends. You can't keep up appearances enough. You're not good enough to be flawless.

And if you want people to be drawn to you because of how important you are or how righteous you are or how good you are, you're not good enough. You are flawed.

You'll never keep up the illusion long enough. You can't. God says, I can make you truly righteous. I can make it not an illusion. I can make it real.

But you gotta humble yourself. You gotta turn to me from your heart. You gotta listen to my voice and my spirit and let me change you from the inside. I wanna share a quote with you by Blaise Pascal.

[40:53] He said, all of humanity's problems, this was back in the 1600s, by the way. There was another guy who was before his time. He said, all of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone.

Now, I don't know about all of humanity's problems, but I think he understood that this was a problem even back then. We have a hard time sitting quietly in a room alone.

And I think our modern day adaptation of that is alone without the outside world available at our fingertips. Alone without this. How many times do I find myself with a moment's peace and quiet and what do I do?

I pull this out immediately. Gotta check what's going on. Gotta check my emails. Check the social medias. Check whatever's going on. Gotta be informed.

Gotta stay up on everything. And this can be a blessing. It can be a blessing to be informed, to know what's going on. But we've lost the ability to sit quietly alone.

[41:54] You know what happens to the follower of Christ when you sit quietly alone? God has space to speak to you. He's got your attention now.

He can cut through because there's nothing else competing for his voice. So how do we become a listening church? First, we gotta slow down.

Then we gotta quiet down. Then we've gotta open up. What do we mean by this? We gotta slow our bodies. Physically, you might need to slow down.

You might be doing too much. Your schedule might be too full. If you never have any time to sit quietly, you're too busy. So you may need to physically slow down.

Two, you need to quiet your mind. That's a discipline. It takes practice. It takes years. Truly, I'm in the middle of practicing that.

[42:55] I'll let you know when I've finally gotten there. But I'm working on it and you need to work on it with me. We all need to work on quieting our minds. And then thirdly, we need to open our hearts.

Open our hearts. Open our minds. God might be ready to change our mind on something. Romans 12, we say it like every other Sunday. God is changing the way we think.

So slow the body. Quiet the mind. Open the heart. Peace begins where self-importance ends. That progression is exactly right.

It's got to start with our body. Then it goes to our mind. And then our hearts become open. And the Holy Spirit can speak to us. This is how we live under the sun.

What makes us different from anybody else? The same sun shines down on all of us. So how can our lives be different? How can they be more peaceful? More full of joy?

[43:59] More full of hope? More able to bless others? How can we as the people of God be any different? It's by slowing the body, quieting the mind, open the heart.

Lift our eyes toward heaven above the sun. And that's how we do it. That's what we've been saying every week. Let's say it again, church. Ready? How do we live under the sun? We look above the sun.

Let's pray. God, that's what we want you to do right now as we lift our eyes to you. We can't be distracted by anything else under this sun and everything is competing to distract us.

So I pray that we would quiet our minds, that we would slow down, that we would sit still, that we would learn how to sit quietly and listen to you instead of just constantly running or constantly doing or constantly performing or constantly talking, that we would learn to sit quietly and listen.

Make us a listening church, listening families. Relationships are saved or restored because often listening comes back.

[45:07] Communications is important, but listening is even more important. As the music begins to play, would you listen right now? God, we open our hearts to you.

We open our ears to you. You speak to us right now, Lord. In our words, in our worship, we want to honor you.

In our hearts, we turn to you. We lift our eyes above the sun to the sun of God.

Amen.