

A Holy God

by Dennis Kinlaw

The sermon emphasizes the doctrine of the fall as the best explanation for human reality and our need for salvation, highlighting our blindness and sinfulness, and the ultimate demonstration of God's love in the cross.

Duration: 49:12

Topics: "Character Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the Methodist tradition and the hymn 'And Can It Be.' He emphasizes the testimony of Charles Wesley, who experienced a spiritual awakening and liberation from sin and bondage. The preacher then discusses a passage from the Gospel of Mark, highlighting the blindness of both the Pharisees and the disciples. The sermon concludes with an exploration of the doctrine of the fall and how it relates to the brokenness of humanity throughout history.

Transcript

One of the reasons, and I think, I hope it's the major reason, the significant reason why I count myself an Orthodox Christian is because of the fact Orthodox Christian truth, Orthodox Christian doctrine is a better explanation for human reality than any alternative that I can find. It is not a position with which I began, but it is a position that I came to as I live. And the longer I live, the more committed I am to it as the best explanation of us, both as to how to describe us and as to how to find a way for us to become what we would like to be.

Now, at the heart of biblical doctrine and the heart of Christian orthodoxy is the doctrine of the fall. Mary spelled it out very briefly yesterday when she was explaining her point of view. And that is that in the beginning, a good God created a good universe and everything was good about it.

In the first chapter of Genesis, you get that. And in the second chapter, you get the picture of how God wants to come and walk with his creatures and be one among us and relate to us. And then in chapter three of Genesis, something went wrong.

And from that point on, the story is a dismal one. And it is remarkably like at any point in human history where you cut it, it's remarkably similar. So that today we have the same kind of tragic circumstances that you had.

You may not have had the technological advance in preceding ages, but oftentimes that advance in technology just enables us to exaggerate the evil that was there all along. Now, the church has always recognized this, though the church does not always admit it. It's found in our hymnody, isn't it? Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see. Because you see, the biblical teaching is that man now is blind and cannot see what's really right in front of his face. I'm convinced that my greatest gift is for missing the obvious.

And that it really takes the divine revelation for me to see what's right under my nose. And I noticed something else, that when I've seen what's right under my nose and incredibly clear, give me a little time and it'll go fuzzy on me again. Now, I think that's what is being said.

I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see. God had come and quickened him so that he could see. We sing, as people who stand in the Methodist tradition, that, and can it be that I should gain an interest in my Savior's blood? Died he for me who caused his pain? We're the ones who caused him his pain, who caused his pain, who him to death pursued? Amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me? But do you remember the verse, long my imprisoned spirit lay? This is a testimony.

This is not just poetry. This is a testimony from Charles Wesley. Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night.

That's bondage and blindness. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, a ray of light broke into my blindness and my darkness that had quickening power about it. Thine eye diffused a quickening way, I woke the dungeon.

See the image of slavery, of bondage again? The dungeon flamed with light, blindness and bondage. My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth and followed thee. Now I thought of what Steve was saying yesterday when he was offered marijuana the morning after his conversion or immediately after whatever it was when his roommate offered it to him and he started to reach for it but as he reached out something said, you're free.

You don't have to do that anymore. Now that bondage to freedom. Now this picture is clear that the theology of the church is clear.

Every major creed in the history of the church points it out and our hymnody as we sing about it says that it's there. Now the scripture is loaded with it too but oftentimes the places where it is clearest we don't see it. Again a lot of people are like me.

We have a genius for missing the obvious but the greatest evidence of the universal fallenness of man or the fallenness of us who call ourselves human creatures is what we did with Jesus. That when the best man that ever came along came along we crucified him. I'll never forget hearing David Ben-Gurion speaking and he spoke about Jesus and he spoke about what a great Jew he was and the greatest of them.

He said it was Paul that fouled everything up. You see from his point of view Jesus didn't teach that he was the son of God. It was Paul who imposed that on Christianity but here we recognize.

You read the lives of the skeptics on Jesus. Here is a man who enchants them all whether it's a Mahatma Gandhi. Here is a man who in his goodness enchants everybody but you will remember what we did to him.

Now I've been sort of working my way through the Gospels with a little of this in mind and I notice at the beginning of the Gospel of John he says in him was life and the life was the light of men and the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it. That was the true light that gives light to every man that comes into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through him and the world did not know him.

He came to his own the very ones he created the very ones he made and they received him not. Now there is the picture of us in our blindness didn't know whom we were rejecting and in our in our in our dullness of heart we did not know why or even that we were rejecting him. Now I ran through the Gospel of John just looking at some of the high spots in connection with this.

Let me run through just a few of them in the Gospel of John. You remember the first thing he does after he's presented to Israel by John the Baptist in the Gospel of John is he goes to a place called Cana after he's picked up a half a dozen disciples and with his mother his family and these new friends of his he gets to a wedding and the wine has run out. So he turns and takes some pots of water and speaks to them and then says to the head waiter take some of that water and carry it to the governor of the feast.

I've always been awed at the faith of the head waiter. I really wonder if the head waiter didn't stare at him and say wait a minute beg your pardon would you say that over again you want me to lose my job. The amazing thing is I think it's the first act of faith outside of the disciples in the Gospel of John.

He carried it. I ran across a line the other day that's too good not to mention. One old fellow was writing about this miracle and he said when the water recognized the presence of its own creator it blushed and turned red.

I like that. But he turned the water into wine and when he did the reputation of Jesus began to spread. He moved up into Capernaum according to the synoptics and he performed all sorts of miracles and in due time when the first Passover came he headed for Jerusalem and when he went into the temple the leaders of the temple already knew about him and when he walked into the temple you'll remember what he did.

He cleaned house and when he cleaned house you know what the leaders of the temple said to him. He just walked in as if he owned the place. Do you know that the temple was constructed to make you know your place and that you shouldn't get out of it? There was a line beyond which a gentile couldn't go if he went he went at threat to his life.

There were stones placed all around that court that said any gentile who goes closer to the center than this will promptly be stoned to death. There was a line beyond which a Jewish woman couldn't go without endangering our life. There was a line beyond which a Jewish man couldn't go unless he was a Levite.

There was a line beyond which a Levite couldn't go unless he was a priest and there was a line beyond which a priest couldn't go unless he was a chief priest and that line could only be crossed once a year. The whole structure of the place was to let you know your place and you better stay in it and Jesus walked in like he owned the joint. And a priest came to him and said show us a sign that you have a right to do this.

You know I suspect though John didn't record it he looked back at him and said boys that's what I just did. Now that gives you the atmosphere and the attitude for the rest of the book of John. You remember he healed a man on the sabbath and the priest came to him and said you broke the law and Jesus said the sabbath was given for us for man not man for the sabbath.

The sabbath was for our healing and I healed a man on the sabbath and you want to kill me for breaking the law. You will remember that he said God's my father and they said no you've got a demon in you. Isn't it interesting that when God came the church said he was demon possessed.

You will remember that they said we don't believe in you because we're children and disciples of Moses and he said he's the guy who first spoke about me. You will remember that the most ironical thing to me is that they took lanterns and torches out on Thursday night in the dark to find the light of the world. That's the figure from which I never get away.

We're the kind of people our darkness is so deep that we need lanterns and torches to find the light of the world and the conclusive proof of that is that when we got him on a cross or before we got him to the cross when we had an option between a murderer and a thief and Jesus we took Barabbas. Now you can say they did that. No that's us.

We'd have done the same thing. I'd have been in that crowd that took the Barabbas. Apart from grace.

Not an ounce of difference between any of us. Every one of us is as sinful as the next when it comes to that. Our blindness is equal.

Our hardness of heart is equal. Our imprisonment is equal. I just didn't have the same shackles that Steve's had.

His is more dramatic than mine. But mine were just as real as his and the need for freedom was just as great as it was in Steve's when Christ came to him. Now that is still true and you say we're educated and we're 20th century people.

Well we have had an interest in correspondence and conversations with a fellow who has been head of the department of psychology, the graduate program in psychology at one of the major universities in our part of the world. Before he became head of that department one of his closest friends was head of the department and he was the head of the department was a very fine upright person, kind and gracious and was one of the experts in our part of the country on mental health. One morning a mind you found friend came in and found out that his friend who was head of the department had committed suicide the night before and then they called him in and said Art we want you to be head of the department in the place of your friend.

Well I shook him up so he said the first year I was there as head of the department he said I made it my business to see if there was any way that we could pay tribute to my friend who had committed suicide. So he talked the university into naming a new building that they were building after his friend. So when they came to dedicate that building to open it they had a dedication service and they asked him to put it together since he was head of the department and so he said I put together a dedication service and had an invocation and a benediction and when the people who were responsible found his proposed program they called him in immediately and said Art don't you know that you can't have a prayer on the university campus? He said you can't have that invocation and the only way you can have a benediction is to have

nothing religious in it.

Now he said I shouldn't have been shocked but now hold on he said I came apart. Theoretically I'd heard this kind of thing but suddenly it came crashing home to me that I was in an institution committed to the search for truth and it was against the law to talk to the author of it all. Now that guy last year published 18 scholarly journal articles either himself or jointly.

One of the most highly regarded scholars in the United States and he said you know I decided I can't work in this kind of atmosphere. He said there is something hypocritical about it. I can't be a part of it anymore.

Could I get a job at Asbury? We don't have a graduate program. Furthermore he'd have to take at least a 40 percent cut in salary. But do you know he's coming to teach for us January 1st? But this is our society.

Now what clinched it for me is there's a course in the curriculum at that university in witchcraft. It's interesting how blind we are and usually the arguments that we use for shutting him out are really the arguments why we ought to accept him. We read the data the wrong way.

That's how blind we are. But now if that's true of the world I want to talk about another kind of blindness. I found an interesting difference in the gospel of Mark from the gospel of John because the gospel of John draws the line between the world and the kingdom.

And that line is sharp and the world is in darkness. And it is in deep darkness so that when Christ comes the world says this is not the way. All you've got to do to get a fight on your hand is get in the average educated group and say the only way of salvation is Jesus.

And you've got a battle on your hand instantly. Now that's the world. But you know what I find in the gospel of Mark? I find blindness in the disciples.

And it is an amazing picture which I missed through the years. Now we could spend several hours on this so I'm just going to have to sort of hit the high spots. See if you can stick with me as I follow through.

It's interesting that the gospel of Mark the first half of it is to tell us who Jesus is. Now the way he tells us who Jesus is is by stories. You see he shows up in the audience of the best preacher the Billy Graham of the day and Billy Graham says there he is.

And the Pharisees said we thought you were he. And he said no that's he. I'm not worthy to loosen his shoes.

So the greatest voice in that day and the greatest prophetic voice in a half a millennium identified him. Then he picks up his disciples and he turns water into wine. And when he gets to Capernaum he begins to teach and people say we never heard a teacher like this.

He's different. While he's teaching you'll remember there's a demoniac in the crowd and Jesus turns and sets the man free. And Peter says to Andrew let's take him home with us.

And when they get home Peter's mother-in-law is sick and he lays his hands on her and she's freed from her fever. They send for all the neighbors and he heals all of the neighbors that are sick. He walks out in the roadway and there is a leper and he lays his hand on a leper and touches him and the leper is cleansed.

And there's a whole stream of these that takes place. He finds himself with a crowd of people and he takes five loaves and two fish and multiplies them and feeds five thousand men. Not to say anything about the women and children that are there.

So you get all these stories to where finally the stories bump into each other and you get the story of the man who comes and says I have a daughter that's at the point of death will you come uh heal her. And so he says which way and they start and suddenly he stops and says somebody touched me and Peter says Lord they're all over you. What do you mean somebody? Oh no he said somebody touched me in faith and there's a woman groveling at his feet and she he looks down at her and she says I didn't want to stop you didn't even want to catch your attention.

I felt if I could just touch the hem of your garment I'd be free and this woman was set free and he goes and finds the the child is dead and he brings the child back to life. Succession of these stories. Now it's interesting that with these stories there is either explicitly or implicitly in the mark in in the gospel of Mark always a question.

Sometimes it comes out explicitly in statements like uh uh what what kind of teacher is this we never heard a teacher like this he's different from all the other teachers we have or when he delivers the demoniac they say what kind of power is this we've never seen anybody with power like this to where finally you will remember they turn to him and says what manner of man is this even the winds and the sea obey him and you get all these questions in Mark and everybody has an answer and the only one that has the right answer is the devils because twice in the first half of the gospel of Mark the devils say this is the son of God why do you trouble us you're the son of God you're the son of the holy one you're the holy one why do you trouble us the only ones that know who he is not his

family not the church not the apostles not anybody else the only ones that know who he is are the are the are the are the representatives of the demonic world after two and a half to three years Jesus takes his disciples and carries them away north and when he gets there he turns to him and says who do people say i am and they say well they got all sorts of answers some of them think you're john the baptist uh that's what herod thinks he thinks you john the baptist come back some of them think you're uh elijah some of them think you're jeremiah and he said who do you think i am it's interesting peter says we know who you are you're the christ and jesus says you didn't catch on to that by natural reason what he's saying is your eyes were open my father opened your eyes and the difference

between you and that crowd out there is my father opened your eyes my father revealed this to you yes i'm the christ now immediately after jesus has peter has said we know who you are you're the christ we found the secret of your person jesus begins to talk to him about the cross and as he talks to them about the cross peter says wait a minute lord come here and he takes him to one side it's interesting that one moment he says you're the one we've waited for for two thousand years and you're the eternal son of god and the next thing he does is lecture him on theology and peter says rebuke jesus and says master don't talk this way don't talk this way now that is a fascinating moment they know the secret of his person but they cannot conceive of his mission now will you hold that let me

give you the context in mark for that it's one of the most interesting things i've ever seen in scripture let me i won't go back and get the whole thing but just let me get a succession can i take you back to the seventh chapter he's already fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish and he's done some other remarkable things and then they find themselves with four thousand people and only seven loaves and so

jesus takes seven loaves and feeds four thousand people if you will look at mark seven the first verse after the conclusion of the feeding of the four thousand the pharisees turned to him and say would you show us a sign you know i never saw that until relatively recently you get the pericope the the unit about the feeding of the four thousand the next one begins the

pharisees said would you show us a sign as they leave the discussion with the pharisees jesus says to his disciples beware of the leaven of the pharisees and the disciples stick their heads together and says is he concerned because we forgot to bring in bring any bread and jesus says to them don't you see don't you understand and then they bring a blind man to him now catch this it is the only miracle story in the gospels where jesus touch doesn't do the job jesus touches him and he says to the blind man can you see and he says marvelous i see many trees walking and jesus touches him a second time and the man says now i see all things clearly and do you know what the next story is peter who says i see your personhood you're the christ but i surely don't see this cross business now i don't

know about you i don't know about you but i'm ready to say mark was loading theology in between the stories and in between the lines and you're not going to tell me that a book is skillfully put together is the gospel of mark that mark didn't know what he was doing when he set that story those two stories right next to each other said i see some things i see many trees walking peter said i see you you're the christ man says but i see too many they're like trees walking jesus said peter said lord don't talk to me about a cross now here's the gist of what i want to say this morning i believe it is as hard for believers to see the cross as it is for the world to see the personhood of the messiah and the world's going to reject him as the one way and we reject his way of redemption we say

there's some other way beside the cross now let me give you some more biblical data on that do you know what happened immediately after the confession of cesarea philippi that's the first time he talked to them openly about the cross read that passage and it says he spoke openly openly about the cross but they didn't understand and peter rebukes him peter fights him they go up on the mount of transfiguration and peter james and john have an opportunity here over here conversation between moises and elijah and jesus now it would seem to me that if that if i were with jesus and he lived with him for two and a half to three years and suddenly i find two other guys there and i find out one of them is moises and the other one elijah i wouldn't have trouble accepting anything from that point on

but jesus says as they start down the mountain he says now don't tell anybody until i rise from the dead and peter james and john peter nudges james and john and they get off to one side and what's rising from the dead sounds like a bunch of liberal modern preachers doesn't it what's rising from our liberal modern layman what's rising from the dead they cannot grasp it they get to the foot of the hill and there's a big crowd in a commotion and a distraught father comes to jesus and says your disciples came through this country weeks ago and they were delivering the demoniacs healing the sick doing all sorts of things and my son has an evil spirit and is mute and i was sure they could help him and i brought my son to your disciples and whatever power they had they've lost pretty good

picture of the church isn't it and jesus says how long do i have to put up with you oh short of faith lacking in faith generation now remember it's not the world he's having trouble putting up with at this point it's nine disciples the best the world has to offer are what's wearying his righteous soul at this point now it is after this that as they head toward jerusalem and as they head toward jerusalem he takes his disciples aside and in chapter 9 verses 31 to 33 he begins to tell them about the cross he says i go to jerusalem there i will be arrested there i will be uh beaten there i will be crucified but after three days i will rise and you know

what the text says mark says just simply but they did not understand do you know where i think mark got his information you know what one of

the traditions of the church is that peter was his mentor and that mark was disciplined by peter and i suspect that mark got his information from disciples who said you know we look back now and it's incredible but we could not hear we could not hear i dare you to sit down and read the first epistle of peter there's more about suffering in first peter than there is in any other book in the new testament and there is a careful picture of isaiah 53 the suffering servant the dying savior the crucified savior in first peter you remember that the first thing jesus did after the resurrection was he appeared on sunday night and the first thing he did was show him his hands and his side i don't believe peter ever got over that but now you see on this side they cannot see it so as they keep going

you will remember that he immediately after he's talked to them about the cross and says i'm going and they don't understand when they get to the end of the way that day after the lecture on the cross that day jesus turns to the disciples and said after our conversation i noticed you guys separated yourself and had a very intense conversation you got very animated what were you talking about with such animation peter said john you tell him and john says peter you usually speak for yourself and us too and jesus said neither one of you has to tell me i know what you were talking about you were arguing as to who was going to have the first seat in my kingdom because you see their notion of the kingdom was this way and everybody ought to work to get as high in the kingdom as he could and you

see the higher you get in the kingdom the fewer there are up there and jesus said i was telling you my kingdom's this way and the big thing to do is get to the bottom because there's where the power is you didn't hear what i said did you and so john says well that's interesting lord but we did have one problem today we want to tell you about we did good he said good tell me something you did good it's interesting between the confession at caesarea philippi and the arrival in jerusalem is not a good word spoken about one of the disciples there's not a single time one of them looks good and so john says we did one good thing today and jesus said what was it said we found a fellow casting out devils in your name and he's not one of us and we forbade him and jesus said give me a little child

he said unless you become like a little child you can't be a part of my kingdom you don't understand this kind of the kingdom yet and you will remember that it was after this that the parents brought their children and said to the disciples and said would you get him to lay his hands on the children and let him bless them and they said he's too busy and in too big a business to bother about children and he just got through talking about his kingdom is for children and so he said you bring the children to me you remember he said at one point if you offend one of these little ones better to have a millstone cast about your neck but the disciples couldn't understand that then jesus for the third time gives them his talk about the cross one of the most entrancing passages in the gospels

because mark tells us that they were walking down the road toward jerusalem and they were getting close to it and it says that the disciples were amazed and in great fear but it doesn't tell us what they were amazed about or what the cause of the fear was do you know i think there are moments when the veil between this world and the other one gets thin and you begin to sense the numinous that's the only way i know how to take that passage and as they walk he is talking to them about the cross and they're saying you know they had no grasp i can see peter nudging andy and said there he goes again he's got this little ritual he has to go through don't know what it means but let him do it if it makes him feel better let him make his speech but this time there is that sense of the numinous and

it's not many days after this when he's hanging on a cross it's interesting that the beginning of this section for me now is the guy that he had to touch twice for him to see clearly and the end of the section is in outside of uh jericho when he comes and hears bartimaeus and the last thing in chapter 10 before the beginning of jesus entry into the city of jerusalem is bartimaeus it didn't take but one touch for jesus to give bartimaeus perfect sight he has infinitely less trouble with physical blindness than he does with spiritual blindness he can make bartimaeus see in a moment naturally but he spent three and a half years and his disciples still haven't caught on to the way of the cross now uh let me tell you and our time's almost gone i'm going to keep you a minute or two longer but

you know what i'm convinced i'm convinced that american evangelicalism is in chapters 9 and 10 of the gospel of mark and i've never gotten out of them because do you know what i hear as i move around the country and listen to evangelicals if you ask what it means to be a christian and why a person should be a christian say believe on the lord jesus christ and you shall be saved and you need to believe on him because you're going to be lost if you don't believe on him and get saved now let me ask you how much self-interest is there in that i'd figure about a hundred percent and the pitch is made that you need christ because if you don't you're in trouble you're lost so that you know it's interesting we say believe on the lord jesus christ and thou should be saved but you know what jesus

said he looked at his disciples and said follow me and do you know there's a difference between the believing and getting your soul saved and following him they're willing to follow him to caesarea philippi but they were not about to follow him to calvary it took the resurrection in pentecost to get the believers to follow into to calvary and there's no pentecost without the calvary now i see that elsie and i see that well he could illustrate that we don't have time but let me tell you one that gets to us why was the cross necessary so a world could be redeemed how far was god willing to go to redeem the world he never had but one son and he was willing to give him to die so a world could be redeemed and that son came and said will you follow me now where was he headed he was headed to

the cross why was he going to a cross so the world could be redeemed you know we live with some of the best kids out of some of the best homes in the world i'm sure that asbury kids are like a lot of other kids but from our point of view i don't know where we could find a better group of young people to work with do you know they represent the best home in the united states i don't mean financially i mean just on general rule they represent homes like john and ella joe now where are you going to beat that let me tell you we sit with these students listen to them and what we try to figure out is what their ideals are their ambitions their values and you know you don't have to sit with them long until they know what their parents value you don't have to spend long with a teenager until you

know what his mother and father won't out for that kid and you know occasionally lc and i'll catch a kid and we'll say let me ask you a question if you would do what your parents would rather have you do than anything else in the world what would you do you know the one thing i never hear if i would do what my parents would rather have me do than anything else in the world i'd give my life so a world could be saved but they all say i want my son to be a christian i want my daughter to be a christian and i've got the sneaking profound conviction that most of us want our children and our family to be christians for their sake and the one we're called to follow his father said i don't want to give you up any more than dennis kenlaw and elsie want to give up their children but there's a world

that's lost and if it's ever to be saved i've got to give you up and the son says if that's what you want for me father that's the way i'm going you know why the world isn't redeemed today i think we're in mark nine and

ten ten and we as christian families have never gotten to acts two three and four now i've got to quit i've given you the burden of my heart now let me ask you does that mean that we're wrong when we speak to the world say believe on the lord jesus christ and thou shall be saved no the only way you can appeal to an unregenerate person is with pure self-interest but let me ask you after a person has been quickened by the touchy quickening power of the holy spirit shouldn't that person then be set free from that self-centeredness it'll be interesting when we stand before god

if he pulls out our checkbooks one it'll be interesting if we stand before god and he pulls out our day log on how we spend our spare time because where you spend your spare time is where you spend your where your heart is is a revelation be interesting if he just pulls out a record plays a record back of our prayer life but you see if i understand the gospel i think what the gospel is supposed to do is to turn me from a life in which all the streams run this way to where all the streams run this way the only way he can get to me to break that tyranny and that bondage that slavery is to appeal to me on self-interest but when that new life is put within then he wants to turn me to the place where the thrust is this way now why is it so hard because you see we believe the lie deep in our

spirits every one of us believes until he cleanses our heart that he's the enemy and even after we regenerate in our subconscious psyche don't let him get too close and get too good a control because if he does he'll make you do what you don't want to do somewhere in our psyche we still believe he's the enemy okay two illustrations on through there's a guy who's appeared on a lot of tv talk shows they tell me i've never seen him his name is posner he's a marxist a communist and he's sort of the guy they send for when they want somebody to represent the other side and balance the arguments you know he apparently is quite clever not too long ago he wrote an autobiography and a friend of mine brought me a page out of that autobiography and the communist was telling the atheist was telling

about a couple of years in his life there were extremely bitter years one of them was 1977 another was 1987 he said in 1987 i almost came to the place where i prayed i almost came to the place where i got on my knees because he said for me to pray is to get on your knees and you haven't prayed unless you get on your knees and he said i almost did it he said i have great respect for the staying power of the church but i don't believe in god and i've often wondered what would have happened to me if i had gotten on my knees he said i'm afraid something would have happened to me there's something inside me that says if i'd gotten on my knees i'd have gotten up different than i went down i don't know what i would have been if i had gotten on my knees it may be that i would have gotten up a

better person than i am but he said i never did and i'm glad because there's a deep suspicion in me that if i'd gotten on my knees i would have lost me as one of the most revealing theological statements i have ever read there is a deep thing within us that says if i let him get too close i lose me as i read that i remembered a conversation from years ago and an illustration which many of you have heard me use because it came early in my life of a concert violinist very brilliant violinist and she came to the place where god said to her i want you to put me ahead of your violin she said lord i gave that violin to you a long time ago he said are you willing to give it up and she said that's my life he said that's right that's my life and jesus said that's right i'm your savior but that's

your life i want to be your life and she said i broke and i cried out but lord it's all i've got isn't that unbelievable for a christian to say that to god and he said i know that and i want to be your all i remember we were standing in a a music hall in a corridor and i got lost when she said that and i said mary did anything happen when you said uh all right take it she looked at me and said oh for the first time in my life i

was free and for the first time in my life i owned my violin instead of it owning me she said i had insured my my arms and my fingers for a tremendous amount of money because i knew if i lost my fingers i'd lost my life she said i never knew how totally it was and she said for the first time in my life i was free i owned my violin instead of it owning me it doesn't

matter whether it's heroin and an unregenerate person our self-interest in a believer is still bonding there's something in us that is afraid if we say lord anything that he's the enemy but you know when he moves in and forces it and we say okay lord we'll let you win it's interesting we don't lose ourselves then's when we find ourselves did you notice what the text says and with this i'm really through let me read it for you whoever desires to come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me for whoever desires to save his life will will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels do you notice the way he says that for my sake and the gospels i think you can tell how much you live for him by how much you live for the gospel for my sake and the

gospels will save him whosoever whoever desires to come after me to follow me let him deny himself and then when he denies himself he'll find himself and the freest people i've ever known are the people who were most wholly possessed by the spirit of god and we're getting ready to take communion isn't it interesting the symbolism of communion this is my body which is broken for you and this is my blood which we shed for you he said i've come to give you my my life myself can you explain to me how jesus feels when we kneel and take the wafer or the bread and the grape juice and walk out with our fingers still on our lives it was only about three years ago that i saw that passage where he says i'm the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep my father loves me

because i give my life to my sheep other shepherds keep sheep so they can eat and wear them or sell them so somebody else can eat and wear them i don't keep sheep so i can eat and wear them i keep sheep so they can eat and wear me isn't that interesting he finds his fulfillment in giving his life to us the question i want to ask you is do you find your fulfillment in giving your life your life tomorrow 24 hours of it next week seven days of it next month 30 to 31 days of it giving your life to him if you come to the point where you see it you know the only way you can do it i think the final revelation of our sinfulness is that nobody can do that because when we come to the place where we see it we find we have a strangle hold on our life and can't cut it loose and we have to say lord

crack my knuckles brutally crack them until i've turned loose of me and takes grace to do that but he's able the same kind of god that can set steve loose from heroine can set us if we'll let him if we ask him free from the tyranny of that self-interest that protection of our rights to where we can become holocaust now as we come to take the bread and the grape juice i hope you'll say lord thank you for giving your life taking your hands off and losing it now lord you find your life in me because i want to give my life to you that way and if we do there'll be streams of living water that'll run out of us

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