

# Repenting of Christian Idols to Truly Know Christ

by Santosh Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of truly knowing and experiencing Jesus personally, rather than just having head knowledge or being caught up in earthly idols. It challenges listeners to seek Jesus above all else, repent of idolatry, and have a personal encounter with Him that transforms their lives.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 12:2, John 5:39, Luke 24:30, Acts 17:30, Acts 17:34

**Topics:** "Personal Encounter with Jesus", "Repentance from Idolatry"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I have a question for the children, do you have to be awake for the Lord to speak to you? Okay, that means you got the message from your memory verse, primary class. My mind instructs me in the night, the Lord wants to speak to you even when you are asleep. And if you can get in the habit from a young age, throughout the day, Lord speak to me.

Samuel experienced that when he was eight years old, speak Lord, your servant is listening. So I think God can speak to you even younger than that. You could be one year old and if you're able to understand that and understand what I'm saying, Lord speak to me, I'm listening.

And if you get in the habit of doing that and if you do that at night before you fall asleep, you know a lot of people even in religious Christendom are in the habit of saying prayers before they go to sleep. Unfortunately most of the prayers are, Lord don't kill me while I'm asleep, if I should die before I wake, that sort of thing. Lord's not out to kill you children, you know that.

He wants, he's not willing that any should die, that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of salvation. So I say that because I used to be like that, I thought God was somehow going to get me when I was asleep and throw me into hell for all the bad things I'd done, it's a lie of the devil. That's why Jesus came, to make a way of salvation and he's waiting for you to repent, to turn to him and give yourself fully to him, so do it, soon.

If you're holding off for any reason, thinking well I can wait one more day, the devil will keep making you wait one more day, one more day, one more day, unfortunately there will be a time when there will not be one more day. So if there's something you need to set right, and I'm speaking to the children so that all of us older children can also understand and take it to heart, don't delay to repent, to humble yourself, don't wait for it, but if you can then fall asleep, and I try to almost every day I believe, as far as I know, I fall asleep saying Lord I want you to speak to me even now while I'm asleep, and write your law on my heart, write your law on my heart, God can do that when you're asleep, and if you go and you ask him, you know our verse for this week is ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you, so tonight when you go to bed, all of us, let's say Lord I'm asking you to write a little bit more of your law on my heart while I'm asleep, and if you believe, he will do it, and you'll wake up in the morning refreshed, even if you didn't sleep well, there are some nights when I don't sleep well, to be honest, physically my mind's gone, I wake up and I can't fall back asleep, but I wake up refreshed because the Lord has spoken to me, the Lord's written his law a little bit more in my heart, he's revealed a little bit more of himself to me even in my sleep, so that's a wonderful verse in Psalm 16, the Lord instructs me even in the night, one of the dangers I believe we face in our church, I think it's probably true for all Christians, but I want to say especially in our church, is that we could come to Jesus for different things, come to Jesus for something, and then go on our way, having received something from him, I see that tendency in my life a lot, that I have a need in my life, it could be a spiritual need, it could be an emotional need, it could be a physical need, and having received an answer and received the fulfillment of that need, I continue on in my own way, but the verse that we memorized this past week was that the steps of a man are directed by the Lord, and he delights in his way, do you want the Lord to delight in the way that you're going, let him instruct you and direct your paths, and so as I look at my own life and I look at many Christians, it could be different things that we have received from the Lord and then gone away with, we start by getting forgiveness, hasn't it been true for many of us that we came to him to be born again, to receive forgiveness, and then continued on with our own life, he's forgiven my sins, thank you Lord, now I'm going to go and live my life, maybe we get a wake-up call and see that God intended for you to have more than just forgiveness and then walk away from him, he didn't want to just give you forgiveness and have you walk away, maybe you took baptism in water, you received baptism in water and you got that, now you're going your way, maybe you had an experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit, you were baptized in the Holy Spirit once upon a time, Jesus is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit, nobody else can do that, yes the apostles laid hands on people and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, but it wasn't the laying on of hands that caused them to be filled with the Holy Spirit, that was a symbol, today you can be filled with the Holy Spirit whether somebody lays hands on you or not, it's up to the Lord or the circumstance maybe, but Jesus is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit, or maybe you came to him for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and received an experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit, but then you went on, and that was my testimony, I shared that a few times in this church I think, where I was seeking for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and came to Jesus and cried out to him, cried out and cried out and cried out, and one day I had an experience and I left, and pretty soon my condition was worse than before I had that experience, and I share that boldly, somewhat shamedly, but boldly because I hope you'll learn from my experience that Jesus, and what I learned through that, was that Jesus wanted something more, it's possible for us to come to a doctrinal understanding of the truth, we seek to preach the real truth in this church, as far as we know we are preaching it from what we've seen in Scripture, and I encourage you, if you're here and you see something that's in God's Word that we're not preaching, come and tell us, you're not preaching this from the New Covenant, or if there's something that we're preaching that you don't see in God's Word, in our practice or our teaching, come and tell us, what you're preaching and practicing is not in God's Word, I

say that boldly because as far as we know everything that we teach and do, or what we see in the example of Jesus and the disciples and is written in the New Testament, but it's possible for us, and I believe that's perhaps our greatest danger, is that we could come to an understanding of the truth and value the doctrine and the teaching, but that's enough, we've come to Jesus now for doctrine, we've come to Jesus for teaching, and then we've gone our way, we could even come to Jesus for an experience of being knit together in a local church, something that we also emphasize here, we believe is true, but having been integrated into a local church and planted in His body, that could become our identity, now I'm a member of a local church, I'm a member of RLCF, I'm a committed member, and somehow that could be an assurance or a sense of, I'm good, Jesus wants so much more than that, I'd like to turn to Acts chapter 17 as we begin, I was reading this passage recently, I was taken to this passage because a phrase that came to my mind, and that phrase is found in this passage here, but I'd like to just look at the passage as a whole, Paul came to the city of Athens, and you see something about the people in Athens that for me, sort of laid bare my soul a little bit, and laid bare some tendencies in my own heart, and that's where the burden that I'm sharing this morning is coming from, I believe is a danger for us, we could very well be, to put it simply, we could very well be like this city of Athens, like the people here, and I want you to see what I mean by that, in Acts 17 we read in verse 16, while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols, now you might say, well do we really have idols, and I think idols, I really see idols can come in all forms and shapes, I'm sure none of us has an actual physical idol in our house anywhere, and I hope nothing in your house is an idol, whether it's some toy you have, or some car, or your house, or clothes, or whatever, I hope there's nothing physical that's an idol, I hope we're past that, but it's possible for these things that I talked about, our experience of being forgiven, or experiencing water baptism, or even the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit, or being a part of a local church, new covenant church, or knowing the real truth, it's possible for those things to become idols, and in that sense the Lord showed my own heart to me, where I imagine Paul coming here, whose passion was Jesus himself, the person of Jesus himself, and the phrase that I was taken to that's later on is in verse 28, in him we live, Acts 17 verse 28, in him we live, and move, and exist, that's a question that the Lord's been asking me over the last few weeks, is it really true that it's in Jesus alone that you live, and move, and exist, that means at any point if Jesus was to be removed from you, the person of Jesus himself, more than the other idols like doctrine, and RLCF, and all these other things that could easily become idols, making idols out of godliness, I see that tendency in my own flesh, to make an idol out of something other than Jesus himself, and it's a Christian idol, so I'm convicted, Paul, whose passion was Jesus Christ, that I might know him, and the power of his resurrection, he says in Philippians 3, and become a partaker with him in his suffering, and in his resurrection life, to Paul who was taken up with Jesus, and Jesus himself, wherever he went, where he saw that something else other than Jesus, was the emphasis, he was bothered, he was aggrieved, he was, it says provoked, he was angry, now that was true in Athens where they had physical idols, it was true in Corinth where he said I am concerned that as the serpent deceived Eve, your minds will be taken up with another idol, something other than Jesus, to a good church, 2nd Corinthians 11, so he says, so he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews, and these were God-fearing people, God-fearing Gentiles, and in the marketplace verse 17, I'm reading, every day with those who happen to be present, and listen to this, some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him, some were saying, he's just an idol babbler, verse 18, others were saying, he seems to be a proclaimer of strange gods, strange deities, because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection, now listen, he was preaching Jesus, the person of Jesus, and these people, because they were such idolaters, were taken up with, oh, this is another idol I can make out of this, and I fear for myself and for us, dear family, that hearing the teachings of Jesus, hearing the teachings of the New Covenant,

and the emphasis of the way of discipleship of Jesus, that could easily become another idol for us, where our identity becomes in the doctrine we believe, the church we're a part of, or what we know, and all of those things are idols, just like it was for these people, and they took him, verse 19, and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, may we know what this new teaching is, which you are proclaiming, and I see that even, you know, almost every week we get, almost every couple of days, we get somebody new that we've never heard from before, writes to us and saying, thank you so much for what you're preaching, and the truths, and broadcasting your services, and sharing your videos on YouTube, and helping us, and the truths that you preach, we don't hear them in many other places, we get a lot of that, and I fear that for us and for those who listen, it could easily become, what is this strange new teaching, something else that we found, it's new, yes, it's different, our emphasis is different, yes, but that is not the answer, all of this should lead us to the person of Jesus himself, and the very simple question I'll share at the very beginning, as you think through what I'm sharing is this, with all the teaching that we receive, and all our meetings, and prayer, and all of that, is Jesus more real to you today? Is he in person, the person of Jesus himself, real, more real to you? Are you more taken up with him himself, your bridegroom? I use this analogy often, before I was married, if you asked me about marriage, I could give you the philosophical, theoretical, doctrinal, I would say, definition of marriage, that marriage was a man and a woman coming together, and they're made one, even a Christian definition of marriage, but that was all theory, until I got married, now if you ask me about marriage, it's a person, whom I married to, Megan, I could tell you about her, and what she means to me, and what marriage to her actually looks like in reality, and it's no longer theory, it's not doctrine anymore, and that's how, you know, it says that our marriage on earth is a picture of Jesus and the church, and the longer that you've been a Christian, the longer that you have been Mrs. Christ, that's what it means to be a Christian, Mrs. Jesus Christ, you're married to Jesus, and I ask you, what is the Christian life about? Do you say, well, it's about saying a prayer, and asking for forgiveness, and that's doctrine, brothers and sisters, and the more that you walk with Jesus, the more you understand Christianity here in your heart, if somebody in the world was to come to you and ask you, what is the Christian life about? You'd say, let me tell you about Jesus, the person of Jesus, what he is to me, who he is to me, how he is there with me in the midst of the storm, nothing else matters, the storm is no longer the focus, and heaven is no longer even the focus, see for a lot of Christians, heaven is the ultimate focus, I get to go to heaven when I die, is that the distinctiveness of Christianity? Then we've missed it, we've made an idol out of Christianity, if Jesus is the distinctiveness of Christianity, then you've understood, then it's become a life, it's become an experience, the person of Jesus himself, others were just like these people in Athens, let's go on reading, verse 20, for you are bringing some strange things to our ears, so we want to know what these things mean, explain this new doctrine, talk about the new covenant life, and explain it to me, and with all our Bible reading, and all our book reading, and listening to messages, and listening to the daily devotions, and the verse by verse, have we just simply connected the dots, and say, oh yeah, yeah, yeah, this makes perfect sense, and missed Jesus, have you understood marriage so perfectly, and how it's supposed to work, but you're not actually living with your spouse, you're not actually living with Jesus, I know I've been guilty of that often, and it's been a reminder for me in the last few weeks, to say, I want to come back to Jesus, and say, Lord, even if I don't understand the doctrine, even if I can't explain it, I want to walk with you, I want to be with you, and I want to know you, now verse 21, now listen to this, all the Athenians, and the strangers visiting there, used to spend their time in nothing other than telling, or hearing something new, is that a good thing, a new sermon, never heard that verse from before, a new truth, I didn't even know that that was there, is that a good thing, no, it may not be, do you have a desire to hear something new every time you come here on Sunday, if I share an old sermon, not because I'm just regurgitating an old sermon, but if it's like, oh, I know that truth already, you could be just

like the Athenians, making an idol out of Christianity, out of new truths that you always want to hear, you can't hear the same message again, because I know what he's going to say next, so verse 22, what did Paul say, Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects, as you read this, I know he's talking to ungodly religious people, who don't know Jesus Christ, but it's been an eye-opener for me to see myself sitting in Athens, wanting to hear something new, and always sit and discuss some new doctrine, oh, what does this verse mean, or was the Lord spoken to you even, and it could be just a regurgitation of something new, some new idea, some new concept, men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects, because while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, to an unknown God, therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you, the God who made the world and all things in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all people life and breath and all things, so no human work, no human work, no effort of my own can ever create a home for God, no matter how much you try to be a Christian and make your heart clean and make yourself good enough, it's never going to be a home that God's going to live in, no matter how much you try to live this Christian life, this is what Paul is saying, no effort of human hands, verse 25, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, can you somehow do such a good job of living such a good life and loving your wife and loving your husband so well and taking care of the children and reading your bible passage and doing this and doing that other thing and praying and doing everything right, he is not served by human hands as though he needed anything, he's not served by human hands as though he needed anything, but his purpose in all of this, why did he make, verse 26, one from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitations, was this, that they would seek God, this was God's purpose in it, that you would seek him if perhaps they might grope for him and find him, this was what Paul was telling these religious people in all your activities and all your idol worship and all your seeking and all your praying and all your fasting and all these other things that you're doing, God wants you to seek for him and find him, grope, look at that word grope, if perhaps they might grope for him and find him though he is not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being and exist as even some of your own poets have said, for we also are his children, being then the children of God we ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man, I'd never seen this verse in all, I don't think I'd seen it before actually to be honest and I'm ashamed to say that, at least not this way, what Paul is saying here that it's possible for us to make even the divine nature like an idol, let's read that verse again Acts 17 verse 29 we ought not to think that godliness, Christ likeness, the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man, and when I read that I was pierced to the heart, I was cut to the quick like we read in Acts 2, I was like what have I made another idol out of being conformed into the image of Jesus, is it just another cheap thing, where I understand it as a doctrine, oh what is my destination, yes it is to be conformed into the image of Jesus, it's just an idol for me, and it's not Jesus himself, the living person of Jesus, I'm convicted brothers that my desire to be like Christ and to be conformed into his image could easily become an idol, where it's something that some plan for my life that I've created and say yes Lord you're going to do it, but it's not about Jesus himself, the person of Jesus, and with all my being conformed into the image of Jesus, what is the purpose of it, is it so that I can have a good life in heaven, so that I could somehow be better than all the other people who are in hell, no, that's idolatry, but to have been conformed into his death so much, where I die and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, where my being conformed into the image of Jesus is because I want Jesus to be glorified, he's so precious, he's so worthy to me, that if I can give up more of

myself and empty myself more fully, that he shines forth, then I've understood Christianity and Christianity is life, I've seen how easy it is for me to make an earthly idol even out of godliness, let's turn to John chapter 1, John 1 he begins by exalting the deity of Jesus, how Jesus was God and is God, has always been God even when he was here on the earth, in the beginning was the that is Jesus Christ, in the beginning was Jesus, he wasn't called Jesus back then because he was given the name Jesus when he came to this earth, he was the son, he's called the word here, in the beginning was the word, the second person of the trinity and the word was with God and the word was God, he was in the beginning with God, all things came into being through him and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being, apart from Jesus you and I came into being without him we couldn't have come into being, this isn't just Jesus the one who died for me and can forgive my sins, I realized that my very existence depends on him, it started there at the very beginning long before I even came to this earth and sinned and needed a savior and needed forgiveness and needed baptism in water and needed the baptism of the Holy Spirit from beginning to end I need Jesus, I can't exist without him, that's why Jesus says later on I am the vine you are the branches if you abide in me you will bear fruit, so apart from him Santos didn't come into being and couldn't come into being that's true about you as well and then listen to this in him was life and the life was the light of men, in Jesus was life, have you tried to find life in something else, now the world is trying to find life in success, sports, money, relationships, pleasure they're trying to find you have a good life have a good life and it's easy for us to think we're that much better than because my life is now I'm a part of this church or I understand the doctrine it's very clear in Jesus is life and if you haven't if you're not in Jesus if you're not in him you don't have life whatever else you have whatever other right understanding of doctrine whatever other everything else that seems to be in a nice little order is not life in Jesus alone is life in him was life and the life was the light of men this is this is what John says look at what he says later on Jesus himself says in John chapter 5 John 5 verse 26 for just as the father has life in himself even so he gave to the son also to have life in himself the father has life in himself and he gave to the son to have life in himself and so I see that it's very easy for us to come to Jesus wanting something from him wanting Jesus to give me something to give me forgiveness to give me this and that even the baptism of the Holy Spirit other than wanting Jesus himself and I have a few things that are on my mind regarding the things that we might want from Jesus further down you read in John chapter 5 let's continue reading here um John 5 verse 33 Jesus says you have sent to John and he has testified to the truth but the testimony which I receive is not from man but I say these things so that you may be saved he was the lamp that was burning and was shining he's talking about John the Baptist and you were willing willing to rejoice for a while in his light and I thought about is that what was it like in that in that day when there were disciples of John you know there were disciples of John as well these were what did John preach John wasn't preaching some other false truth he was saying behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and there were disciples sitting in John's church listening to him preach about Jesus who never went and followed Jesus listen to that carefully again here was John preaching about Jesus he came it says he came with as a lamp to shine to Jesus to point out behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and that's what he preached and there were disciples who sat in John's church listening to him preach about Jesus who never actually came to know Jesus do you think that's possible for us could we be a church of John the Baptist we're preaching about Jesus we're we're saying he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and we could be sitting here listening to more and more preaching about Jesus but we've never actually come to know him the church of John the Baptist I call it and there are such churches today is very easy for us to know I mean what what do you think the disciples of John the Baptist sat there and listened wow Jesus is amazing yeah he is but you know the person of Jesus was actually there down the road somewhere there were a few of John's disciples who left John's church to

follow Jesus and they were the ones who through whom God built his church I don't know what happened to the disciples of John the Baptist I don't know where they are today to be honest but God couldn't use them to build his church to further his kingdom my fear is that I could be sitting in John the Baptist church not the church that Jesus is building a church that's preaching about Jesus that has baptism in water John's disciples were baptized he did baptize in water but they weren't following Jesus they didn't leave his church and if you're sitting in John the Baptist and it's not a physical church you know there is no such church as John the Baptist church at least not that I know of but spiritually you could be sitting there learning even at RLCF learning about Jesus hearing about Jesus hearing the preaching that says that's the Lamb of God that's Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus but you never actually follow him because you hear the right teaching and in John the Baptist church they had right teaching the teaching about Jesus but they never actually followed him now you look at what happens to this this such a church later on Luke chapter 5 Luke 5 look at look at the characteristics of this church you would think it's a very very godly church Luke 5 it says about these disciples of John the people sitting in John's church you know they fasted more than the people in Jesus church if you came to a church and saw that they had fasting and prayer every week fasting and prayer for what about Jesus who are they praying to they're praying to Jesus this is the church of John the Baptist fasting and praying to Jesus but not actually knowing Jesus wow it's it's pretty serious I'll tell you why because I could think I could look at my own life and say Lord I pray to you I read your word and I have a desire to understand this more fully and I fast I take time out and I make sure that I don't brag about it and all these things I'm doing right but I'm sitting in John the Baptist church hearing about Jesus fasting for Jesus praying to Jesus verse 33 they said to him the disciples of John often fast and offer prayers in fact the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same but yours eating and drinking so if you came into a church and found one particular church is spending a lot of time fasting and praying and another church they seem to be having a good time they're eating and drinking and if you don't know how to discern the spirit if you're judging things if you're assessing things by what happens outwardly you see this group of people fasting and praying or singing or spending a lot of time in prayer and then this other group of people just seem to be living normal lives but in their hearts they're taken up with Jesus he is the one that excites them while they're eating and drinking whatever you do whether you eat or drink do it as unto the Lord and what nobody else can see is that that Peter sitting over there in his eating and drinking he's taken up with Jesus and it's because Jesus is there with him that he likes to eat and drink meanwhile the disciples of John the Baptist over on this side and the Pharisees over there in the old covenant they're fasting and they're fasting and praying and they're having long meetings and all of this they're not taken up with Jesus they haven't left that church to follow Jesus himself you see the end result of this a few chapters later Luke chapter 7 the disciples of John the Baptist the disciples of John the Baptist one day went to visit Jesus's church Luke 7 verse 18 and then they came back and the disciples of John reported to John about all these things and so John you know this is a sad story John the Baptist was the greatest man born of woman women until Jesus the greatest man in the old covenant was John the Baptist Jesus made that very clear and yet you see what happens when you're not really taken up with Jesus himself you're taken up with the right doctrine you're taken up even with preaching about Jesus and having revival meetings and having I mean John the Baptist you read in Matthew chapter three throngs came to be baptized with him even ungodly centurions the Pharisees came to him tax gatherers were coming to him lives were being changed but the end result was that they weren't taken up with Jesus now it's not something that they could really experience under the old covenant so let's not fault John but Jesus will let's continue reading he says at the end of this passage that the least person in the kingdom of heaven in the kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist why because you and I dear brothers and sisters the kingdom of heaven the kingdom of God is to be taken up with Jesus to be taken up with Jesus

John the Baptist couldn't experience that that's why the one who is least in the kingdom of God because Jesus is a person is greater than John the Baptist that's like saying the person who has been married for one day and actually loves his his wife or her husband is greater than the person who's been studying marriage for 50 years let me say that again the person who's been actually married for one day and actually loves his husband his wife or her husband is greater than the marriage student who's been studying it for 50 years and it if you haven't experienced that yet or you've lost your way along the way dear brothers and sisters come back come he invites you to come and renew your marriage vow to him and spend one day with Jesus that'll be much more beneficial to you and useful to you than those who have studied the bible for 30 years but have never come into that life that's why you could start today you don't have to wait 10 years 20 years you don't have to go to seminary you don't have to say Lord what all do I need to do before I can have that he says today you can be married to Jesus today if you've never made that vow the person who's been married for one day for whom marriage is a person is greater this is the least in the kingdom of God the person who's been married for one day for whom marriage Jesus is a person marriage to Jesus is an experience Jesus is their bridegroom as a person is greater than the person who's been studying about marriage under the old covenant all they could do was study the law was a pointer to Christ the law was a tutor Paul says all it could do is tell you about what marriage what a wonderful marriage you can have what a wonderful marriage you can have and for 30 50 years if you study what a wonderful marriage you can have it was still theory and the day you got married it became a reality so let's continue reading see what happens to the the end result why am I using this as an example because you see the end result of simply studying about Jesus knowing about Jesus so John the Baptist himself the teacher sends two of his disciples verse 19 to look to Jesus saying are you the expected one listen what what sad words here was the man who pointed out to Andrew and to James and John or whoever the two disciples were he said hey that's the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world that's the Messiah but John himself could never know Jesus that way as a bridegroom he says that in John 3 the friend of the bridegroom rejoices but the bride has the bridegroom we look at that we'll come back to Luke 7 John chapter 3 in its sad words in a sense John 3 why is it that John could never come to that experience that you and I are entitled to because he says here he was under the old covenant the Holy Spirit had not yet been given couldn't come and dwell within him John 3 verse 27 a man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven you yourselves are my witnesses that I said I am not the Christ but I have been sent ahead of him to point you to the Christ he who has the bride is the bridegroom but he says I'm just a friend of the bridegroom and that's that's the essence of what I'm saying today do you want to be the best man at the wedding or do you want to be the bride that's the option you could be a part of the planning the wedding planning and all that you could plan the bachelor party you could be standing next to the bride bridegroom and rejoice with him over what a wonderful person he is or you could be the bride who actually knows him he who has the bride is the bridegroom but the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him is that your testimony you're standing next to Jesus you're hearing him stands and hear him rejoices greatly because of the bride because of the bridegroom's voice so this joy of mine has been made full he must increase but I must decrease now what a John was still an amazing man he saw the new covenant as it were from a distance he saw the bride and he saw that his calling was to tell Andrew and tell James and John and tell some people in his church hey you can be the bride and you don't don't you think there must have been a longing in John the Baptist's heart he says you mean I can't the invitation is not for me to get married no you know God has a plan for those people under the old covenant I don't know all of that but I know what my invitation is what a tragedy it would be having heard the message of John the Baptist having read the old testament if I say you know what well I'll just be content to attend the wedding and stand there as part of the bridal party I'm a friend of the bridegroom now

and Jesus says oh I wish that you would know me that was my goal that you would be the bride that's why I sent John the Baptist you see the end result of this and Luke go back to Luke 7 now John is standing there and you know the same man who said those words in John 3 says I'm starting to have a few doubts and there are Christians who the time comes in their life where they start to have doubts it's like yeah is this really true is it worth giving up everything for this man Jesus you know why those thoughts come because they're not taken up with Jesus himself the more you're taken up with Jesus the longer the trial can last the longer the storm can last the longer the delay could be before he answers your prayer and says it doesn't matter I'm looking to the answer I'm looking to Jesus it's the bridegroom and I want I pray that that will never happen to any of us that we start to doubt are you really is Jesus really the one after 10 years of following Jesus where some prayers have been answered the way you want it and some have not where you've had earthly joys and disappointments will the time come in your life where you're like I'm not sure I'm not sure about this Jesus person the only way that could happen is if somewhere along the way the person of Jesus has not become precious to you something else his benefits the house he gives you because you're mrs Jesus the the car he gets you because you're mrs Jesus the clothes he gets you and I'm talking about even spiritual clothes spiritual houses and spiritual blessings where the giver is more important is not more important to you than the gift himself like that wonderful hymn of ab simpsons that we sing once it was the blessing now it is the lord once his gifts I wanted now the giver I own he's mine and it doesn't matter what gifts he gives me or doesn't give me I have the giver himself and he decides what gifts he wants to give he's the giver you know if you have the giver you never have any need the king of love my shepherd is and I want nothing because I have the king of love my shepherd the lord the lord is my shepherd I shall not want wonderful song so he says are you the expected one or do we look for someone else is it sad words that the man who spent all his time pointing people to Jesus the time eventually came because he himself didn't know Jesus personally and couldn't but now we can but because he didn't know Jesus you see the end result and all of a sudden these doubts are creeping in it's like I haven't seen Jesus do this for me or do that for me I'm having some doubts and then Jesus you know says he cured somebody he says to verse 22 hey go and tell them what you have heard what you've seen and heard verse 22 the blind received sight etc etc let's skip down verse 28 I say to you among those born of women there is no one greater than john it's wonderful that john was such an accurate pointer to Jesus he did it so perfectly that people were willing to leave his church and follow Jesus I'll say this boldly I hope to point you to Jesus so faithfully that if the time ever comes where you see that I'm not following Jesus anymore you'll leave this church and join another church that's following Jesus I can say that boldly my ambition in life is not that you'll be here or you'll follow me but you'll follow me as long as I'm following Christ and by God's grace I will follow Christ until the end of my life but that's john preached so perfectly he was the lamp it says in john one he he was the lamp that was shining and he did it so clearly he pointed to Christ so faithfully that people left his church and followed Jesus and yet he so he was the greatest man born of woman yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he so our testimony must be greater than the testimony of what john the baptist disciples had is it possible that you come to God for salvation come to Jesus for salvation would you say that that's a bad thing I was just sitting there while we were singing and I thought about this verse in Isaiah 12 I wanted us to see it together Isaiah chapter 12 this is a beautiful picture of life with Christ that Isaiah got a picture of I don't believe he actually experienced it Isaiah 12 we'll begin reading in verse 1 and you can read the context of it in the last few verses of 11 where it says there will be a highway from Assyria and the remnant of God's people will be left and then he says verse 1 then you will say on that day I will give thanks to you O Lord for although you are angry with me your anger is turned away and you comfort me so here he's talking about a people who experienced God's anger a judgment although you were angry with me your anger is turned away and you

comfort me behold God is my salvation that's the phrase that just ran like was a peel of thunder in my mind this morning we were saying God is my salvation it's quite a different thing from saying God saves me God gives me salvation God is my salvation I know I know for years I came to Jesus for salvation I said Lord Jesus please save me please give me salvation as a gift and I got forgiveness of sins I got cleansing I got justification as gifts from him but it was quite a different thing for me to say God is my salvation that means my salvation comes from being with Jesus himself not him washing my sins away and this is again sadly what's being preached in Christendom where it's come to Jesus get your sins forgiven and you continue to live your self-centered life my salvation comes from being with Jesus himself that's my salvation it's no longer something he gives me but Jesus himself being my salvation God is my salvation and so I will trust and not be afraid the Lord God is my strength and song he has become my salvation I came to him for salvation once upon a time now he has become my salvation let's go back to John 5 we're looking at all these different idols that we could make earthly idols that we could make out of things that God gives us whether it's even salvation but here John 5 verse 36 we'll continue reading where we left off is it possible that we want Jesus's works the things that Jesus can do miracles many people in Christendom are taken up with miracles and if you they say you know they're taken up with promoting miracles that Jesus can do mighty works here's what Jesus says the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John John 5 verse 36 for the work which the father has given me to accomplish the very works that I do testify about me that the father has sent me the works that Jesus did testify about him and here here's I believe the point of what Jesus was saying it's possible for you to look at what Jesus is doing for you and what Jesus can do for you and miss that the whole purpose of that work was to testify about Jesus and that's why this is the alignment you know Jesus said that this generation looks for a sign they're looking for a sign give me a sign do something miraculous Lord prove to me that you are really who you are by doing this miracle and answering this prayer and performing this mighty work he says the danger is that you might see that mighty work and miss that the whole reason for that work was to point to me you know the the book of John records a number of miracles but doesn't call them miracles they're called signs these signs Jesus did you read in the very first miracle John chapter 2 what was the purpose of the wine the water being turned into wine was it so that you could brag about I was at that wedding where the water was turned to wine and if God does a miracle in your life and God does a miracle in our midst and whatever it might be what is the purpose of that is it simply so that we could say he did such a great work or is that Jesus becomes more precious to us Jesus said this in John chapter 11 when he was interacting with Martha and Mary um see what Mary and Martha and again let's let's learn from the lesson that that uh of their lives and what Jesus Jesus interaction with them what Mary and Martha wanted was for Jesus to either not have allowed their brother to die or having died that they would raise him back to life that he would raise him back to life that's what they wanted Lord I'm putting you in a box I want you to do this miracle for me and here's how I expect you to do it now it's it's implied in the story but the reason I say it that way is because so often we do that don't we Lord you're a miracle working God you can do amazing things now I want you to do exactly this and here's I'm what I'm telling you to do prove that you're God by doing this now who is God in that situation if I tell God what he should do and he does it I'm God I told him what to do I said Lord you need to answer this prayer exactly like this now do it and he's at my beck and call and like we read he is not served by human hands he's not answerable to you on how you expect him to do miracle says I'm God you trust me prove that I'm God by submitting your prayers and your petitions to me and see how I will do the miracle it might not be how you expected it to be in fact it probably won't be but I will do it and so I think of Mary Martha saying Lord you know why didn't you you you should have come you know the story you should have come yeah let's read it John 11 verse 21 here's Martha putting Jesus in a box this is God this is Martha who had Jesus in her home I believe she believed that he was

really the Messiah the Son of God and here she is saying Lord you're God but somehow you missed the plot you could have done such a mighty miracle in healing my brother if you had come four days ago John 11 verse 20 Martha therefore when she heard that Jesus coming went to meet him but Mary stayed at the house and Martha said to Jesus verse 21 Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died you could have proved how powerful you are by answering my prayer the way I wanted it listen to the deception in that statement listen to the idolatry in that statement Lord it sounds good Lord you could have proved how powerful you are if you had answered my prayer and then she says even now I know that whatever you ask of God God will give you and Jesus said you said to her your brother will rise again mother Martha said to him I know that he will rise again in the resurrection of the last day and then Jesus says to her I am the resurrection and the life I am the life if you have me don't look at the dead Lazarus don't look at how long it's been don't look at the sickness I am if you have me you have resurrection if you have me you have life he who believes in me will live even if he dies Mary says the same thing verse 32 when Mary came where Jesus was she saw him and fell at his feet she says the same thing Lord you could have done such a mighty thing if you had showed up before my brother died if you had been here my brother would not have died and then you know they say uh verse 38 Jesus says 39 Jesus says remove the stone and Martha is still doubting she's like no Lord it's too late you missed your chance to prove how powerful you are but that statement Jesus saying I am the resurrection and the life but you see there how even Mary and Martha even Mary with all her the same Mary who sat at Jesus feet and listened to him even her in that moment where calamity hit where her brother died she missed it and it's written for our instruction say and I say and I think about that story and I pray Lord may it never be that some circumstance some blessing you give me or some trial you allow me to go through ever causes me to miss out on the fact that you are who you want that in you I have life you are the resurrection of the life even if it's a circumstance that looks like death I have you I'm in you I have life I have resurrection even though there's turmoil even though there's sickness even though there's trial even though there's pain I have you and I have resurrection I have life this is the lesson that I'm learning from there let's go back to John 5 other things that we could make as idols earthly idols verse 39 you could make the scriptures an idol instead of Jesus verse 39 you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life you know we've been we've for a couple years now we've been emphasizing read your bible read your bible read your bible we share bible reading passages we have books that we're reading that point us to the word of God but what's the point of it all dear brothers and sisters are you searching the scriptures are you faithfully reading your bible and listening to a daily devotion and listening to you know reading concordances or listening to sermons about those passages and all that searching them thinking that in them you have life you search the scriptures because and you make sure you know the doctrine right you can say because you think that in them you have eternal life but it is these that testify about me I remember some years ago and this changed my bible reading drastically every time I'd open the bible and start reading I say Lord Jesus you're here in this book somewhere you the person of Jesus you're here in this book somewhere there's life in this book no other no theological book no sermon could ever do that for you all it could do is point you to this book and explain things to you and show you how Jesus the person is in this book and once you read it if Jesus doesn't become alive to you and and you don't know Jesus more personally we've missed it now we're searching the scriptures and we're looking at the concordance and listen to another sermon and listen to another sermon and listen to another sermon you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life but the scriptures simply testify about me with all our searching brothers and sisters with all our meetings and our bible studies and our prayer meetings are they testifying about Jesus in a way that the person of Jesus has become more precious to you then we understand it wanting just wanting scripture knowledge is an idol let's continue reading

another idol verse 44 how can you believe when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from above or the honor is the literal word or fame you seek the honor from one another you seek the honor of people your opinion the people's opinion of you matters this is an idol it could be what people think about me at rlc do they think i'm a spiritual person if that means anything to you Jesus you have an idol in your life when you're really taken up with Jesus when Jesus is precious to you it matters zero what people think of you it's a very it's a very difficult thing to be free from i'll tell you that i see it even in my own life i say lord Jesus you're precious to me you're everything to me and i say that often to him and then i realize that if the opinion of people matters even a little bit to me that's an idol in my life can you have an idol in your house while worshiping Jesus a very simple question no you can't but the opinion of even one person let me tell you plainly brothers and sisters the opinion of us elders of you could be an idol if you want us elders to think that you're a spiritual person i want to tell you be forsake that we're men our breath is in our nostrils like it says it doesn't matter what we think about you is Jesus precious to you we could be completely wrong about your spiritual condition for good or for worse i don't know but what Jesus thinks about you is Jesus truly precious to you can you answer that question before God himself that he's everything to you and you'll never get offended and he Jesus says you can never believe you will never be able to believe if you're worried about what people think about you the opinion of people if that matters anything to you you can never believe i'd like to close by looking at the story in Luke 24 of the disciples on the road to Emmaus and there's a beautiful picture of what our church could be like i see two two options it could be like these two disciples one of them was named Cleopas we don't know what the other person's name was it's a picture of the church before Jesus is precious to them before they've really known Jesus and a picture of the church after before or after so here's these this here's the church pictured by these two men it's not just one it's two they're having fellowship verse 13 Luke 24 verse 13 behold two of two of them were going that very day in a village named Emmaus which was about seven miles from Jerusalem and they were having fellowship with each other they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place now these were disciples of Jesus people who had followed Jesus and yet Jesus was not in their midst they didn't really know him in the way that he wanted them to know him and while they were talking and discussing Jesus himself approached and began traveling with them but they their eyes were prevented from knowing him so this is not only a church that is speaking about Jesus but Jesus is actually sitting in their midst if you knew that Jesus was sitting in a church would you think that that's a good church I would have thought yes but their eyes had not yet been opened I believe Jesus is in our midst but it's possible that he's sitting here in our midst and some of us don't really know him let me say that again brothers and sisters it brings real fear into my heart I believe the presence of the Lord is in our midst we pray for it I believe I believe he's here but it is possible to sit in a church where the presence of Jesus is there and not know him absolutely it was just like these Jesus was walking alongside them and he was talking to them even Jesus could be the one preaching the sermons through through the messages that you hear here but you don't actually know him and Jesus says in verse 17 this is the before they know Jesus church they were saying to him what did Jesus said to them what are these words that you were exchanging with one another and they they were amazed and Cleopas said don't you know you know verse 19 Jesus says what things they said the things about Jesus the Nazarene I mean they're they're talking to Jesus about Jesus because their eyes have they've got idols in their mind they're wondering about all these things and I tell you you know even even the last few years with with Covid and and politics and all this stuff it's just all these things going on taking up conversation time and and movements in different churches and all these things you know that's great let it be for the for the Lord to deal with each one of us but in the midst of all that's going on in the world in the midst of all that's going on in Christendom is it just more conversation what things all these things about Jesus they don't know Jesus

he says these things about Jesus the Nazarene who was a prophet mighty indeed this is verse 19 and word in the sight of God and all the people and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him see these disciples know the facts they know the doctrine they delivered him to the sentence to the sentence of death and crucified him but we were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel and you can see this is now he somehow didn't Jesus wasn't everything to them and they missed it they were looking for something they were looking for the redemption of Israel but not for Jesus himself and then it says uh you know that you read the rest of the story and then Jesus says foolish men this was about Christ and you read later on that their hearts were burning within them is it possible for you to sit and listen to a sermon and be in a church where your heart is burning but you still haven't seen Jesus there's something more than just your heart burning brothers and sisters it is having your eyes open to see Jesus because I've sat in meetings where my heart was burning it's like wow really it's possible to really see Jesus and I went away not having seen him see these are it's not enough to just be stirred by a sermon and you have your heart burning within you wow I heard a good word today good word brother but have you seen Jesus and these men had their hearts burning within him within them and they still hadn't seen Jesus were not our hearts burning within us while Jesus was speaking verse 32 but Jesus had not yet been revealed to them while Jesus was explaining the things Jesus you know it's possible what are we seeing here it's possible for Jesus himself to be sitting here behind this pulpit not me Jesus himself sitting here and your hearts would burn within you but you don't know him Jesus himself in our midst and not know him what a tragedy that would be what a great danger and then they approached the village and then Jesus says okay are you satisfied with a burning heart are you satisfied that the sermon was great the singing was great all these you had a great time of prayer and all that are you satisfied can I move on now you met with me for a few hours and they said no stay they begged him they urged him saying stay with us lord this burning heart means there's something more and oh they saw Jesus they urged him to stay with them and then he says okay I'm glad you asked and he reclined at the table with them and he took bread and blessed it and breaking it he began giving it to them when they received that so the bread is a beautiful picture it is receiving something personally from the lord it says that he broke the bread and gave it to them and something happened I want you to get a picture here they've walked with him they've heard they've heard the doctrine they've they've asked him to stay he's sitting at the table and then he breaks that bread and gives a piece to Cleopas this is a personal this is not a corporate thing anymore this is Jesus and Cleopas and Jesus and that other disciple saying I have something for you Santosh I have something for you put your name there and he gives this piece of bread to Cleopas and it says when when he gave them the bread their eyes were opened and they knew him their eyes were opened and they knew him verse 31 it says in verse 35 that they knew him by the breaking of the bread verse 35 the last part of verse 35 they recognized Jesus by the breaking of bread you know I I read this again this morning and I was like lord I want the breaking of bread not just the communion time that we have but even the breaking of bread that we you do here to be a personal thing you know our experience here is meaningful only if each one of us individually by sitting here and Jesus himself taking a piece of bread and giving it to you then it's meaningful otherwise it's a waste of time if all you got was nice time together we sang some praises together we listened to a message together we had some sharing if God laid something in your heart you shared it and we ate a meal together if that's all you had was a corporate thing then we missed it we have an idol and when Jesus broke the bread and gave it to Cleopas Jesus broke the bread and gave it to the other disciple then it became the church as it were then they knew it says then they knew him they knew him by the breaking of bread that phrase of Mary's earlier you read in John 20 I have seen the Lord Mary Magdalene says I've seen the Lord so we have three ways that we can respond to this and I want to leave you with that let's turn back to Acts 17 you see that in the response of these people in Athens Acts

17 verse 32 verse 30 you know that verse we've set it off in this church therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance you didn't know that you had idols in your life Christian idols now you do things that have been idols in your life now you do the times of ignorance God overlooks now he says repent now God is declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent of these idols verse 32 and when they heard this some began to sneer it says I like my idols too much that's one way to respond another way to respond it says ah let's come back next week and hear another sermon like the one we heard today some said we shall hear you again concerning this hey preach that same message again can you preach a little bit more about how we should be taken up to Jesus is it possible that you just want to hear another sermon about devotion to Jesus instead of actually having devotion to Jesus that's the second way to respond and then there was a few it says verse 34 some men joined Paul and believed they repented of those idols they followed Paul and believed in him how would you respond you know we could continue by God's grace we'll continue to have meetings here at River of Life but I pray with all of my heart that these meetings will be ones in which each one of us individually and children you too that you can hear Jesus speak to you personally today something personal to you that's not just a sermon that you heard from brother Santos or somebody else but a personal piece of bread that Jesus gave to you and you touched his hand when he gave it to you and there was a spiritual contact with him that happened that will change your life not another sermon amen

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