

The Only Thing

by Sandeep Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's great mercy and living a life that reflects Jesus' purity, warning against the danger of being friendly with the world system and prioritizing our relationship with Jesus above all else.

Duration: 51:28

Scripture: Matthew 13:45-46, Luke 9:23, Luke 14:33, John 3:30, John 16:13, Acts 2:38, Romans 8:29, Philippians 3:8, James 4:4, Revelation 2:4

Topics: "Discipleship", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the need to make Jesus the only thing that matters in our lives, not just a great thing or the main thing. It challenges listeners to seek a deep immersion in the Holy Spirit, count the cost of discipleship, and earnestly seek fellowship with those who desire only Jesus. The speaker shares personal reflections on the journey of making Jesus the sole focus amidst the distractions and idols of the world.

Transcript

We sang, great is your mercy towards me. I'm a man who stands under great mercy, the great mercy of God. It's important for you to know that.

It's important for you to know that when I look at anybody who I've met in my whole Christian life, I think that I have received more mercy from God than anybody else. And let me tell you why. Because from the day I was born, God gave me all kinds of good things in the things that matter.

He gave me a family who loved me so deeply. He gave me a spiritual father and a mother and my physical father and mother who live only for Jesus. Most people don't have that incredible gift, but this is my point with it.

In spite of that all, I squandered so much for so many years in sin and living for myself and living for my own interests. So if God could have mercy on me, I don't know why he can't have mercy on anybody else. And I'm a testament of his mercy, his great mercy towards me.

And I try to live my whole life often reminding myself of the great mercy Jesus had on somebody like me, who he gave so much in terms of spiritual gifts that I didn't deserve. But even having squandered it all, he's been merciful to me. I hope you will receive what I say with that in mind, knowing that that is true

about my heart as best as I can.

I live before God and try to tell him, God, I'm so thankful for your mercy. We all live with this phrase that is in our consciousness. Life is a journey, not a destination.

And what that phrase is supposed to mean, that we're not supposed to live life as if we have arrived. However, we should not be under the illusion that we have no destination. All of us are going somewhere.

And all of us have a motivation in our hearts that are fueling us to go somewhere. Every single human being, whatever religion you have, whether you're existentialist and say, I'm living in the moment and I don't have a destination, even if you say that, you have a destination. Because if somebody were to look at all of the actions of your life, and if somebody was to be able to look at every single thought and desire and emotion of your life, that person would be able to have a very good idea of predicting exactly where you're headed, what your destination is, and what's the current motivation of your heart.

It won't be difficult at all. For most people in the world, it is wealth, or maximizing their health, or maximizing their comfort, and maximizing the good things in this life. Now, we as Christians, we might say something is our destination, and we may act and live as if something else is our destination.

But when somebody who has full access to all the actions that we do when nobody is looking, and when somebody has access to all our innermost thoughts and desires and motivations, that someone may be able to say, you say one thing, do one thing externally, but your true destination and motivation is something else. Now, we know that someone is God. God is able to see.

Nobody else can, not even our spouses, know our innermost thoughts. But God does see it. And what an unfortunate situation it is if God looks at us as Christians and says, there's no difference between you and somebody out in the world.

You have the same destination, and you have the same motivations. And I say life and heart, because being a preacher's kid, I know how I can fake it. I know all the truths well enough to fake it.

That I might do all the right things, might say all the right things, but God looks at my heart and finds me wanting. He finds a heart that has selfishness as his God, who finds his own honor and his own Christian reputation, or his own Christian ministry as his God, and not Jesus himself. Romans 10 says, the verse in Romans 10 says, with the heart you believe and with the mouth you confess.

But I think what we have in many cases are mouths that are confessing what hearts don't truly believe. The order was supposed to be that hearts that truly believed first, not minds that believed, hearts that believed, and out of the overflow came a confession of the mouth. Let me show you what I see is the destination and motivation of what should be the destination and motivation of every Christian.

I've tried very hard to make it my destination and motivation, and when I say try very hard, the best I can do is put it into my mind, and I can try and get my emotions worked up around that as well, but I cannot put it into my heart. For that I need the Holy Spirit, and for that you need the Holy Spirit too. The Holy Spirit needs to drag it into our deceitful hearts from our minds, but we first need to get our minds to wrap around it, what the destination and motivation that God has for every Christian.

Turn to 1 John chapter three. 1 John chapter three, verses two and three. It tells you the destination and motivation, at least tells me what my destination and motivation ought to be.

1 John chapter three, verses two and three. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him.

We will see Him just as He is, and everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself just as He is pure. Brothers and sisters, the best thing that can happen to you when Jesus returns is that you will be pure like Jesus is pure. Not that sickness will go away, not that pain will go away, not that the streets will be filled with gold, although that may all happen, but the best thing that can happen to you is that you will be pure like Jesus is pure, because we look forward to Him, not to the things that He brings.

No true bride looks forward to the wedding presents on her wedding day. No true bride does that. A true bride looks forward to the bridegroom, being united with the bridegroom and being one with the bridegroom.

If we are being called the bride of Christ, then we prove that we are the bride of Christ by looking forward most to Him. And when I read 1 John 3, it says everyone, not most people, not some people, everyone who looks forward to Jesus coming back so that we would be like Jesus, everyone who has this hope will purify himself. So if I look at my life over the years, I don't wanna say every day, every time you have to look at it, but if you look at your life over the months and the years, and if you are not increasing in your purity compared to Jesus who's the standard, if we are not increasing in purity compared to Jesus as the standard, then the implication must be, and that's definitely the inference of what John is driving at, the inference must be, I must really be looking forward to Him.

I might say it, I might put it all over my blogs, I'm really looking forward to it, I could pray about it saying, God, come soon, but the proof of whether we really look forward to Jesus, our bridegroom coming back, is if we purify ourselves as He is pure. That should be the destination and motivation of every single Christian. Romans 8, let me show you another verse.

Romans 8, verse 29. It cannot be more crystal clear than this. Romans 8, verse 29.

It tells us what God's destination is for us, what God had in mind when He created us and I with a destination. Those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son. Predestined just means destination determined ahead of time.

Now please notice that the destination determined ahead of time is not heaven or hell. The destination for everybody who loves God and names the name of Jesus is not heaven or hell, it is conforming to the image of His Son and His purity. What we think about Jesus and His purity is everything if we're calling ourselves Christians.

And purity is not determined by amens or songs and all of that. It's in the moment of temptation. That is when purity is being tested.

That's when purity is gained or lost. Now some of us may have heard already enough to say that's all I needed to hear. I know my life needs to go in a different direction.

Yes, I've called myself a Christian for many years. Yes, I've done all kinds of things for the church but my destination has not been the purity of Jesus that I might reflect the true purity of Jesus. If that's the case, that's wonderful, praise God.

That is all you need to ever hear for the rest of what I'm gonna say. The purpose of all preaching, the purpose of my preaching is to create an unbearable vacuum in your heart that nobody can fill except the Holy Spirit. Not a sermon, my sermon can never do that.

No drama, no song, nothing, no experience can ever do that. Only the Holy Spirit and the person of the Holy Spirit can fill that vacuum. My job, the job of any church, of any person who ministers is to create an unbearable vacuum.

If that vacuum is created, I hope you will seek God and the Holy Spirit to fill you because He will. But if you're already there, wait for the rest of us to catch up with you. I use the rest of the time to make sure we all together can have an unbearable vacuum in our heart that says, God, I need to be reflecting your purity in a way that I've never had.

When I look at a group of people like this, when I look at any church, I see three groups of people. Now, some of us may look at this group and say there are two groups, that those who are born again and those who are not yet born again, or those who are not born again at all. I look at this in a completely different set of eyes.

I look at it with three categorizations of people. I hope that this will be an exercise of judging yourself, not judging your neighbor and your pew, not judging your spouse and nudging her when the right category comes up and you say, that's you, honey. Not judging your children, not judging your parents, although your spouse and your children and your parents may have a very good indication of where you probably are.

But you focus on yourself. We are gonna stand one day before God and give an account for our spouse's lives, no, for our lives. So let us judge ourself.

If we're gonna do that one day when it really matters, might as well start practicing to do it now. The first categorization of people are people for whom Jesus is a great thing to them. That sounds like a really good thing, but I hope you will hear me what I say with due respect.

I don't see much of a difference between people who treat Jesus as a great thing and an agnostic or an atheist. I have plenty of agnostic and atheistic friends who will tell me that Jesus is a great thing for them as well. They love reading the Bible, they love kind of his teachings and his forgiveness and his gentleness, but remember, God's destination for us is not heaven or hell.

It is conformity to the image of his Son in purity. And in that respect, the people who say Jesus is a great thing and say they're Christians and the agnostic and the atheists are superficially different. One goes to church, one says a prayer, one said a prayer, but fundamentally and essentially and in their heart where God looks at, they're about the same.

But you'd say, no, no, no, no, no, I'm different. Jesus is my friend. He calls me friend and I call him friend.

If you call Jesus your friend, let's look at the manual and let's read what Jesus, what the Holy Spirit talks about what it means to be friends with Jesus. Turn with me to James chapter four, verse four. James was called one of the pillars of the church.

He was one of the leaders of the early church after Jesus was sent into heaven. James was one of those key leaders. And look at this stunning words in James chapter four, verse four.

You adulteresses, you know you're not off to a good start when a sentence starts with you adulteresses. What's an adulteress? An adulteress is a woman who's married to one man and fooling around with another. Now, he's talking to Christians here, claiming to be married to Jesus, fooling around with another.

Who are they fooling around with? You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility with God? Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world, this is in your Bible, makes himself an enemy of God. If we desire to be friends with the world system, we're enemies with Jesus. It doesn't matter what we sing about, it doesn't matter what we blog about, it doesn't matter what we've put on our Facebook status, Jesus is the way, I love Jesus, Jesus is the greatest thing.

If I'm friendly with the world system, I'm enemies with Jesus. So what does a Christian who's friendly with the world system look like? A person who's friendly with the world system will say, I'm a Christian, I go to church most weeks, whenever I can make it. But that, those late night flirtings over the internet with my chatting with late at night, can't stop that.

That looking at women, especially with their summer dresses, can't stop that. That once in a while binge drinking with my corporate friends, can't stop that. And everywhere I go, whether I walk down the street or whether I open a magazine or whether I'm on the internet, my eyes are flooded with lust.

And my heart is a hissing cauldron of lust, always ready to boil over. And I just can't get rid of internet pornography. I can manage it, but I can't completely get rid of it, because I enjoy it too much.

So when my girlfriend dumps me or when I'm rejected or my friends don't think I'm cool enough and I'm feeling down on myself, I'll go to the secret addiction that I have and I'll go to this favorites of websites that I know about. I can't get rid of it, I'm just gonna manage it. And if you're a woman, you'd say, yes, I know I'm supposed to be modest, but that low-cut dress is just hot right now.

And everybody's buying it and it's on 15% discount, so I gotta get it now. And I work hard for this body, so why should I cover up my body with loose clothing? God made me the way I am, so I'm gonna wear clothes that maximize my curves. And if men are lusting after me, that's their problem, not mine.

But whatever you do, don't judge me, because Jesus said do not judge. But I love Jesus, don't tell me I don't love Jesus. I watched the Easter program three weeks ago and I wept.

And I watched the Passion movie every time and I weep every time I watch it. How could anybody do something to somebody as good as Jesus? So I must love Jesus. But I don't live a life that is based on what I believe in or what I claim to believe in.

What I end up doing is I do what's most comfortable, I do what's most enjoyable in the moment, and I tell myself I'll repent later. Church is on Sunday and this is Friday night. Repentance is for Sunday morning, but right now, Friday night, my internet is on, I know where I'm gonna have to go right now.

What a tragedy, what a tragedy to be friendly with the world system. I've been there, that's how I know. This is how it is, it's a very self-defeating life to live.

Wearing masks, saying one thing on Sunday and living a different life all the rest of your week. But you know, you think the world is fooled? You think the world all look at your lives and they look at your Facebook photo albums and they see the outfits you're wearing there and they say, you're no different from us. You expose as much as the rest of us do.

You do the same things we do. You're not different from us. You can say you do different things on Sunday morning, but you're just as cozy with the world as we are.

Jesus is just a nice accessory. What a tragedy. I was reminded of the story of the emperor's new clothes, it's that children's story where this emperor wanted to wear the most incredible outfit and they could not get any material that suited him until the tailors came up with an ingenious idea to make him an invisible outfit.

And they said, can you see this cloth? The really smart people can see this cloth. And they were holding up nothing. But the king didn't want to show that he was not smart.

So he's like, yeah, I see that, that's great. And all the subjects also didn't want to look as they were not smart. So they said, yeah, we see this outfit, it's great.

So they have the king take off all his clothes and dress him with this invisible cloak, which is nothing. And he's walking around and then he arranges a parade and he walks through the kingdom. And the whole kingdom is afraid to tell the king that he's naked, except for one little boy who's the only one who's willing to tell the truth.

So we come or we walk around with our half-baked Christian lives and our sweet, supportive Christian friends who also have got a half-baked love will tell us, no, you're great, you're clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. You're cool, you're all set. But even a child in the kingdom of God can tell you you're naked.

Jesus is not a great accessory. It's a travesty, it's an insult to him to call him an accessory. But there's something good about such people.

Such people are generally very quick to admit that this is where they are at. They're honest about where they're at. They're willing to tell you, hey, this is exactly what I struggle with.

I enjoy the pleasures of the world too much. I just can't give it up. They know Jesus isn't all that to them.

They're probably not pretending. If you'd stop beating them up with all kinds of verses or telling them that they're fine when they're not, they'd say, ah, this is not working for me. Is this the best you got as Christianity? But they're addicted to the world and to the things of the world and the attractions of the world and the advertising programs and the marketing campaigns of this world whose CEO is the devil, by the way.

The devil is called the god of this world. He's warped their minds so much that they just don't know how to get out of it. They don't know what to do, how to get out of this system, and these campaigns keep feeding their minds and this is how you ought to live.

This is the nice life you ought to live. And they are hoping that maybe one day they'll come to church and the Holy Spirit will finally feel it fit to hit them or zap them and then suddenly those urges will go out of them and they won't have these desires to live like the world. It won't happen like that.

And you look at all the people who are exuberant in their worship and say, hey, God, I wanna be exuberant someday. I'm just not there. You don't have to be exuberant.

You don't have to jump up and down, but you have to make Jesus more than just a great thing. It's not gonna work if Jesus is just a great thing. And let me show you the disastrous end from the Bible, the disastrous end of somebody who could never make Jesus more than just a great thing.

Turn with me to Matthew chapter 26. The absolutely disastrous end of somebody who treated Jesus as just a great thing. Matthew chapter 26, verse 22.

Matthew 26, verse 22. And being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to him, Jesus has just told the disciples, one of you is gonna betray me. And being deeply grieved, none of the disciples thought that any of them would betray Jesus.

They said, surely not I, Lord. But read what Judas, the one who eventually did betray Jesus said in verse 25. And Judas, who was betraying him, answered and said, surely it is not I, Rabbi.

I don't know if you notice the subtle difference here. Even though all the disciples would desert Jesus, only one of them would betray him. Judas, the one who betrayed him, couldn't call Jesus his Lord.

Could only call Jesus Rabbi. Great teacher. And let's be clear, all the 12 disciples gave up everything externally to follow Jesus.

Judas also heard the Son of God preaching the most incredible sermons for three and a half years. 11 of the disciples would not betray him. 11 of the disciples could call him Lord.

Do you think hanging out with Jesus and listening to all of Jesus' sermons is gonna fix the problem? It didn't fix Judas' problem. Judas, at the end of three and a half years, could still call Jesus only Rabbi. Good teacher.

Good teacher. Let's be very, very afraid, dear family of God, making Jesus just a good teacher. He's much, much more than a Rabbi and a good teacher.

He's your Lord. And he deserves to be much more than a great thing. And some of us are there.

We're saying, yeah, we are more than, Jesus is more than just a great thing for us. So this is the second category of people. Jesus is the main thing for some of us.

He's number one. Now, this seems so right. And this people could, the people like us could say all the right things, and we could be so well-oiled theologically.

But God still has a problem with our heart because he sees idols that coexist with God in the corners of our hearts, a heart that was meant to be only inhabited by him. And this group of people are doing a lot of good things. They're working in the church.

They're serving in the church. They may be even working for churches. They could be missionaries out in the mission field.

And they're doing a lot to help the poor and all kinds of things. They can even speak, teach theology accurately, can discern against heresies in the church. But, and their problem is not external sins.

So they're not cheating or stealing or committing adultery. It's the harmless things of the world that have become their idols. Things like an obsession with ease and comfort.

Things with a desire for the next cool thing and the next sweet vacation they're going to go on later this year. And the pursuit of happiness. The thing that the Bible calls the deceitfulness of riches and the worries and the pleasures of this world that the plant grows up and gets choked by.

So for some of us, it is our career. We love Jesus and our career. This is how I know my career.

I'm a working man. I'm not saying you don't have a career. But this is how I know my career would have slipped into my heart.

Because I am more bothered and affected and discouraged when my business is failing than when my spiritual love for Jesus is floundering. If that is true about any of us, then our career might be a God trying to coexist with the one true God. It could even be a Christian ministry.

We could be working, doing all kinds of things, serving the poor, helping to preach the gospel, teaching, a teaching ministry, whatever it may be, standing up like me, speaking pulpit. But I think God owes me something now because I'm serving him and I'm laboring for him. And I think my spirituality must be okay because I'm doing something for him.

Then Jesus is probably just the main thing. But in many, many cases, the real drive for the rest of us might just be an inordinate pursuit of happiness. We have so bought into this American dream that we are more obsessed with happiness and comfort.

And we think we can pursue happiness as well as pursue God. So we've got two gods. The God of the Bible, the God of comfort.

We live in a part of the world where even the weather cooperates with us most of the time. We have just such great lives. And we think, God, that's the sign of your blessing on us.

We worship God and we worship our nice life. And I wrote down some things for us to search our hearts to see whether God might just be the main thing. If you're more impressed by the rich, high-cultured people of this world who are Christians than with the simple and godly people, then Jesus might be the main thing.

If I gave you a chance to sit down with a CEO of a successful company who was a Christian who had made millions, or if I asked you to sit down with somebody who was a much more godly man but labored just in an ordinary job as a janitor. If you're more interested in hanging out with a successful CEO, but you don't discern that that other janitor has more of the spirit and the love of God in him, then Jesus is probably just the main thing to you. When we do spend our time with godly people, if we reduce our conversations with godly people to Bible trivia and arguing finer points of theology, not bad things, rather than trying to see how can I grab a hold of that heart like Elisha said, I want that spirit that you have in Elijah.

If you don't have that, Jesus is probably just the main thing. When we read of the Bibles, because Jesus is the main thing kind of people read their Bibles regularly. When we read the Bible, but we're most fascinated by the intellectual theories about the Bible and the newest fascinating ideas, and we're more interested in deep root world analyses of the Hebrew and the Greek, more than trying to get a hold of the person of Jesus that is being revealed in scriptures.

You search the scriptures because you think in them you have life, but you're unwilling to come to me that you might have life, Jesus said, then you're probably just made Jesus the main thing. If we're more taken up in agitating for God in the schools and in the courthouses, rather than being agitated that God is not in our own house and in our own families, then Jesus is just the main thing. If we're more passionate and worked up about our opinions about America's broken healthcare system, then the brokenness of our own spiritual health and caring for our own spiritual temples, then Jesus is just the main thing.

If we think that the sin of abortion and homosexuality in others is greater than the sin of pride and hypocrisy in ourselves, then Jesus is just the great thing. If we continue to have fits of anger that we don't weep over, and if we don't repent over the way our tongues can be so loose when we speak about other people, when we speak to our wives, when we speak to our children, when we speak to our coworkers, it's a little quieter. Jesus is just the main thing.

James went further, he said your religion is worthless if you don't have control over your tongue. And I see three grave sins, I see three grave sins when Jesus is just the main thing. The first is the sin of hypocrisy.

I have noticed in myself that hypocrisy abounds when I make Jesus the main thing. Hypocrisy has been defined to me as somebody whose external life is better than his internal life. So what people see is better than what God sees.

That's hypocrisy. So when I preach about making Jesus more than the main thing on Sunday, but I go on and live the rest of my life as if Jesus is just the main thing, I am a hypocrite. When we stand up and we sing Jesus one day in your courts is better than a thousand day elsewhere, but we live the rest of our weeks and our lives as if his presence isn't really that enjoyable.

Then we too are hypocrites. And we may have started off so well like the church in Ephesus, but by the time you reach Revelation chapter two, they've lost their first love. Maybe they worship their own righteousness.

Maybe they like their own Christian reputation too much. Maybe they are proud of the fact that they're not sinning externally and that everything's fine the way other people look at them, but they are not consumed about being conformed to the destination and motivation of human beings which is to be conformed to the purity of Jesus. And hypocrisy is abounding.

And another sin that comes with such people where Jesus is the main thing is greed. Jesus says guard against every form of greed. You don't have to be rich to be greedy, you don't have to be poor to be greedy.

And even if you are rich and you give a lot to the kingdom, it doesn't mean you are not greedy. You could still be greedy, you may not. We know the story about the widow with the two mites who gave more than all the wealthy people.

Greed is not about how much you give or how much you don't give. It has got nothing to do with it. It's got to do with the quality of your heart.

And greed is not just about money. Greed could be about a good reputation. Greed is maybe saying, hey, look, I need to show myself as better than that other person.

So I'm greedy for other people's honor. And right with greed usually comes pride. The sin of comparing yourself with other people.

Pride, the sin of comparing yourself with other people. I am smarter than him. My children have better behavior than her children.

I thank God that I love Jesus more than he does. My sermon was more appreciated and got more claps than his sermon. It, pride abounds, pride wells up in all of us.

But pride exists in our hearts because Jesus is just the main thing. You've got corporate CEOs and janitors who could have Jesus as the main thing. You walk the halls or you clean the halls, it doesn't matter.

Jesus could be the main thing only. You could have full-time ministers, you could have missionaries out in the mission field for whom Jesus has never become more than the main thing. So that ministry is everything.

You could be single, you could be married, you could be rich, you could be poor, and you could have every skin color, but you can have Jesus as just the main thing. It has nothing to do with what you get paid for, it's got nothing to do with your doctrinal beliefs, it's got everything to do with your heart. And nobody knows that except you and God.

But he's gonna judge us one day. So we must live before that throne. And my deepest fear is not that I will make Jesus a great thing.

I think I've gone past that stage. But my deepest fear, brothers and sisters, is that I might be making Jesus the main thing in most of the areas of my life. And that's a tragedy, because God was never meant to coexist in our hearts with anything else.

And I think one of the myths we've bought into in the American culture, not American culture, it's the human culture, is that we think that we must have the perfectly balanced life. And we've got God in the right position, number one, yeah, because that's what Jesus said, but then we've got all the other things in our hearts as number two. We've got the right balance, all the juggling balls are in the right place.

And God never called us to a balanced life. It's a myth, if you're a Christian. God calls us to a deeply imbalanced life.

A life skewed completely towards God and desiring only to know Him. If you have a problem with what I said, read Philippians chapter three. See the determination and the destination and motivation of one of the greatest saints that has ever lived, the Apostle Paul.

You see what his destination was. You see what his motivation was. I only want to be found in you, to know Him.

All of my righteousness, which is better than probably any of our righteousnesses, the righteousness of Paul, he considered it like filthy garbage compared to knowing Jesus. We must live deeply imbalanced lives, lives that are radically disciplined to being wholly, wholly, wholly devoted to Him and fully dependent on Him. Jesus must become the only thing that matters in our lives.

But He'll never be that if we spend most of our time, most of our free time playing Farmville on Facebook. Farmville is this game on Facebook, dominating so many ordinary people's lives. Mafia Wars, another one of them.

If Mafia Wars gives you more excitement than the battle over sin in your inner man, you'll never make Jesus the only thing. And this is not a sin to get onto Facebook or any of these things, but let me ask you a question. Have the pleasures of Facebook and all the links and the posts and the YouTube videos and all of those things, have they become more attractive than Jesus? That you spend hours and hours on Facebook, clicking on all those links, but you labor through minutes with Jesus.

What does that say about our lives? Jesus, I wanna really spend time with you, but your life is saying Facebook is who you really wanna spend time with. And you find the pleasures of this world, you find the pleasures of all those links, and they're all interesting videos. They're all really fascinating.

They're not the dirty ones. They're all the nice, cute videos. But they spend all your time, and then you're like, all right God, I can't get anything out of Jeremiah 43.

I'm just done, I'm going home. I wake up tomorrow morning, and I'm gonna go on my Facebook, and Facebook is the thing that excites me. Outside of church time, what is the thing that excites you the most? Tell me.

Are you more excited that your business ideas are taking off, or that your love for Jesus has potential to grow? Tell me, all of us corporate folk. Have our hearts ever been quickened of late by the immense love of Jesus on Calvary outside a church setting, outside watching an Easter drama when you were just alone by yourself? Has your heart been quickened of late by the immense love of Jesus? Have our hearts been broken by the sins that cling to us, that stain this perfectly white garment that Jesus gave us, the robe of righteousness, but there are these same sins that cling to us, that stain our garments, and James says, true religion is keeping yourself, among other things, unstained from the world. But here are these sins that are staining my garments.

Are our hearts broken over it? When was the last time we were moved, maybe even to tears, when we thought about the love of Jesus? And I'm talking outside church. I'm talking outside listening to some CD of a worship music. I'm talking outside watching an Easter drama.

I'm talking about when you were doing an ordinary thing, when you were driving your car home in that insane commute, when you were washing the dishes, when you were just by yourself taking care of the children, but you had a free moment in your thoughts, and your thoughts were drawn once again to the heart of Jesus, and you had to slow down when you were driving, and you had to catch your breath and hold on to the sink just to catch your breath because you saw afresh the Son of God kneeling at the garden of Gethsemane, buckling under the weight of your sin. Jesus did not buckle and faint because He dreaded the physical pain of His flogging and His crucifixion. I know the passion may make you feel all kinds of feelings, but Jesus specifically said, do not fear those who will hurt your body.

And a lot of His disciples went through torture much greater than the Master ever did. When Jesus knelt in the garden of Gethsemane, He bled. And He bled in Gethsemane in addition to bleeding in Calvary.

He bled in Gethsemane before He bled in Calvary. And when He bled at Gethsemane, nobody laid a hand on Him. But He who made the whole world and holds the whole world together in His hands could scarcely

bear the weight of my sin.

When your sin was put upon Him, He buckled. Couldn't stand. He who made the whole world.

That sin of mine which is my desire to live for myself, that sin of mine which is to desire that which is not my own, that is what lusting is. That sin of mine which has inflated thoughts about my skills and my talents. That sin of mine which is my obsession with my career.

That sin of mine which has an insatiable desire for comfort in this life. Saints, this is not preaching. I try to live before God and I feel like He's opened His word to me.

I said, God, I don't want to make you just the main thing. I need to make you the only thing. And so Jesus said, well, He told me this yesterday.

I felt like He was telling me. He doesn't speak in an audible voice, but I felt like He was telling me this yesterday. If you care more about what other people think about your sermon than what I think about your sermon, I'm not the only thing.

I'm just the main thing. So I've learned this from the great men of God. I've learned this from my dad that after I speak a sermon, whatever people may say and how many claps I get, I gotta go before God and fall on my face and say, God, did I do what you told me to do? Did I speak your sermon the way you told me to speak? And then I'll leave the rest up to you.

But you need to be my only thing. When we desire Jesus to be the only thing, only then will we get the story of the merchant who sold everything for the pearl of great price. I heard that story for years, but I could never explain it to be true in my whole life.

Now I think I have a little better idea. When I have Jesus as the main thing, I understand what Jesus said when He said, without me, you can do nothing. God, I don't want to do anything without you because you are the only thing.

And if Jesus is the only thing, I will hate the spirit of Martha that wants to do something for God. And I will covet deeply the spirit of Mary that says, God, I just want to sit at your feet. If you give me opportunities to speak, I will speak.

But even if I can't, I will sit at your feet and I will listen to you and I will worship you. That's what happens when Jesus becomes the only thing. You get the spirit of Mary.

So you can be a housewife. You don't have to have any formal ministry. You can be a mother of five children and you can have Jesus being the only thing because that's the only thing that grabs your fancy.

And all your children get to see, this is a woman of God who's made Jesus the only thing that matters. And it's not what you teach them, it's what you don't teach them, but in the actions of your heart, the way you guard your tongue, the way you talk to your parents, the way you talk to your husband, the way you talk to other people. That's where our children will be noticing us.

My own Christian life, I felt like I was on a plane ride for many years. I felt like I would say, God, I'm getting on a plane ride and I'd be taking off towards the heavens and God, I seriously want to live for you. I want to reach heaven.

But then I'd hit what in the airline industry is known as cruising altitude. I would stop pointing to the heavens and taper off. And I'd say, God, I'm not attached to the world, right? I'm above the world, I'm gone, but it was just a matter of time when I'd fly over New York City or Miami or some other attraction in the world that I had to stop over.

I had to descend. Or maybe it's because I was losing steam in my Christian life. I was losing fuel.

So I needed to come back down to it to refuel. And I'd fulfill the addictions of whatever it was that was affecting me that I needed was drawing me in. And then I'd say, okay, after some time, I got sick about it or I watched the right drama or I listened to the right sermon.

And then I said, okay, God, I'm buckling myself again, I'm taking off again, pointing towards the heaven. But I knew even as I was pointing towards the heaven that I was gonna taper off. I feel like now God said, you need to strap you in, that we're going on a rocket ship.

And we're gonna go to the heavens for real. And you're gonna feel the force of G-force, which is the gravitational pull that the world is trying to pull you down. And you have to go through that, that tearing experience.

And Jesus has to become everything. And just because you're on a rocket and you're in space now and Jesus has been the only thing for a while doesn't mean you can't descend. The Earth looks all beautiful from space.

You've seen those pictures, right? That you may say, God, I think I wanna go back to Earth. I wanna have a little bit more of a taste of it. And then we'll fall again.

And Jesus will be the great thing. Or Jesus will be the main thing. But I say, God, I wanna put my face in the dust.

I wanna put my face low in worship before you, being fully grateful for you, being fully aware of the great mercy you have for me. And I wanna stick in this rocket ship. And every day is a decision I make to say, God, you strapped me into this rocket ship.

This world, the prince of this world has nothing in me. I need to be able to say that by the end of my life. I'm far away from saying that, but I wanna be like my master, who said that at the end of his life.

The prince of the world, the God of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me. What must we do? You know, in Acts chapter two, when Peter preached the sermon, and then a lot of people were cut to the quick and wanted to know what to do. Peter didn't have to give a whole list of to-dos.

It was very simple. When you have an unbearable vacuum that your life isn't the way it's supposed to be, and that Jesus is not the only thing, I have done my job. What you need is the Holy Spirit.

You need a baptism. You need a fresh immersion, like we saw in baptism. We need a fresh dunking to where the Holy Spirit completely immerses us, a baptism of fire, and we need to seek to be continuously filled with him.

I don't care whether you call it a filling, a refilling, a rededication, a rebaptism. I don't know what you call it, but you need the Holy Spirit to so immerse you, because the Holy Spirit has been sent to glorify Jesus, to make Jesus look bigger. If the Holy Spirit truly resides within you, Jesus will become the only thing, and

the Holy Spirit has been given freely by the Father to all who ask with a deep hunger and say, God, I have an unquenchable thirst that will only be filled with you.

The Father is quick to give the Holy Spirit to such people, so don't make this this mystical feeling you have to feel. I was 17 when I felt I was first baptized in the Holy Spirit, and I even had the gift of tongues back then, but it's only been a few years when I felt like I've gotten an immersion in a love of God that I couldn't tell that day, I couldn't tell the next day, but over months and over years, I can tell, God, you're becoming the only thing, and the yoke of God is easy in that realm, and the burden of his is light, but I have to stay there by making Jesus the only thing and cleaning out all the idols that wanna creep into the utter recesses of the heart, and God shines a light and say, that one, that one, that needs to go. Seek to be baptized in the Holy Spirit afresh.

I don't care if you had an experience, I don't care if you don't have an experience. Experience is secondary. The person is fundamental.

Secondly, count the cost. There's a time to come forward, there's a time to receive Jesus, there's a time to confess your faith, but when you wanna be a disciple of Jesus who wants to go all the way with him, you need to sit down, that's what Jesus said. Sit down, count the cost, take inventory of your life.

You'll be surprised some of the idols that God says, yep, that too. Your careers definitely have to be on the altar. Your family, yes, absolutely.

My precious two-year, my precious beautiful daughter and my wife, yep, on the altar. Has to be. We're called children of Abraham by faith.

You know what Abraham had to do? Had to give up the son of promise. And our whole lives on the altar. God, all of my ambitions, God, all of my desires, God, all the preferences, all the biases, all the criticism from men, all the praise of men, God, all on your altar.

Only you, Jesus, to be found in you and to know you. Last point, earnestly seek those who desire only Jesus. There are a lot of sermons, there are a lot of books, there are a lot of people who call themselves Christians who have made Jesus a great thing, who are making Jesus the number one thing, but they're not making Jesus the only thing.

Earnestly ask God in your spirit, whenever you read a book, whenever you listen to sermon, is this somebody who's preaching only Jesus? That's all he's talking about? Or is he trying to give you some tips and techniques and all these little tricks? And how to have a nice life, too? Discard that rootlessly. And if I read my Bible right, it says few there be that find the way. So discard the crowds who may say Jesus is a great thing.

Discard the crowds that say Jesus is the main thing. Seek those people, hopefully there are few in this world who would say Jesus, you are the only thing. And we all need fellowship, as we heard in the small groups.

The fellowship of those who make Jesus, there's something so undeniably beautiful in people who are striving to make Jesus the only thing, not just the main thing. Let me close with a song my mom shared with me as I was telling her what we were gonna be talking about. I hope these words will be true, not just in our minds, but it'll be dragged down to our heart by the Holy Spirit.

Be thou supreme, O Jesus Christ, your love has conquered me. Beneath your cross I die to self and live alone to thee. Be thou supreme, O Jesus Christ, nor creed, that's not doctrine, nor form, nor word, nor holy church, nor human love compare with you, my Lord.

Be thou supreme, O Jesus Christ, my inmost being fill. So shall I think as you did think, and will as you did will. Be thou supreme, O Jesus Christ, your life transfigure, obliterate, overshadow mine.

And through this veil of mortal flesh, Lord, let your splendor shine. Be thou supreme, O Jesus Christ, my soul exults in thee to be your slave, to do your will is my great happiness. Let's bow our heads.

We have to count the cost. This is not some kind of sermon intended to pick you up. It is a sermon that is meant to create an unbearable vacuum.

So if you feel the searing sword of the Holy Spirit, he's also a great comforter, and only he can comfort that thirst, and only he can quench that thirst. And don't wait for a feeling. Ask God, and don't stop seeking him until he's filled you up with the love of God, and ask him to keep it there.

Father in heaven, we are deeply broken people. We are dust. Who are we, dear Father in heaven, that you should be mindful of us? But yet you draw near to us.

You call us your children. We're deeply thankful for it. We repent, God, for making you a great thing, or the main thing.

Lord, we want you to be the only thing that matters. We want your purity to be the only metric that matters in this life. Father, I pray that you may find people here with unquenchable thirsts, unbearable vacuums.

We trust your word that you will give the Holy Spirit gladly and quickly to such people. In your name we pray, amen.

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