

# The Nature of Jesus - Part 3

by Gayle Erwin

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*The nature of Jesus is that of a servant, a slave, who did not lord it over others, but led by example and was humble, honest, and unable to deceive.*

**Duration:** 51:42

**Scripture:** Isaiah 42:3, Matthew 20:26-27, Matthew 23:11-12, Mark 10:42-45, Luke 22:26, John 13:14-15, Philippians 2:1-4

**Topics:** "Nature Of Jesus"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the nature of Jesus and how it contrasts with our natural self-centered tendencies. He emphasizes the importance of being others-centered and not driven by selfish ambition or conceit. The preacher then reflects on the humility of Jesus, who made himself of no reputation in order to reach out to humanity. He highlights the incredible love and sacrifice of Jesus, who came to Earth to communicate with and save humanity. The sermon concludes with a heartfelt declaration of following Jesus and praising His name.

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## Transcript

We have been looking together at the nature of Jesus, especially as revealed in his greatest-in-the-kingdom teachings. Now, in prior sessions, we have covered eight of those, and I want to write them up here. If you can't see them from where you are, well, I'll be verbalizing it and you can come down afterward and look.

But the nature of Jesus, as contained in his greatest-in-the-kingdom teachings, first of all is that he was servant of all, or slave was a better word, if you recall. Second, as we interpolated from his expression about contrasting himself with the greatest-in-the-Gentile or world kingdom, we discovered that he did not lord it over others, so number two is not lord it over others. I'll just write not lord it over because I need that other space down there later.

As he compared himself to the greatest-in-the-religious kingdom, he said, in essence, he that is greatest must lead by example. He says that specifically in a certain passage, which I will cover later in our series. Then he that is greatest must be humble.

We discovered that that specifically means that he was absolutely honest about himself. Humility is a very accurate assessment of who you are, which can be devastating, but it's true. Then he that is greatest must be as a child.

We saw that a child was very humble, a small child is who they are, not very pretentious, we know that. A child is unable to deceive, a very significant thing, because one part of your body, you see, these are the kinds of principles that make your body work and the body of Christ work, and a child cannot deceive, and relationships cannot survive deception, you see. Then another thing that we discovered is a child is very unthreatening.

We're seldom afraid of a child. Well, some of the recent ones I've seen, maybe. And no one was ever afraid of Jesus.

And then he that is greatest must be as the younger, which we looked at in terms of being always the disadvantaged ones in this world, pilgrims passing through, having no enduring city here, but looking for one whose foundations and builder and maker is God. And also it means traveling light, being as the younger, carrying very little luggage through this life, so that wherever God calls you, you can go. And you don't have to say, if you recall, that we're guarding a lot of dung.

And he that is greatest must be as the least, and number eight, as the last. And that completed what he had to say in the Gospels, now go with me to Philippians chapter two. You will discover that the first four verses of Philippians tie into these eight points perfectly, and then we hit an awesome, awesome section.

Listen to this. Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit.

See, if you recall, if I may stop here for just a moment, as we were looking at the nature of Jesus, one of the key descriptions was others-centered, as opposite to my natural self-centered tendencies. So it says, let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind. Let each esteem others better than himself.

Now, I just need to comment this one thing about that statement, because often I will see people who get that backward, and they esteem themselves worse than others. Now do you see what's going on there? That turns it self-centered. See, I'm just looking at myself as being worse than others.

That's not what it says. And others-centeredness says, I esteem you better. You see the difference? So, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself.

Let each of you look not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. And then we come to this awesome passage. Oh, maybe it was a song they sang in the early church.

I don't know. If it was, we really ought to put it back to music. Figure out every way we can to sing this next passage.

It's a great song. Maybe it was a creed they said. If so, it's an excellent creed.

A creed doesn't have to express everything you believe, as long as it gives you the key so that everything else that you believe is obvious, and this does. Or maybe, just at that particular moment, the Holy Spirit said, write this down, Paul. And he says, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Wow. Does your mind ever fail you? Can't remember? If you ever have the opportunity to trade minds with anyone, don't trade with me. You'd be in trouble.

But here is the opportunity to trade with Jesus. This is awesome. We can literally permit His mind to be in us.

Not a bad deal. Well, the question is, what was His mind? What was this central core of motivating being? What was this set of attitudes that were in Christ Jesus? Fortunately, He doesn't leave us alone. He tells us.

The next verses reveal specifically what this means, and He says, who being in the form of God did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. I read that and I went, huh? What does this mean? It's rather obscure, isn't it? Well, the NIV, the nearly inspired version, says, who though He was in the form of God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. Well, that helps a little bit.

But what does it mean? Well, let's dig in. I discovered that there were two meanings to this, and we're going to let this be numbers 9 and 10 here. Two meanings to this particular verse.

One, it means that He used no force on us, no physical force, and that He was not driven by blind ambition. So, number 10 would be no blind ambition. No force.

Let's talk about that. He could have used force on us, you know. He could have.

He could have. He had power! You know that! He had all the power of the universe coursing through His veins, man! This incredible power that formed billions of galaxies out in space, this incredible power that created this earth! Didn't know I could do that, did you? And yet with all of this power, He didn't use force on us. It's amazing.

He could have. He could have grabbed us by the throat and put a sword there and said, wouldn't you like to be a Christian? We'd have said, oh yes, I've been thinking about it for a long time. But He didn't do that.

I'm amazed. He had the power. In fact, what amazes me is how much the Scripture speaks of His gentleness.

Now, there's a good reason for this. You see, when we feel that we have been forced into something, we're going to do everything we can to sabotage the situation. I can recall, well, this year my wife and I celebrate our 35th anniversary together, held together by my animal magnetism.

If you believe that, I have a bridge to sell you to. But I can remember 36 years ago, I was a scared boy. I held a ring in my hand and I said to Ada Brown, will you marry me? She said, yeah, might as well.

Not quite. Now, I could have held a ring in one hand and a pistol in the other. And I could have said, you're going to marry me for your own good.

Now, if she had married me under those circumstances, every meal she fixed for me, I would have fed some of it to the dog first to make sure he stayed alive. Because when we feel that we've been forced, we're going to do everything we can to sabotage the situation. Have you ever heard anyone make this statement? Or ask this question? Can I do this and still be a Christian? Have you ever heard that question? Now, that's coming from a heart that feels forced, you see, and so it's trying to press against the edges.

That would be as foolish as if my wife were to say to me, well, honey, you're going to be gone for about a week. Is it okay if I go out with some of the other men in the neighborhood and still be called your wife?

Now, when you love someone, you want to enhance the relationship. You want to improve it, you see.

But the thing is, the only way you can make a genuine decision is if it is a genuine decision, if you're not forced. So Jesus comes in a way that frees us to make a genuine decision about Him. All the evidence in the world is there.

Revelations 3:20, you know it by heart. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. He's a gentleman.

He knocks. If it were me, I would have said, behold, I stand at the door and I'm going to huff and puff and blow your house. But Jesus is a gentleman.

He knocks, and if any man hears His voice and then opens the door, then he will come in and sup with them. He's a gentleman. There was one place in His ministry, I'm fascinated by this, it was in the third year of His ministry, which is often called the year of opposition, first year being year of obscurity, second year of popularity, third year of opposition, when everyone had abandoned Him.

It appears that the only ones hanging around still were the apostles, and they must have been a little bit discomfited. There must have been some looking around on their part. See, they had been so busy arguing over who was the greatest, they hadn't noticed that the crowds were gone, and they look up and say, uh-oh, I bet we're going to have some apostolic layoffs now.

And so Jesus must have seen their dis-ease, and He said something to them that amazes me. I wouldn't have said it. I would have looked at them in their discomfort and said, all right, you fellas, three steps in the wrong direction and you're vapor.

See, that's what I would have said. But you know what Jesus says to them? Will you leave me also? Isn't that amazing? He never violated their ability to choose. This is awesome.

And then in Matthew chapter 12, quoting from Isaiah, we hear these words, a bruised reed He would not break, and smoking flax He wouldn't quench. What does that mean? We don't use those words today either. Well, for a bruised reed He wouldn't break, that's sort of like saying He wouldn't kick a man when he was down.

Now, that's when we like to kick them. Kick them when they're down, they can't kick back. And some of you, when Jesus found you, you were down and the world was kicking you like crazy.

And Jesus did not come along and say, you've never been kicked until you've had a divine kick. No, He picks you up and He begins to put you together. I was just thinking about this yesterday, Chuck, looking at the people who were here and realizing how much of an incredible set of stories there are here.

What would happen if we began at the end of one of these rows and you shared all the ways Jesus has put you back together and healed and restored you, and when you finished we went to the next one of you and you shared all the ways that He's healed and restored you, and then we went on, and how long would it take? We don't have that much time, do we? That's one reason I look forward to heaven. We'll get to hear the whole story. A bruised reed He wouldn't break, and smoking flax He wouldn't quench.

What does that mean? Well, in modern terms, that would be like He'd take the slightest spark of hope in someone and try to fan it into flame. I was a boy scout once, until I got old enough to be a girl scout, but that's beside the point. But we would sometimes have competition among other troops with scouting skills,

one of which was starting fires without matches.

And I can remember 30 or 40 of them lined up with a handful of what they called tender, something that would burn readily, cotton or something of that nature. And when they would blow the whistle, the flints would begin to strike against it, and the sparks would fly, and soon there would be a little wisp of smoke come up. Never once did I see any one of those fellows look at that and say, just one wisp of smoke? Is that the best you can do with all the sparks I've thrown at you? Just one wisp of smoke? Oh no, that's all they wanted, and they'd pick it up, hang in there, we're going to make it, and it would burst into flame.

Some of you, when Jesus found you, all you were was one stinky little wisp of smoke. And the world was looking at you saying, is that the best you can do with all the opportunity you've had, all the potential you've got, just one wisp of smoke? But Jesus didn't do that. He picked you up and began to blow the great breath of God on you.

Hang in there, we're going to make it. And here you are, you see. A bruised reed he wouldn't break, smoking flax he wouldn't quench.

He used no force on us, because he wanted us to make a genuine decision about him. And he was not driven by blind ambition. Now blind ambition, well you've heard the old philosophical question, does the end justify the means? You've heard that.

Blind ambition says, yes it does. If the end is good enough, lie, cheat, steal, do whatever you have to do to achieve your goal. But Jesus was not driven by blind ambition.

In fact, Satan tempted him on that very point, took him up on a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world with their splendor. Can you see it in your mind? Can you see Satan? Looks good, doesn't it, Jesus? Yes, it does. I thought so.

You really want it, don't you? Yes, I do. I thought so. You came for this, didn't you? Yes, I did.

I thought so. Well, I can get it for you wholesale. All you have to do is bow down and worship me.

Come on, come on, you can do it, you can have it. Real easy, real cheap. But at that point Jesus made an eternal decision.

No, it is written, I shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve. He decided at that point that a heavenly goal can only be achieved by heavenly means. Now, we may think this doesn't really apply to me, I don't have that kind of problem, but you know, it happens so often, it does.

Maybe you work in a place where your employer has asked you to do something that you know is unethical, and you feel, I can't do this, and you realize your job's on the line and good jobs are hard to come by. You have a mortgage to pay off, a car to pay for, a family to feed, and you end up caving in so often, don't we? It's really quite common. God help us, it even happens in the church.

Have you ever gotten a letter from some, quote, ministry, unquote, that said, Dear Brother or Sister so-and-so, God woke me up at 3 a.m. the other night and your name was on my mind, and God gave me a word for you, and if you'll send me an offering to help keep me on the air, I'll be glad to tell you what God said. And you think, great, gee, they don't know me, this is a computer letter, why would they do this? Well, it may have started well, and it may have been an act of faith that caused them to enlarge things,

and then there came a cash crunch, you ever heard of that? And then they decide, what are we going to do, we're going to lose some of our ministry, and someone says, well, I know how to raise money. Well, I'm not sure that's the right way to do it.

Well, you want to lose your ministry? No. Well, then give me a chance. Okay.

And then you start getting letters like that saying, blind ambition. Jesus was not driven by blind ambition. There never seemed to be a panic in his life.

Maybe he knew something. Well, let's move on to the next verse. This next one is a rather scary one for me, it's not my favorite verse in the scripture.

It says, he made himself of no reputation, or no image, or emptied himself and made himself nothing. Hmm. This is not my favorite verse, because I'm kind of into reputation.

I like it. I want people to know who I am, to know my name, to know how to spell it, to know that I'm a guy. But Jesus made himself of no reputation, no image.

Why would he do that? The thing about reputation and image is that it separates you from people. It really does. I live over in the desert, and there's a town right near me where there seem to be more Rolls Royces per square foot than any place I've ever seen.

Now, why do you drive a Rolls Royce? Because you're desperate for transportation. Image. But it separates you from people, it really does.

You've heard of Johnny Cash, haven't you? I thought so. I interviewed him once. I was editing a youth magazine.

He had made a public profession of faith. His pastor was a friend of mine. He said, I'll get you an interview.

I said, wonderful. I'll never forget that day. I was sitting in his plush office, waiting for him to arrive.

I had memorized my questions. For days, I had practiced being cool. And then he walked in.

Hi, I'm Johnny Cash. I didn't realize he was that big. I lost it.

Hi, Johnny. I'm going to have you autograph it for my son. When that was over, I thought, I don't believe this.

He puts his shoes on one foot at a time, just like I do. Why was I so intimidated? Fame. Fortune.

Jesus makes himself of no reputation, so everyone in the world, whosoever will, can come boldly before him. Be comfortable. Wow.

In fact, he did such a good job of it. Let me show you this. I want to show you some ways that he made himself of no reputation here.

This is an awesome thing to me. Imagine for a moment that you're God. Just give me one day, huh? And there's this ball of mud out in the middle of space called Earth, and little critters running around on it called people, and you love them.

And you want to tell them that, but they don't even speak your language. And then you know, I know what I'll do. I'll send my son.

I'll make him just like them and just like me. Now you have a problem. A premiere.

An introduction. Now, if God would have checked with me, since I've had some experience in public relations, I could have helped him. I would have said, I know how premieres go.

I live near Hollywood. Turn it over to me. Every searchlight in the world will be there.

Everybody who is somebody will be there. And God says, well, no, Erwin, I don't think I'll do it that way. I think I'll have my son born like other people.

Oh, okay. Not a bad idea, actually. But what you need to do, God, is you need to snap your fingers and create a 5,000-story hospital gleaming bright on the outside with a giant diamond on the top that would catch the rays of the sun and cast them over the countryside and only have one person ever born there, your son.

We organized tours to go see it. He says, no, thanks, Erwin. I've got a different idea.

I'm going to have him born in a barn. Born in a barn? Do you realize how funny this is? That's no place for a baby to be born, you know. I was born on a farm.

I'm an old farm boy. I know what barns are like. They're not places for babies to be born, unless they go moo afterwards.

We have sanitized this manger, folks. We really have. We think that the angels are just waiting and thinking, oh, no, they're going to have to sleep out here.

Oh, my, quick, sweep, sweep, shovel, shovel, whatever you have to do, get it clean. It's hard for us to realize, because of our traditions, that they probably had to watch their step. I love Christmas, and I especially love nativity scenes, but they're not quite accurate most of the time.

They don't smell right. It looks like someone has said, everybody get over here. We're going to take a picture.

I've pondered this, because I'm fascinated by this particular moment. You realize, of course, that Bethlehem was sort of the old hometown. Why didn't they have a place to stay? Have you ever thought about this? Why didn't they have a place to stay? When I go back to the farm area where I was born, there are plenty of places to sleep.

Family, friends, oh, come stay with us. You stayed there last time. Why didn't Mary and Joseph have a place to stay? Well, I have a couple of ideas.

Mary was pregnant, and this kind of happened before they were married. It wasn't Joseph. That was a lot worse in that day than it tends to be in ours.

I have an idea, just an idea, that maybe the family said, look, we don't know what's going on here, but we don't approve of it. If you stay with us, people will think we do, so maybe you should stay somewhere else. If you've ever found yourself on the wrong side of family approval, Jesus has been there.

He knows where you're at. But there's another thing. Have you ever heard the statement, money talks? You heard that? Talks to me.

It says, goodbye. You know, you know that if Joseph had had enough of the coins, the innkeeper would have said, why don't you stay in my apartment? I'll sleep in the barn. So obviously they didn't.

So if you've ever found yourself at the wrong end of the financial ladder, Jesus has been there, too. He knows where you're at. But if this wasn't enough, you see, he could never brag about this.

You understand this? He could never say, I was born in a barn. Where were you born, huh? My mother used to say that to me. Erwin, Gale Erwin, were you born in a barn? You know, and it was not a compliment ever.

But if this was not enough, he had, as I have indicated, questionable parents. You see, we believe in the virgin birth today. They didn't necessarily believe in it as we do back then, any more than if the sweetest young lady of your youth group suddenly showed up pregnant, and everyone's going, oh no, where did we go wrong? And finally someone gets the courage to ask her, who did it? And she smiles sweetly and says, the Holy Spirit.

Sure. Do you understand the stigma under which Jesus grew up? What they might have called him? So far, this isn't helping his reputation, is it? But if this wasn't enough, he had a very common name. Now, by now you're aware that his name was not actually Jesus.

That's the way we sort of push it through the Greek to our language today. His name was actually Joshua, or Yahshua more accurately, which was a good name. It means God is salvation.

But it was a very common name. There were Yahshuas running all over the place. If God would have just checked with me, I would have recommended that he give his son a name that stands out from all other names so that everyone would know when they heard it, that must be God.

But Yahshua? But if that wasn't enough, he had what, well, I'm going to make a judgment about it, and I'm going to call it a weak announcement. Now, you may be saying, wait a minute, Erwin. They didn't have angels singing when I was born.

How can you call that a weak announcement? Well, think with me for a second. First of all, if he had checked with me, since I've had some experience in public relations, I would have recommended that he get up on the moon with about a \$5,000 microphone and hang two billion-watt speakers out in spades, and walk up to the microphone and say, hello, world, this is God. And we say, yes, yes, what, what, what? But he says, well, thanks, Erwin, but I've got another idea.

I think I'm going to use a choir. Okay, okay, choirs are all right. But don't you think you should follow somebody's chain of command and have them sing for the Sanhedrin first? No? Well, at least have them sing in the marketplace.

That way we get our best coverage for singing angel. You want them to sing where? Have you ever thought about this? Imagine that you're one of these angels, and for 200 years you've been practicing. Me, me, me.

Everything is in order. For 100 years, they've been building risers in the sky for the gig of the centuries, man. And the moment arises, and whoever is in charge says, okay, fellas, he's been born.

Hit it. And they pull the curtains, and you get ready to sing, and then you see the crowd. Six shepherds? All right, who was in charge of posters? Folks, shepherds were the wrong bunch to bring the message to.

Anyway, we have also sanitized shepherds. We, we tend to believe that every Jewish boy just grew up dreaming of being a shepherd. Really, in that day, shepherds were sort of bad news.

They were kind of like your friendly local burglars. When they went through town, things tended to disappear. And all of this for them.

But if that wasn't enough, have you noticed that the Lord always seems to be bringing the message to the wrong people? Like us? I hate to tell you this, but I think you're mature enough to handle this. He was not handsome. Now, you may be saying, that's it, Irwin.

I was with you till now. But I've got his picture on my wall. And he's the most beautiful redheaded Irishman I've ever seen.

You know, Isaiah tells us the truth about him, and I can't believe how we miss this. He had no form or comeliness. Now, we don't use that word comeliness much, but it means handsomeness, good looks, that we should desire him.

Amazing. But I like that, because I know how I feel around ridiculously handsome men. Jealous.

So Jesus doesn't even throw this into the equation. I've pondered this, you know. I know there are some reasons why it might not be true, but you realize the Gospels are his biographies.

Have you ever wondered why they didn't actually describe him physically? Usually they do in a biography, and it's possible that maybe they thought of it and then said, no, give him a break. But if that wasn't enough, he grew up in a very bad neighborhood. If you ever go to London, be sure and go to the Tower of London.

It is history condensed. But one thing they have at the Tower of London that I know of no place else in the world where anything of this nature is on display, they have the crown jewels of England. You go deep beneath the earth in this totally secure room, and as you walk around the outside, you look in the middle, and you've never seen jewelry like that.

You don't need one of these eyepieces to see any of this. Every time after you visit this, whenever you walk by a jewelry store, you just go. They have jewels there as big as your fist.

And I looked at that, and I thought, what would I do with one of those if I owned it? I don't have a place to keep it. Would I carry it in my pocket around here and say to my friends, look what I have? They would say, look what you have. Now, I tell you this because I want you to think for a moment.

Imagine that you are Mary or Joseph, and born to you is the greatest jewel ever to grace this earth. What are you going to do with him? You ever thought of that? Where are you going to go live? What neighborhood do you want to raise the Son of God in? They took him to Nazareth. Now, if you ever go to Israel, what a dumb question to ask here.

Chances are good you'll go to Nazareth. And if you react to Nazareth like I did, I couldn't wait to get out of that town. What are we doing? It's a dirty, no good town.

They say it always has been, you know. And I said, what are we doing here? Well, Jesus grew up here. Okay, fine, let's go.

Even Nathanael said, can anything good come out of Nazareth? But I like this, because it tells me you don't have to grow up in Beverly Hills to be somebody. But if this wasn't enough, he owned nothing. He said, birds have nests, foxes have holes, I don't even have a place to lay my head.

That's not very impressive in our day, not impressive at all. The problem with owning things is that, well, there are a couple of problems. One, when you purchase something, you have to maintain it.

It takes time and energy. You have to protect it. It takes time and energy.

You can own just enough things that all your time and energy goes into maintaining and protecting your things. And Jesus, who came to redeem people, was not going to be fooled by things. And there's another problem.

If you're rich, don't tell me, because if I think you're rich, I get real friendly. Isn't that amazing how that messes with our minds? And Jesus comes in a way that says, if you follow me, it'll be for the right reasons, not for greedy ones. I'm amazed at the theologies that arise that feed off of greed.

What can you get? Jesus didn't found that. But if that wasn't enough, he had what I can only describe as a rather strange advanced man. See, if I were forming the Gale Irwin evangelistic crusade today, I would want to send someone ahead of me who had some dignity, somebody like John Wickham, who could just really kind of put things together and organize it.

But John the Baptist, the original hippie, out in the desert wearing funny clothes, eating organic food, yelling at people, repent, and when they do, he dumps them in water. But if that wasn't enough, he also had what I can only describe as a motley crew. I could have helped God so much if he'd let me advise him.

I would have recommended that he first go to the theological seminaries and get three or four professors who understand the ramifications of the theological questions that arise. And then I would recommend that he go to Hollywood and get someone with charisma who can command the attention of the people. Explain to them what it was you meant when you said such and such.

And then I would recommend that he go to Wall Street and get three or four millionaires. They're nice to have on the team. Then I'd recommend that you go to Muscle Beach and get about six bodyguards because they'll crucify you around here if you don't watch out.

That's the way I would put it together. But Jesus didn't do that. He went to the streets and got the strangest bunch.

If you'd been walking 50 feet behind him, you'd have said, I smell fish. He had a zealot and a tax collector. What can I say? It's kind of like having Saddam Hussein and George Bush on the same crew.

And some of them fellas had the awfulest accents you've ever heard in your whole life. And with that crew, he proposes to turn the world upside down. Amazing.

But I like it. Because if he can work with them, he can work with me and you. But if that wasn't enough, he died a very bad death.

Now, we believe that, but we don't really believe it. I was reading in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 where Paul says the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness. And I thought, no, no, no, no, no.

It's not foolishness, man. I see it everywhere. It's on lapels.

It's on necklaces. It's on bracelets. It's behind altars, beautifully polished wood or burnished silver.

It's on the top of steeples everywhere. Sometimes even neon lighted and revolving. And the Lord spoke to my heart and said, Erwin, you don't understand the cross because people don't die on crosses today.

And I realized that if we were to bring it into modern terminology, if Jesus were to have come today for the first time. Now, I know the Bible has prophecies about this, but let's just think about it for a moment. If he were to have come today for the first time, we'd treat him a lot better.

We'd electrocute him or gas him or hang him. Now, that would change some things. It would change some things.

It would change our evangelism. Can you see me saying, friend, have I got good news for you? My best friend just died in the electric chair for you. And if you'll believe that and take up your electric chair and follow him, you'll be safe.

He'd be saying, take him away, take him away. Our songs would change at the electric chair, at the electric chair where I first saw the light. There's room in the gas chamber for you.

Now, do you see, as we laugh at this, who are of sort of Greek mental descent, do you see now, as we laugh, why it says to the Greek, foolishness to the Jew, a stumbling block? Ah, but the power of God unto salvation. Well, you look at this, and can you decide that Jesus did a pretty good job of making himself of no reputation? Pretty good job. But I have a problem.

Jesus said something that disturbs me. Really, he said a lot of things that disturb me. One thing he said is, as the Father has sent me, even so send I you.

Uh-oh, we got a problem, don't we? See, I can't go back and be born in a barn. I was born on a farm, but it was a nice farmhouse. I can't go back and have questionable parents.

They'd been married for two years before I was born, so there. Common name? How many guys do you know named Gale? Weak announcement? I probably made my own announcement, and with my voice, it wouldn't have been weak. You can count on that.

Moving right along here, I happen to have grown up in a bad neighborhood, but that doesn't make any difference to you. There was a time I owned nothing but me and the banker cooperating on a house. If I had an advanced man, he'd have to be a little strange to accept the job.

I'm a one-man motley crew. If I died a bad death, you'd just say he deserved it. So I cannot necessarily repeat this, and it wouldn't, if I did, be of much value to you, but I do believe that I'll have my own list of those ways that God makes moves on me to make me approachable by those he's chosen for me to serve.

No reputation. Let me get off your case for just a second and talk about us preacher types. Present company accepted.

We're into reputation, you know. We are. I can introduce myself and say, hello, I am the Reverend Mr. Gail D. Irwin, and I've got you.

I'm impressed you. Dust of furniture. The preacher's here.

Or if I don't get to do that, I can wear a black suit and a white shirt and a black tie, and immediately you know I'm either an umpire, an undertaker, or a preacher. Or if I don't do that, I have another method. I can speak with a sanctuary tone, dearly beloved.

So good to see you today. It's the end of your search for a friendly church. And immediately know I must be a preacher because people don't talk that way.

What this means came screaming home to me one day. I was flying from here to Dallas. The plane was full.

I had to sit in the middle seat. The man seated by the window, well-dressed, distinguished-looking young man, just outstanding, and he was reading a Bible. Now, you don't often see people reading Bibles on airplanes, and when you do, your first thought is, he knows something about the plane I don't know.

But after a few moments, I cleared my throat and said, is that a Bible you're reading, sir? And he said, uh-huh. I said, well, I do that too. Why are you reading? And he told me.

He said, well, to be honest with you, sir, I'm a wealthy man. I own a manufacturing company. He said, I have a big house in an exclusive neighborhood, beautiful wife, lovely children.

He says, everything I have ever dreamed of in life, I've achieved it. And I'm only 32, he said. He said, to be honest with you, I'm miserable.

He said, there are some other people in my neighborhood just as miserable as me, but he said, there are some others in my neighborhood who are, well, happy, he said. I said, I decided to see if I could find out why, and I've done some investigating, and I don't know all the reasons, but I found out that they all read the Bible, so I've bought one to see if I can figure out what's going on. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

There he was right next to me. I could see his scalp already hanging from my belt. Nearly had the man on his knees in this plane until at one point he looked at me and said, by the way, what do you do? I wanted to say, I represent the big three, but I told him, I'm a preacher.

Now, you can finish this story, can't you? I was the first preacher he'd ever talked to in his life. The wheels began to spin. What have I said to this man of the cloth? And the conversation became very proper, and someone seated on the other side of me, who had been overhearing the whole conversation, says, oh, you're a preacher.

Well, I've been wanting to talk to a preacher for a long time. I have some questions I want to ask. They were great questions, like, how many angels can stand on the head of a pin? The answer is five, in case you want to know.

And the Lord just spoke to my heart and said, Gail, you loved your reputation, didn't you? You squeezed everything out of it you could, didn't you, Gail? You loved it. Yes, yes. Now, do you see all the stereotype that you have helped build and how it separates? Yes.

And Jesus made himself of no reputation, so anyone could come. And if you haven't come to him, there's nothing that should hold you back. He has come to you.

He has come to you. Now, you know, we've got three more to go. We'll have to finish those the next time we get together.

But I look at the ones we've seen, and I am so overwhelmed with this man, Jesus, that again, my heart says, I will follow you the rest of my days. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Amen.

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