

Snapshots of the Life of Christ

by Jim Cymbala

Jesus' life teaches us that greatness exists with great humility and humble circumstances, and that God protects and guides us, even in times of vulnerability.

Duration: 41:42

Scripture: Luke 23:34-43, John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 1:26-27, Ephesians 2:8-9, James 4:10

Topics: "Life Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the life of Jesus and its significance for believers. He emphasizes that Jesus' life was not just about great teaching, but also about the lessons and experiences that intersect with our own lives. The speaker shares three snapshots from Jesus' life, one from his childhood, one from the middle of his life, and one from the end of his life. He highlights the importance of understanding who Jesus is and the power of his name, as demons tremble at the mention of Jesus. The sermon also touches on the story of the thief on the cross and the power of God's grace to transform lives.

Transcript

Three weeks from today is Easter. I wanna talk to you about the greatest life that ever lived. I wanna tell you about snapshots from the life of Jesus.

We'll put a hold on our spiritual warfare series because I just wanna lead up and make sure you all understand about Jesus. We're Christians. We follow Jesus.

Our faith is in Jesus. Be careful when you talk to people and you say God and Lord because God and Lord can mean a lot of different things to people today. There's Lord Krishna.

There's God, whatever God, you know, people have, oh, it's Jesus. Demons never tremble at the name God or Lord, but at the name of Jesus. So just look at this very famous little passage from John.

I'm not gonna preach from this passage, but it kinda gives me a jumping off point. He was in the world, Jesus, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, and name means their character, who he is, what he came for, what he stands for, to all those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. I had a visitor in my office who came to the last service with his wife, first time

here, and he's from Russia. And I mentioned to him that I've been in St. Petersburg, Russia, but later on in the spring, I'm gonna go with my friend Ravi Zacharias, and we're gonna be in Moscow together talking to hundreds and hundreds of pastors from all over Russia.

We got to talking about Russian history, and we talked about the famous dictator who ruled for decades in Russia, Joseph Stalin, man of steel, who probably caused the death of his own people two or three times more than Adolf Hitler did in the terrible concentration camps that he initiated. Stalin killed and starved his own people on purpose. He's one of the most infamous names in history.

I've read maybe three or four books about Stalin's life. Then there's books on the other side about great men. More books have been written about Abraham Lincoln than any president that who ever served in the United States.

A lot of books have been written about Napoleon Bonaparte and his military successes and strategy. But of all the people who ever walked on the earth, nobody comes close to the number of books that have been written about Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the most written about person in history, and it's amazing because as an adult, he never traveled 200 miles from where he was born.

He just went up and down between basically Galilee in the north and down to Jerusalem. He never wrote a book. He's not found in the newspapers of his day.

There's scant reference to him historically, but most of our information comes from the Bible, the Gospels, like John. And yet, he said things that are still coming true today. He said to the disciples 2,000 years ago, a carpenter's son, just as they've hated me, they'll hate you, and it's come to pass.

How would he know that? How would he know 2,000 years ago that people who believed in him would be hated and persecuted? I just got a SOS email from Pakistan from somebody in Samaritan's Purse telling me about 100 Christians who have been burnt out and everything they own destroyed for only one reason, because they bear the name of Jesus Christ. It's the only reason. Now, how would Jesus know that? If he was just an ordinary guy, who would wanna follow him anyway? And the people who did follow him, what did they get from following him? They got nothing but a heartache and persecution, all because they said, we saw him alive after he died.

More hospitals have been built, inspired by Jesus Christ and Christianity than any other cause in the whole world. More charity has been displayed in the name of Christ than any other name in the history of the world. He's the greatest life that's ever lived, and even people who don't believe that he's divine and the son of God, they search and scrutinize his words, and they can't find anything wrong in what he did and what he said.

Everyone admits, and in fact, they even not only admit he lived a great life, they'll even quote him once in a while. But in other places, they say, no, I don't believe that. I don't receive that.

So there's never been anyone like Jesus. In fact, he's the focus of the Bible. If someone wants to argue with you about the Bible, and do you really believe Jonah was swallowed by a whale, and where did Adam and Eve, and all of that stuff? The major miracle, and what you wanna talk to them about, is say, look, we'll get to those issues later, and we'll discuss it, but here's what we wanna talk to you about.

The centerpiece of the Bible is Jesus Christ. The centerpiece of history is Jesus Christ, according to the Bible. The Old Testament can be summarized by this.

He will come. He will come one time in the future. That's from Moses all the way through all the prophets.

He will come. One day, he will come, the Messiah, the one we're waiting for, the one who will be the Savior, the one who will bring true freedom and deliverance. He will come.

The message of the entire New Testament is he has come. He did come. He was born of Mary, and he lived, and he died, and he rose again.

So that's the whole story of the Bible. So instead of talking about sidebars, and miracles, and whatever, do you believe that a man was born of a virgin? That's a miracle. Do you believe that he died and rose again? He said he would do that.

So he's either a liar and a fraud, or he's the Son of God. So before we talk about other miracles, let's just talk about Jesus. Do you believe, sir? Let's talk about Jesus, ma'am.

Let's just discuss Jesus, because that's what our message is, Jesus. Not join the Brooklyn Tabernacle, Jesus. Not be a Catholic, Jesus.

He's the centerpiece of history. And in the end of your life, it'll be like a song that God brought to my heart when I was a young boy laying in bed at night, God dealing with my heart. The words of a song they sang in church came to me.

What will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot be. Someday your heart will be asking, what will he do with me? What will you do with Jesus? Neutral, you cannot be. You can't be in the middle.

One day your heart will be asking, what will he do with me? Will he say, welcome, well done? Or will he say, away from me? I wanna give you some snapshots about this life, because Jesus' life was filled not just with great teaching, but since he's the greatest life that was ever lived, fully human, yet fully divine, there are things that happen to him that intersect with our life, that are lessons for our life, and that sometimes strike right to the heart of our lives. And I wanna give you a few snapshots, two when he was just little, one in the middle of his life, and then one at the end of his life. I just wanna give you some snapshots, because they're very significant.

And they symbolize a lot about his whole life, especially leading to the last one I'm gonna tell you about. The first snapshot I wanna give you is a snapshot of Jesus' birth. He was born in amazing humility.

That he would be the greatest life that ever lived, that he would be called the Son of God is amazing because of the humble circumstances of his birth. His mother was a nobody. Mary was just a nobody.

Not to God, but to the world. I mean, God could have picked a famous woman to be his mother. He could have picked a wealthy, educated woman.

He did not. Jesus was born to just a young woman, maybe as young as 14, 15, 16 years old, 17. And his supposed father, Mary's husband, Joseph, was a carpenter, which was looked down on as a trade by the Jewish culture.

If you were a rabbi, you were doing something great. If you were a successful merchant, you were doing something great. But a builder of tables and chairs.

But this is the world Jesus was born into. But more specifically, Jesus was born, as you know, in Bethlehem, but Mary's time came to give birth, and they couldn't get him into the local inn or place where there were some rooms they could rent out. So they were sent away, there was no room, and they were sent away to a manger, which is nothing more than a place that they kept animals.

And if you've ever been in a barn anywhere, you know the smell of a barn. And you know that animals defecate and eat there and lay down there. And that's where Jesus was born.

God, who could have had his son born anywhere in the universe, he had him born in a manger. And he was wrapped in the old King James, which totally misleads us, swaddling clothes. I always, when I was young, when I read swaddling clothes, I thought that meant like a little blanket that somebody made or something.

No, what it literally means is he was wrapped in strips of cloth. Strips of cloth surrounded this little crying baby, born in a stinking manger. Now, what's that lesson for us? The lesson is that God, who could have had his son born anywhere, chose humble circumstances because to God, the greatest of things can exist in tremendous poverty and humility.

And if you look at where he could have had him born, like in some palace, Jesus was so great that if you put him in a rich place, it would be silly because he was so great. He would make that rich place look cheap because there's no place good enough for the son of God if you go by material grandeur. God chose to have him born in a manger, telling us something very important, that what is great to God, the world thinks is stupid.

And what the world calls great, God often says is an abomination. To be a follower of Jesus, you have to believe that greatness can exist, like your life and my life, in common circumstances. No one's ever gonna write about us.

We're not gonna be famous. We're not gonna have our picture on People Magazine. We're not gonna be on the cover of Time Magazine.

We're not gonna be featured in an article about the rich and famous. To God, greatness is not what the world calls greatness because what the world calls greatness is stupid just within a few years. I always get a kick out of people who are very hip and dressed together, and they look at pictures like from the 50s and 60s and 70s, and they go, ha, ha, ha.

Look at the hairdo, look at the big afro, whoa. I can't believe, double knit and all of that and platform shoes. Remember when platform shoes came in and girls and women were, and I mean, they were elevated.

They were way up there. But while you're laughing at that, they're gonna be laughing at you in just 20 years. You think you're together and you look good today? Someone's gonna laugh at you and see your picture and go, pfft.

2013, it was so stupid how they dressed like that. And that's the way it is with everything in this world. What's in is out.

Just wait around. But what God calls great can exist in total humility. Your life, my life, can be great in God's eyes.

And if you live for what's great in the world's eyes, you're gonna fall in a trap. If you make your role models people the world calls great, parents who dedicate your children, don't let them copy athletes and singers and dancers and movie stars. Some of those lives are horrible.

Let them copy Jesus. Can we all say amen to that? Let them copy Jesus. A great day in your life can be amid humble circumstances.

You can be a secretary working for a boss in the city. You can be a transit worker. You can be a police officer.

You could be a student at a college. You could be a housewife at home and you'll say, this is not important. No, that's where greatness exists with God, in manglers.

Later on, he didn't even have a place to lay his head. The Bible tells us that when he was arrested, the only thing he really owned was this one garment that he wore, his one main garment, and that he really was cared for by the offerings, especially from women who followed the disciples and he around. This snapshot of Jesus tells us that by the grace of God, we've gotta get a proper idea of what to aim for.

Great in the eyes of God, appreciated by God, or great in the eyes of this world and very often rejected by God. I wanna give you another snapshot, not just about his humility, which is an astounding fact. What humility.

What humble circumstances. His vulnerability to attack. The Bible tells us that when the only people that went to the manger, by the way, and saw him were the shepherds, who were another considered lowlifes among the Jewish culture.

But that's who celebrated his coming. Sometime later, we don't know how long, it seems like Jesus was still in Bethlehem and Mary couldn't travel yet, maybe. And the Bible tells us that people from Persia or what we call today Iran, Magi, or maybe priests, learned people from Iran, who gazed into the skies, they saw his star and they came to Jerusalem and they asked King Herod, who was the Jewish king then, but hated by the religious people.

They asked him, where is the one who's born king of the Jews? And he thought, wait, whoa, I'm the king. What are you talking about? No, we saw his star, there's a king that was born. Well, he started to ask everyone in town, the religious leaders, where's this promised king? I don't know the Old Testament, he didn't read it.

Where was this king supposed to be born? And of course, one of the scribes or Pharisees said, of course, Micah tells us, out of you, Bethlehem, will come the savior. Bethlehem, little town north of Jerusalem. Herod, trying to be sly, said to the Magi, go to Bethlehem and find him, and if you find him for me, call me because I want to come and worship him.

Oh yeah. So the Magi went, the star appeared again, they followed it, and they were led supernaturally to the place where the baby was. After they gave gold, frankincense, and myrrh as presents, the Bible tells us that God warned them in a dream, don't go back to Herod, but go home another route, and they did, and when they didn't show back in Jerusalem, Herod put two and two together and said, they just played me, but that baby must have been born.

I don't know if that baby was born, but I'm not taking a chance, so he ordered soldiers to go and kill every male baby two years or younger in the whole vicinity, and women were crying, and fathers were wailing because babies were slaughtered. It's called the slaughter of the innocents. Why they didn't get Jesus was Joseph was warned in a dream by God, go and take the child and take him south to Egypt because they're seeking to kill him.

Now Jesus is being held in his mother's arms. He's the son of the living God, but he is so vulnerable. He could catch disease, he could catch cold.

Herod's men could get him. On the way to Egypt, let's say riding a camel, there were all kinds of brigands and thieves and outlaws that would jump caravans and just maim and kill people and then steal what they had. So here we have Jesus, the son of the living God.

The hope of the whole world lies in him, and he's a little defenseless baby, and he has no caravan of soldiers. He has no money. He's got a father who's still trying to figure things out, a supposed father, and he's got a mother who's pondering things in her heart, and now they're being taken to Egypt where they've never been, don't know how they're gonna live, but God has supplied because the gold, frankincense, and myrrh will tide them over.

Oh, God is an amazing God, isn't he? So notice the vulnerability. He's the son of God, and seemingly, the enemy could kill him at any second, and yet he lives. That's a lesson for us.

Have you ever felt spiritually so vulnerable when you think of the power of Satan, when you think of some of the habitual sins that we've practiced in our lives, and temptation comes, and you don't know how you're gonna hold it together, and you seem so vulnerable, and you don't know what life is gonna deal you next, and you hear things in the economy, and you hear things around you, and you hear about new diseases they're discovering, and you seem so defenseless and vulnerable, and that's a great lesson that God gives us through the life of Jesus. When you're weak, you are really strong when you're trusting in God. When God is guarding us, and when God is guiding us, our vulnerability becomes our strength.

Where we get in trouble is when we don't wanna be vulnerable and admit how weak we are, and we try to be strong in ourselves, and then we become weak. But that Jesus was kept by God, and I wanna tell someone up in the balcony today, way up in the top row, God is gonna see you through. He's gonna protect you.

I don't care how the devil comes. I don't care what the devil tries to do. Greater is he that is in you than the one that's in the world.

Can we put our hands together and say amen? Just because it doesn't look good doesn't mean it's good. Just because it doesn't look good doesn't mean God can't work it out for good. God can work it out for good when you're hanging by a thread.

Some of the most wonderful things that have happened to me, how about you, is when I didn't know what the next day would bring, and out of nowhere, God came and blessed and supplied. Can we say amen to that? So the lessons that we've learned from Jesus as little is that greatness exists usually with great humility and humble circumstances. The early church had this testimony.

Are there many great among you, many wise, many rich? No, God has chosen the foolish things, the plain things, the ordinary things. That's the way the Christian church has always been. Most often, the wise and

the wealthy and the powerful say, I don't need this savior, and they miss out on the greatest gift that you could ever have.

We've also learned that Jesus was vulnerable, and in a way, we seemingly are vulnerable, but just the way God protected him, God is gonna protect us. God is gonna watch over us. Don't go by how it looks.

Go by what God said he will do. Thirdly, a remarkable thing about Jesus's life is not just his humility and his seeming total vulnerability. I mean, before I leave that point, several times it says when he was talking, they got so mad, they picked up stones, but he just walked through them.

How'd he do that? Another time, they took him to the top of a hill, and they're gonna throw him down, but he just said, no, I'm leaving now, and then nobody did anything. You know, I said to a woman in the church, interviewing me in London on a radio show. She said, you know, I read, she was, I guess, for possession of guns.

She was for, like, she was asking me about gun control and what I felt about it and all the things going on in our society, and assault weapons and those, you know, magazine clips that have so many shots on them. So we were talking, and she said, yes, but your Second Amendment and that you can carry a weapon. I said, yeah, I don't like guns, I hate guns.

Kind of told her my position, but I said there's 300 million handguns right now somewhere in America, so they're not gonna confiscate them all, and we do have the Second Amendment in our country. So she said, yeah, but I read your book, and a man once walked on the platform with a gun drawn on you, and your eyes were closed, and he walked right up on the platform with a gun drawn on you. I read that, and I went, I didn't know she had, and I went, yeah, that did happen.

She said, yes, but if you would have been carrying a gun, you could have shot him dead right there on the platform. And I thought, what a wonderful service that would have been. Just Dodge City.

So I said to her, well, no, I don't think I would have done that, and I wouldn't carry a gun. I said, but I believe that what the Bible says is true, that our days are numbered, and that there's a day I'm going home. I'm not going home one day sooner than what God has said, and I'm not going home one day later than what God has said, and I and you are immortal until that day.

We're to live wisely, we're to do what common sense tells us, we're not to tempt God, but we're immortal till our day comes. And she oddly said to me, you really believe that? I said, I do. How many believe that no matter what's happening around you, God's got you in the center of his hand until that day? I want you to notice just one other thing here.

The emotional pain that Jesus went through, even though he was the son of God and the greatest life that ever lived. It's very odd to me that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, who obviously are followers of Jesus and are writing this gospel narrative, which is named after them, the four of them, why they would admit to so many things that were painful to Jesus. His own own family didn't understand him.

Have you ever gone through that pain? Anybody here ever have your own family almost turn against you? His brother James, who became famous as a pastor in Jerusalem later on, never was converted until Jesus rose from the dead. Grew up with him and never believed in him. That must have hurt.

His father seems to have died, husband of Mary, seems to have died when Jesus was growing up. He's not heard from at the end, just his mother. But his family actually thought he had lost his mind because he kept teaching and preaching and praying for people and had no time to eat.

He came to the very world that he had helped create and he wasn't even recognized. That must hurt. You come to your own house and no one knows it's you.

The Bible says in another way, he came unto his own and his own received him not. Jesus came to the people he loved and you know what the people basically said? Get out of here. Get out of here.

That has to hurt because Jesus came to the people and Jesus' heart was full of love and when love is rejected, it's very, very, very painful. Some women and men have actually died, they say, of heartache, heartbreak. The Bible says he was lied about.

People made up stories about him. That had to hurt him. People rejected him.

People mocked him. People called him a demon. Now when your heart is that tender and there's no sin in you, that must really hurt to be called a demon and to be rejected and hated.

He was despised. Do you know the pain of loving someone and not just having them reject you, they now look at you and hate you. Jesus knew what it was to be preaching and people are listening and on the edge of the crowd, he sees Pharisees talking while he's teaching and you know what they're saying while they're whispering to each other? We're gonna kill him.

How does it feel if your heart is tender to know people wanna kill you and yet you love them? If the people you love are plotting to kill you, what kind of damage does that do to your nervous system and your heart? And yet the Bible tells us clearly, doesn't try to hide it, that Jesus was rejected, hated, gossiped, lied, libeled, slandered, right to the very end. And you would think that his 12 disciples would stay with him, but how about the men you put the most time into, they run and flee. One of them is the one who betrays you.

You love them, you eat with them, you travel with them and yet when you really need their moral support, they're nowhere to be found. Don't tell me that that doesn't hurt. That hurts.

That hurts. And then to have a mock trial where people are brought forward and tell false stories about you, when witnesses can't even agree on their false stories, when somebody is laughing at you, King Herod, and says, prophesy to me. If you do a miracle, I'll believe and you do something for you.

And when you don't even say a word to him because it's not a time to talk, then he just orders them, give him a beating. And men, strong men are taking full punches at you and you're taking it. Don't tell me that doesn't do damage, not just to your body.

Don't tell me that doesn't hurt you. And yet the Bible says this is the greatest life that's ever been lived. And right to the way he was scourged, you know, it says just casually.

And Pilate had him scourged. You know, Pilate wanted to let him go. Pilate knew.

Pilate knew he was innocent. Pilate knew that they were just jealous of him so he's trying to get out of the thing and says, let me release him. No, the crowd screamed.

No, crucify him. Release Barabbas to us. But crucify Jesus.

What was he thinking when he heard that? Now, if you hated the people and didn't care or said, I'll get you one day, then you could live through it. But if you love the people who are doing that, come on, come on. No, not just born in humility, not just constantly vulnerable and yet protected by God, but the emotional pain he endured.

I know I haven't even got to the nails and the crucifixion. I haven't got to that. I'm talking about something else, psychological, emotional pain that he went through.

You know why the Bible tells us these things? Everything the Bible tells us about him is carefully chosen by the Holy Spirit because we know so little about him. From the time he was born till the time he's 30, we hardly know anything. We catch him as an infant.

We catch him as a little baby. Then we catch him at 12 years old in the temple. They're looking for him, his mom and dad.

Then nothing till 30. And then Matthew, Mark, and Luke repeat a lot of the incidents of his life. John has a bunch that are different.

Luke reports some parables and incidents that are not in Matthew and Mark. But basically, I mean, he ministered for three and a half years, and John says if everything he did and said were put in a book, the world couldn't contain everything he did. So we know very little.

But what we do know must be for our edification and to remind us of something important, humility, vulnerability, yet you're still protected. Greatness can exist in humility and impoverished circumstances. You can be great in God's eyes and not have two nickels to rub together.

You can be vulnerable and yet totally protected by God even though it looks terrible. And now God says to us, and sometimes in life, you can really be hurt. But Jesus knows about it.

You ever go through something and you think nobody could understand how deep and down and low and hurt I am? Have you ever had that? I've had that. I've had moments where I felt nobody knows what I'm feeling right now. But Jesus knows.

Everything you're going through today, all due respect to all of us, it's like child's play to him. He's the friend of a wounded heart. He heals broken hearts.

If your heart is broken today and you don't feel you can talk to anyone, you can open up to Jesus. Everything you and I have ever gone through, he went through it and then things we could never imagine. To be hated when you love the people, to be rejected, lied about, put a knife in your back.

All of that was put in the Bible so we would know where to run when we're hurting. Not to another person. Look at me, everyone.

Don't run and look for another person to help you. Run first to Jesus. When you're hurting and you have pain, when you feel broken, when you feel broken, when you feel rejected, isn't rejection one of the worst pains? When people on purpose reject you.

This young woman in our church told her story some months ago on a Sunday afternoon, born to an Indian father, a mother, she can't even, doesn't even, not even sure where her mother's from, but it seemed to be she worked in the streets as a street walker. Was raised by a grandfather in Germany

because they were ready to put her and her twin sister in the system. She finally tracks down her father in Queens just some years ago and goes to the father who she never knew.

And you know what he said when she came? I don't wanna see you. I don't wanna know about you. Get out.

Jesus had that a thousand times. So whatever we have, we can have a little talk with Jesus. Pour your grief, your pain out.

Don't run to a bottle. Don't run to a drug. Don't take prescription drugs to get rid of that.

Bring it to Jesus. Listen, I don't know how he does it, but he will lift you up. He will heal your heart.

Can we say amen to that? And now, just one last snapshot. You got it? Greatness and humility. Even though you're vulnerable and it looks bad, you're gonna be protected by God.

He was. And if anyone can understand your emotional distress, Dr. Jesus is the one to go to. Not Dr. Phil.

Don't go to Dr. Phil. Go to Dr. Jesus. He will help you.

But let me go beyond the beyond so you understand who Jesus, what he's really about in case it hasn't happened to you yet. Because the Bible warns us, many will say in that day at the end of time, Lord, Lord, and he'll say, I never knew you. He ends up on a cross with two thieves next to him.

And all the crowd is mocking him and jeering at him. The religious leaders are saying, yo, if you're who you said you are, why don't you come down? We'll believe. Just come on down from that cross.

We'll believe. Jesus just kept silent. Oh, what was going on in his heart? The two thieves next to him are both cursing at him, jeering him too.

They're 24-carat stone thieves and they're being crucified too. And it's just their good fortune to end up on either side of Jesus Christ. So the Bible tells us, somewhere in those six hours from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon, a light goes on with one of the thieves.

And as he just perceives Jesus and he hears the jeering and whatever he knew about Jesus, I don't know, but something changes in him and he stops cursing and jeering. And Jesus is going through suffering. He just says those few words.

Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. Mother, behold thy son.

Son, behold thy mother. You know, the famous sayings from the cross. Well, the one thief who's still cursing is just going at it.

And this other thief says, hey, stop. Don't you have any shame? Don't you know what you're doing? Don't you fear God at all? We belong up here. We're guilty of sin.

We're getting our just desserts. But this one, how he knew it, we don't know, but that's the mystery of salvation. But this one, as he's nailed to a cross himself, but this one, he's done nothing wrong.

Jesus doesn't say a word. Stop cursing at him. Stop mocking him.

We belong up here. We should die. This one is innocent.

And then to make religion 101 real easy for you, you understand Christianity? It's real simple. That one thief who has revelation of who Jesus is says to him, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus didn't say to him, all right, listen, it's kind of late now.

You wasted your whole life. You're a loser. I know I haven't done anything wrong, but you, I mean, I know what you did when you were 14 years old, 18 years old.

Or he didn't say, look, if you find some way to get off the cross and you go to a church, there's one on Smith and Fulton there that I recommend. You get baptized, you'll take classes, the whole thing. Get a Bible, start reading, start with the book of John and start reading a chapter.

They know Jesus didn't say anything. Come on, are you ready to follow me into, we sing amazing grace. We don't even understand how amazing it is.

He said, Lord, when you come into kingdom, just remember me. Today, you'll be with me in paradise. Today, not tomorrow.

Today, when you die, you're really gonna live. Death isn't the end of anything. You're gonna live and you're gonna be with me in paradise, whatever that meant.

And that's the last thing I gotta tell you about Jesus. He is so anxious to help you. That if you're not a Christian born again today and you're in this church, it's not because he doesn't wanna help you.

It's maybe because you can't bring yourself to say, I'm wrong and he's right. You can't admit that your life is bent. You can't admit that your life is sideways.

See, that's what holds us back. That's what the thief said. No, we're wrong.

He's right. We deserve to be punished. That's what you gotta say.

That's all you have to say is, God, have mercy on me. I'm wrong. Today, you'll be with me in paradise.

But what theology did he have? What did he understand about the miracle of Jonah and the whale? What did he believe about creation? Where is it, six literal days, seven days? I mean, how old is the earth? He didn't understand anything about anything except one thing, Jesus, please remember me. Today, you'll be with me in paradise. Let's close our eyes.

Getting ready for Palm Sunday and two weeks Easter, the end of this month. We've all been encouraged because today we know greatness to God exists in the most humble circumstances. You don't have to go up the socioeconomic ladder.

You can just, you can go down and be great. And you can go up and be nothing. Zero, with all your money, with all your jobs.

We've learned that you can be vulnerable and it can look bad, but if you just trust God, he will preserve you like he did baby Jesus. No matter what the devil wants to do, he can't touch you if you run to that rock. We've learned today that no matter what you feel and where you're hurt, you can tell it to Jesus and he's the doctor who will help you.

And if you're here today and you are suffering from a solar plexus punch emotionally to you, someone has really done you in, hurt you, even this week. But if you're here today and you've never known what it is to be born again and have your life changed by Jesus, I'm not talking about joining a church, growing up in Jamaica and church, Trinidad, Poland, Ireland, wherever. I'm not talking about any of that.

I'm talking about a personal experience where you knew your sins were forgiven. You got to the end of yourself and you said, Jesus, remember me. I believe in you, Jesus.

I believe what the minister said about you today. You're the greatest life ever lived. Would you just get out of your seat if you would like me to say a prayer over you as we dismiss this service? Come quickly now.

Pastor, the message was from me. I needed to hear that or be reminded of it. I need him to help me today.

Come on, today's the day. Your whole life's going to change. I don't care what you've done, where you've been, how many times you've done it.

God's grace is amazing if you just humble yourself and say, Lord, Lord, I receive you. As many as received him, he gave them the power to have their life changed and become sons and daughters of God with a new nature inside of them that God gives you. Joy and peace instead of emptiness and depression.

Lord, as we minister to them, we ask you to go with us. Watch over all of our hearts and remember, greatness exists in humble circumstances. Vulnerability doesn't mean strength because you're able to keep us from falling.

No matter what pain we ever go through, we have an open ear, open heart from Jesus that we can pour it out to you. And thank you, Lord, that you don't want anybody to perish, but you want everyone to come to salvation. We thank you for it in Jesus' name.

And everyone said. Amen. As we talk with these people, greet one another.

Would you, before you leave, give somebody a hug.

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