



Obstacles on the Road to Christ: Grandiosity

Luke 11:43-46

Here's some words for ya. Self-image. Self-esteem. Self-worth. Self-respect. Self-development. Self-help. Self-actualization. Self-acceptance. Self-assurance. Self-love. Self-confidence. Self-doubt. Self-hatred. Self-loathing. Self-pity. I could go on all morning like this. Because there happens to be so many of these words in the modern lexicon. A moderate sized dictionary will have over five hundred and eighty compound words that flooded our modern vocabulary that begins with the word "self." And I think you'd have to admit that all these new words to describe our self interests certainly seem to be, uh, certainly seem to be... selfish, or self-centered, or at least self-focused. I think you would agree. (1:52)

And in our culture it seems like everything in our culture is certainly accommodating to this new found focus, ardent focus, on myself. And you'll see that in just about every organization advertising, all the rest, social organizations. And the sad thing is that many religions are quick to accommodate for this. Many iterations, presumptive iterations, of Christianity are more than willing to not only accommodate it but to feed it, to pander to it, to make sure that you can retain all that self-interest, and even self-promotion, and we can put Christ in there and make that all work. Many forms of Christianity, but let me make it very clear. There is someone who will not allow these to be accommodated, and that is Christ, himself. (2:44)

Jesus not only taught that these are incompatible ideas, a kind of self-interest, self-focus, self-promotion, self-aggrandizement, self-centeredness—not only is that just incompatible with biblical Christianity it is completely antithetical to it. Everything about the theocentrism of the Bible is in complete opposition to the things that we find that are resident in people's hearts, not just in the twenty-first century, though we've certainly created a vast vocabulary to speak about ourselves. It went all the back to the first century. It even went back all the way to the garden. I mean, this is nothing new. And even in first century Judaism you find that there was a- an accommodation to this kind of self-promotion, self-focus, and self-centeredness. You see it here in the passage that we've arrived at in our study of gospel of Luke. We've reached chapter 11, verses 43 through 46 that I'd like you to look at today. (3:39)

As we continue this series of pericopies or scenes and discussions where Christ is responding to people's bad responses to him. And he starts pointing out, listen. You can't rightly to the message I'm bringing you and have all these things going on. And we've looked at various words to describe these barriers: cynicism, propriety, diversion, incredulity. We've gone through this list, and we've arrived at one I've called today "grandiosity." The idea that I think more of myself than I ought. That my interests become a stumbling block to Christianity. Now, what we have to carefully point out here is that Jesus is talking to religious folks in the first century. And their Judaism that had accommodated self is really no different than our Christianity in most of America today that has accommodated self. And we need to recognize his concern with them is one that we should quickly and readily identify with in our own culture, our own Christian culture. So let's take a look at this passage as he responds to what becomes, really, one of the most prominent barriers to real Christianity that we could ever encounter. A real focus on ourselves. (4:52)

Verse 43. The woes continue. Now remember, "woe" means how bad it is for you, how terrible it is for you. And he speaks now to the Pharisees in general, and he says, "Woe to you Pharisees." Verse 43 of Luke 11: "You love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people over over them without knowing it." We'll untangle that in just a bit. "One of the lawyers"—and this isn't the guys helping to adjudicate disputes in a court of law, this is a group of people within the religious community that focused on learning, studying, and teaching the law of Moses, the Torah. This is a religious class of people that are really highly esteemed within the circles of first century Judaism, and so he speaks to these teachers of the law, or what's called here or translated "lawyers." And one of the lawyers spoke up, verse 45, answered him and said, "Teacher, in saying these things"—now remember, the focus up on verse 43 was the Pharisees. But he says, "In saying these things you insult us too." I don't know if you know it or not, but you've insulted us as well. Because, you know, when it comes to those seats in the synagogues, that's often the lawyers or the teachers of the law that— that occupy those. And when it comes to, you know, those greetings in the marketplace that seems so respectful and deferential, well, we get a lot of that. And you're, you're kind of throwing us under the bus here, too, Jesus. (6:24)

So note carefully with your highlighter poised. Jesus responds by saying, I'm so sorry. I didn't know I had offended you. Underline this phrase: I take it back. Do you see that there? No. This is a colossal mistake. Hey, you're offending us. I mean, you want to offend them that's fine, but you're starting to offend us, Jesus. Well, I'm glad you brought yourself up, Jesus says. "Woe to you lawyers." You want to get to that specific class of the teachers of the law, I got a problem here for you. How terrible it is for you. How awful for you, you lawyers also. "For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers." The breakdown of this passage, as you've noticed last week and you'll notice as we pick it up in verse 47 next week, that I-I've tried to tie together the aspects of the response to Jesus that all fit under one theme. And certainly, we have this here from verse 43 to 46. And if you've noticed your outline in the bulletin, or you downloaded it on the website there, you'll recognize I'm gonna try to just deal with all the things that tie together and are said about this self-interested, self-focused connection with religion in the first century that we'll pick up from verse 43, 45 and 46. And then we'll come back to that cryptic statement which is the diagnosis Jesus gives in verse 44. (7:49)

So let's skim the passage. 43, we'll get two subpoints out of that that'll give us a sense of what Jesus is referring to, and then verses 45 and 46. Okay? Let's head this first segment, not for the day in which Jesus lived, although we could if we wanted to be historians. But because there's such a clear and ready connection and application to our day, let's just title it this way if you're taking notes, and I wish that you would. Number one. We need to beware of self-centered Christianity. A self-centered Christianity. (8:21)

1. Beware of self-centered Christianity.

A Christianity that is fine accommodating its theology in its presentation and its preaching, and the doctrines of that Christianity that still keeps you intact, that certainly serves your self-interest and your self-promotion, and your self-aggrandizement. And I think you'll find it's much more pervasive than you may first think when you hear those words. (8:41)

Letter A, let's get it from verse 43, the first half. "Woe to you Pharisees! For you"—here's the phrase I wanna, I wanna understand—"you love the best seats in the synagogues." Now, of course, the synagogues were the place in first century Judaism where they assembled from their communities, and they'd be taught and they would have this time of connecting with God in the reading of scripture and the commentating and the admonishing from scripture, and so there were seats in the synagogues where people would sit. But much like in the church I grew up in you'd have a lot of seats that were facing the front, but then in the very front, if the very very front you're talking about, you'd have seats that are facing the congregation. Same way in the first century synagogues. And I'm not talking about a choir loft here. I'm talking about the seats that sat there in the very front. And you would have people arise from those seats, and they would sit there at- the lectern, or the pulpit if you will, and they would unscroll the rolls, and they would read the scripture, and they would comment on the scripture. But there would be those seats. Now smile at me if you grew up in a church where you had those seats up on the platform. (9:41)

Now it starts as a utilitarian thing, I assume, and that is you need quick access to the platform. If you're standing up, sitting down, people are praying, people are leading hymns, you got the preacher stepping up, give announcements, to come back up to preach— I can see it's convenient. But it- it is a certain experience to sit on those big chairs up at the front. Having preached in several churches where we have those, and in some really big churches where the seats—they're not just folding chairs. They become very ostentatious places to set your bottom. They look like thrones, do they not? And it's kind of an awkward experience for a guy that has a church where we don't do that here, to sit there and have everyone staring at you the whole time while you're trying to worship, and pray. (10:22)

Now Jesus, you need to note this carefully, is not condemning the seating arrangements of first century Judaism. He's not condemning that. If you look carefully at the verb, this is what he's concerned with. It's not that you sit in the best seats in the synagogue. It's not that you have really good seats in the synagogue. It's that you, what? You love them. You love them. you love sitting in those best seats. I'll post one some my Facebook this afternoon. How about this deal? Go on my Facebook. I'll post some of the, the pictures of— of the artifacts from first century synagogues. And they weren't just seats that faced the congregation. They were ornate. Often the ones that survived, of course, made of stone with carvings, and they were very fancy. And they would sit there, much like you might picture from your childhood church where they became thrones up there. (11:14)

And that's what it was. And Jesus isn't even saying, oh, it's bad to have a seat of honor. Matter of fact in other illustrations he doesn't condemn the seat of honor. It's just that here's something going on in your heart. You love that. You want that. You— you like the fact that in your relationship with God you— you can have this place where your ego kind of gets propped up. It-it serves your sense of importance. Well, we have to be careful, especially when forms of, today in Christianity, there's kinds of things that are done in the name of Christ that really seek to do that. Let's put it this way, letter A. I put it in quotes, but Christianity. We gotta beware of Christianity that feeds your ego. (11:56)



1. Beware of self-centered Christianity.

A. "Christianity" that feeds your ego.

You know what I mean? It's gonna try to make sure that understand that you can be your best self. You can feel good about who you are. You can improve your self-image. Come and deal with us in our version of "Christianity", and we will help you see yourself in a better light. You'll feel good about yourself. You'll see the advancements and the progress, an—and, man. That'll be awesome. And you know? It's appealing. It's appealing to people. I like to feel better about myself. Lots of stuff about myself that I don't like. Let— That would be fine. That be great. If I can do it in the name of Christ, fantastic. (12:29)

God has a problem when we love that, pursue that, want to utilize and leverage Christianity to accomplish that. He has a problem with that. We don't even have to look within modern-day Christianity or first century Judaism. We can just go to God's dealing with humanity in general, and I couldn't think of a guy with a bigger ego than King Nebuchadnezzar. So I'd like you to turn to Daniel 4. And remember the context. This is the conquering king of Babylon who swept in with his armies into Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and torched the city, an—and robbed and pillaged the temple with all of it's gold. Took all the valuable stuff and all the treasures of the temple and brought it back to Babylon. He burned the city. He killed a lot of people. He left the destitute in the environments around Jerusalem to just fend for themselves, and he took the cream of the crop. Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah. You know them as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. That's just a few. That's the ones you know. And of course, Daniel, himself, the namesake of the book. (13:32)

And he was now kidnapping. He was, he was now enlisting into his service in Babylon these people of the covenant people of Yahweh. He lived over in Mesopotamia. He was a foreign king. You would call ihm a pagan king. His gods, his stuff, his temples had nothing to do with the God of the Bible. Well now he's encountering these young, bright leaders who now have been prisoners. And of course, he's trying to utilize them for his good and one of them turns out to be a prophet. Somebody that God is clearly giving revelation to, and from time to time for the sake of God's people who are now under the custodial care, from a human perspective, of Babylon, God's gonna say some things to Babylon now. And you know a little bit of this story in the first couple of chapters, but we get to chapter four and God now speaks to Daniel about the problem with King Nebuchadnezzar. (14:27)

Let's pick up the story where it starts to be fulfilled. 28 and 29. Let's start there. Daniel 4:28. All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. All the things that Daniel had said, they all came upon King Nebuchadnezzar at the end of the twelve months. So he had some time between the prophecy and the fulfillment of it, the fruition of it. He was walking on the rook of his royal palace of Babylon. If you know anything about ancient Babylon, this place had all the money, all the power. It must have been amazing. And the king answered. Who's he talking to? Himself. Right? He's just knocking around in his own mind how great he is, and look at what he says. Is not this great Babylon which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence for the glory of my majesty. Something I hope you haven't looked in the mirror and said. Walked around your house and said. Look at the drama. Verse 31. The words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven. O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken. Quote: The kingdom has

departed from you. What? What? What are you talking about? I worked at this. I was trained for this. I was raised as a prince in the king— I've studied the art of war, military strategies. I've become a good leader, a good captain, a good manager. I mean, I'm smart, I'm gifted, I'm trained. It's all going away 'cause a voice from heaven said it's over? Come on. (16:03)

Verse 32. It's worse than you losing your job. You shall be driven from among men and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and you shall be made to eat grass like an ox. And seven periods of time shall pass over you until—now note this, underline it—you know. This is the problem. Powerful man, ego is being stroked by his own thoughts of his greatness, and he needs to know something. What's that? That the Most High rules the kingdom, not just of heaven, but of men. And he gives that kingdom, that rule, that authority, to whom he will. He passes out the way he wants. Now, think about this. This is the problem. Whether it's the lawyer or the Pharisee in the first century who's saying, well you know what? I sit here in this chair of prominence in my synagogue 'cause I— I've worked hard at this. I've got degrees. I've studied. I-I- I'm smart. I passed the tests. I graduated. I feel like I, I've done a lot to achieve all this. What we need to understand is what Paul told the Corinthians, and that is what do you have that you have not received? And if you've received it why do you boast as if you hadn't? Everything we have, including your intelligence, your military might, your power, your pedigree, your education, your smarts in business—it is all derivative. It's all been derived from God. And you need to understand that. (17:30)

He didn't understand that. He didn't seem to know it. He didn't live like it was true, so God said you're gonna be an animal for a while. You're gonna live like an animal. And immediately, verse 33, the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar and he was driven from among men. And he ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until his hair grew as long as the eagle's feathers and his nails were like bird's claws. What happened to the king, man? He thinks he's an ox. This had to be the most humiliating, bizarre thing. I mean, crazy. And you'll have doctors talk about this, and you'll see medical people come up with names for it, and there's history and medical history about situations that are like this. Whatever. God was just making a point. You're not a great king in all your majesty having all that you have because of you. You need to understand that if I just step back, even a little bit, all of that goes away. I'm not interested in the medical diagnosis. I'm interested in the fact that if God were to step back from my life, or your life, all your accomplishments would be for naught. All your intelligence would be— would be drained out of your brain. Everything that you're admired for, or think you're great for doing, or accomplishing, or having, or possessing, it would mean nothing. (18:44)

Verse 34. At the end of days, I, Nebuchadnezzar— Now think about this. First person discussion. We're about to hear some stuff that sounds like David writing the psalms. Sound like some Jewish prophet saying things in worship. This is a pagan king that had just killed a bunch of the covenant people of God, and imprisoned a bunch of others. I, Nebuchadnezzar—look at this, verse 34. My reason returned to me. I blessed the most High God. I praised and honored him who lives forever, because his dominion, his sovereignty is an everlasting dominion or sovereignty. His kingdom, his power, endures from generation to generation. He never dies, never had a beginning. All of his power is in him inherently. And just, unlike us, he doesn't gain it and he can't lose it. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing. How many? All of them. Even me in my prime, even you in your prime. Nebuchadnezzar got it now. He does

according to his will among the host of heaven. Not only did Gabriel and Michael, and all the angels in heaven, he— he does that, according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth. And none can stay his hand or say 'What have you done? What are you doing?' If you really understand God's sovereignty, that everything is derivative from him, everything is given to us from his hand, would—you really can't argue with that. He is the ever-existing one who has all power, and he gives it as he wishes. (20:11)

Verse 36. At the same time my reason returned to me, for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My councilors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom—now I would like you to underline this next phrase. Have it jump off the page the next time you read this passage—and still more greatness was added to me. You know what you learn from that? God wasn't concerned about the greatness of his kingdom. He really wasn't concerned or had a problem inherently with anything he actually had, or the power that he possessed. It wasn't about that. It was about his attitude in having that. See, it's not the problem that there were chairs in a synagogue that were chairs of prominence. That wasn't the problem. God wasn't arguing the seating arrangements of the synagogue. He was concerned about people's hearts who loved that, who saw them as deserving that, as seeing in their own hearts that they had earned that. Note he had even more greatness than he had before. But it's different now. Just like the prophecy had predicted. (21:14)

Verse 37. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, extol, and honor the king of heaven. Even with greatness. Even with more greatness than he had before, now his orientation has changed. God is great. I extol him. I honor him. For all his works are right and his ways are just—look at this now—and those who walk in pride he is able to humble. The Bible repeatedly says that you need to learn to humble yourself. You know why? 'Cause you don't want God to humble you. That's the bottom line. (21:50)

If you've been great and had Nebuchadnezzar, even as a pagan king, looked at his life and said, "You know what? Wow. Sure has been, uhh, you know, lucky, whatever you wanna call it, that I've risen to such prominence. Man, I've had some breaks in life. How amazing." Better for the pagan king to think that than to think, "Look at me. Look at me. I deserve this." Humble yourself so that God doesn't have to humble you. And any Christianity that doesn't seek to bring humility into your life, but instead wants to use their teaching, their books, their attitudes, their- their lessons, their videos, whatever it might be, to promote, and stroke, and feed, and indulge your ego, we've got a problem. (22:32)

Secondly, verse 43b. Luke 11:43. They not only love the best seats in the synagogue that make them feel good about themselves and the majesty of their greatness, but they love those greetings in the marketplace. And this isn't just any greeting. You can look over to Matthew 23 some other time and recognize that when he speaks about the greetings that the Pharisees love in that passage also, it's that they love being called "Rabbi." They love being called important person. It's not that they are someone who plays an important role in the synagogue, it's that they love people recognizing that with the distinction of, like, "Here comes the Reverend Dr. Mike Fabarez. Good day, sir." Oh, yeah. I mean, the reality. Ordination, reverend. Degrees, doctor. All that's true. And the problem isn't the reality of those things. But it's the love of having that recognized. And look at the context. Where? What does it say at the bottom of verse 43? They



love the greetings in the marketplaces. (23:34)

Here's what we need to watch out for. People that want to see Christianity as some kind of, of some kind of means or mechanism to have their reputations not only left intact, but even improved out there in the marketplaces. I'll put it this way. Letter B. (23:50)

1. Beware of self-centered Christianity.

B. "Christianity" that improves your reputation.

Now I don't mean reputation within the church, like we would see in 1 Timothy 3 or Titus 1. I understand there is a place for concerning ourselves with a good reputation, but we need to understand that there is no success ever in wanting to see Christianity improve my reputation, and keep my reputation intact, and exalt and polish my reputation with a lost world. Jesus said if they hated me, they're gonna really love you. No. John 15. If they hated me, they're gonna hate you. You need to get that straight. (24:24)

I often say this when I turn people to 1 Corinthians, but you do know the city of Corinth is a lot like the modern day Orange County. Right? It is the Orange County of ancient, you know, Asia Minor. It was prosperous. Weather was good. It was a place where money had flowed into. People there were respectable. It was easy for them to look at— with contempt and reproach at other people in other places in Asia Minor. This was a— this was a happening place. (24:50)

Turn with me if you would to 1 Corinthians 4. As you remember how well off they were, that this church that was growing, trying to grow in Christ, had lost sight of the fact that to grow in Christ and be distinguished in your sanctification is not going to lead an improvement in your relationship in the marketplace, at least in terms of your reputation. And if you see Christianity that should make your reputation more palatable with the world. you've got something wrong with your theology, and something wrong with the practice of your Christianity. What you need to catch in this passage as you read it is the contrast between stated reputation in the marketplace with the Corinthians' reputation in the marketplace. (25:35)

Start in verse 8. Already you have all that you want. Already you've become rich. This is 1 Corinthians 4:8. Without us you've become kings. Now, right there we begin the contrast. Hey, you get what you want. You become rich and you've become kings, but you've become kings without us. O that you would reign, that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you. Now you gotta catch this about the theology of the kingdom. There will come a day when we will rule and reign with Christ. But Paul kept telling people in Asia Minor, "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom. In this world you'll have tribulation." That's— that's the idea. When we get to the kingdom, when we ascend the throne with Christ and we become people in this blessed place where righteousness dwells, then it's all gonna be great. Copacetic, we'll love it, high five, it'll be a nice place to be. But between here and there it's gonna be a struggle. And he says this. You think that you want all of that stuff, the kingdom fruition, you want it now, something's wrong with your theology. And clearly, something's wrong with the practice of your Christianity. (26:37)



'Cause then he goes on and he says let's think about our reputation. The apostles, the leaders of this thing called Christianity. I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death. And already we're getting the picture now of the processional of a invading king, much like Nebuchadnezzar, coming into Jerusalem. And they come back with all the pillaged, all the jewels, all the gold of the temple, and they parade some people back in chains, in bonds, and those are the prisoners they're gonna kill. He says that's what it's kinda like in the marketplace for us. Like men sentenced to death because we've become a spectacle to the world and to angels, and we're not talking about the elect angels here. To demons who deride us and to men out there. So in the world when we walk through the marketplace, I mean, we're like the losers they want to kill, that they jeer at, that they throw things at. We're fools for Christ's sake. Because we follow Christ it's like they're— they're calling us idiots. (27:38)

Oh, but you—here's some dripping sarcasm—you're so wise in Christ. Oh, we're weak, we're beat up, we're beaten down. Oh, but you, you're so strong. Back to the idea of verse 8. You get all you want, riches, kings, all of that. You know, it's funny how the leaders of the organization now are being beat up, are being considered idiots, and fools, and weak. You're held in honor. We're held in disrepute. To this present hour we're hungry. We thirst, we're poorly dressed. We're buffeted, we're homeless. We labor, working with our own hands. When reviled—now if that ever happened to you in the marketplace you'd revile back, you'd say, "Oh, I gotta change then." No, we bless. When persecuted, we endure. I know you'd stop and change something and accommodate, but we keep going. When slandered, we pray, we entreat. We have become, and we still are—now underline this—like the scum of the world and the refuse of all things. That's the word "doodoo", you understand. Poop. That's what we're like in this parade through the marketplace. Oh, there may be some honor and accolades given within the church for the great apostles of the church. But we get out there in the marketplace, and you know what, we don't get respectful greetings. It's funny how what you want is a kind of Christianity where you are kings, and you get all you want, and you're strong and you're honored, and you're wise and all of that. Well, that's not how it is for us. Now, is there something wrong with our Christianity? Or is there something wrong with yours? (29:01)

I don't write these things, verse 14, he says, to make you ashamed. I'm not just here to shame you. But I am here to admonish here as my beloved children. Now there's the connection. We're the parents, you're the children. You should be imitating our example. But instead you're trying to break out and have Christianity somehow feed your reputation in the marketplace. Though you have countless guides in Christ, verse 15, you don't have any fathers. I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you then, I admonish you then, be imitators of me. What does that mean? Go out and try and be the scum of the earth? No. (29:37)

The problem is the root problem in their hearts. I want my Christianity to be tailored in some way so that I can still go out there and win friends and influence people, and my Christianity will be a boost to my life. Quoting there Dale Carnegie's bestselling book. Which, by the way, you track Dale Carnegie, Norman Vincent Peale, Robert Schuller, Joel Osteen. You will see the lineage of people with a veneer of Christianity trying to throw a high gloss Christ on something that is gonna make you—I mean, do I add Stephen Covey, the Mormon, and the rest of them, all the self-help books with a veneer of Christianity on top of it. And what it's supposed to do is get us together, let us be the best self we can be, and then we'll go out there and be even richer. We'll



be even stronger. We'll even be better and more influential. (30:21)

This sound familiar? This is the culture that we now have arrived in. A Christianity that with you start talking about biblical Christianity people go, "I don't understand." Shouldn't your sales go up at work? Shouldn't more people like you? I mean, I thought Christianity was gonna change me so that I get out there and just conquer life and have my best life now. That's not how it works. You've missed the point entirely. If there's ever a rebuke that should be earned in our culture when it comes to that brand of Christianity that feeds our ego and seeks to improve our reputation in the marketplace, you can see that on almost every program on Christian television. This is it. It's what we've been fed. Jesus says this is a problem. Woe to you Pharisees. You love the best seats in the synagogues and the greetings in the marketplace. (31:06)

Back to verse 44 in a minute. Drop to verse 45. One of the lawyers answered him, "Teacher, teacher, come oonnnn. You wanna, you wanna beat up on the Pharisees, okay. But, you know in saying these things, 'cause we really like those greetings and we sit in those seats a lot, you're insulting us toooo. Come onnn." (31:29)

Now what's the assumption there in the lawyer's mind? I mean, we know where this goes 'cause I already read verse 46 for ya, and it doesn't end well for the lawyer. It doesn't end well for the teacher of the law. But he said that in hopes of what? That if he mentioned, you know Jesus, you're kinda throwing us under the bus here, that Jesus would go, "[Gasp!], I'm sorry. Let me stop." Now I jokingly read the passage that way in verse 46, but that's of course not what he says. But his assumption is if I tell you you're offending me then what? Clearly you're gonna stop. Does that sound familiar today? I want as much of your truth as you can dish up until it offends me. I want as much of y—your Christ as I can take until I start being insulted by it. Mm, it sounds familiar. There are entire brands of Christianity that are built on that philosophy. Hey, beware self-centered Christianity. Let's call it this, Letter C, a Christianity that seeks to never offend you. (32:26)

1. Beware of self-centered Christianity.

C. "Christianity" that never offends you.

There's a Christianity that the lawyer believed in, first century Judaism at least that he believed in. And there's lots of Christians today that believe that. I want to go to your church as long as the sermons will be uplifting, and encouraging, and inspiring, and edifying. And I just, I hope he doesn't say anything that would ever offend me, or insult me. I mean, I hope you don't read those verses about, you know, woe to you, or you know, I—they don't preach on that at your church, do they? Of course. There's entire brands of Christianity seeking to give you as much Christ until we get to any passage that might offend and insult you, and then we just avoid those. (33:06)

Well that's how they practice Christianity in the Bible, right? Acts 8. Here's a good example for you. Let me introduce you to a man named Simon. I'm not talking about Simon Peter here. Acts 8. Simon was the one that you might remember if you have studied the book of Acts. Simon, he's sometimes called Simon the Magician. And we're not talking about a stage show in Vegas here. This is not a guy who's an illusionist. This is a guy that's out there trying to tap into supernatural things. Now this is happening in Samaria. What do you remember about Samaria? To the north,

Galilee, Jewish enclave. To the south, Judea, capital city of Jerusalem. In between you had Samaria, and that was the group No Man's Land. That's why the good Samaritan is such an interesting, ironic story, because these are the people that hated the Jews and the Jews hated them. Samaria. (34:02)

Acts 8. Eight chapters after the first chapter that said the gospel's gonna and you're gonna be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. We finally hit Samaria in the concentric rings of growth in the book of Acts. And here we get, in verse number nine, a man named Simon. There was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and he amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. I'm someone great. And they all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." I mean, Great's his word, Mr. Great. Simon the Great. And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. I don't know what he was doing, but something, and something that amazed people. And, so, here was a guy used to being great. (34:56)

Verse 12. But when they, who's they? The Samaritans were starting to get saved here. When they believed Philip—now Philip wasn't an apostle with a capital 'A', but he certainly was an apostle of an apostle, small 'a'. He was representing the apostles here in Samaria, doing some evangelistic work, and people were responding to the gospel. He preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and they were baptized there, both men and women. Even—now, look at this, verse 13—even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. Catch the picture. Mr. Great, out there, pagan man, doing stuff that certainly the Bible does not approve, now becomes a, a follower of Christ. Baptized, steps out of the crowd. And now he's the protegee of Philip. He's the new disciple of Philip. He's continuing on and following Philip around, and he's confessed Christ, and he's been baptized. (35:51)

Well, God was trying to bring authentication to New Testament preaching without a New Testament. So he saw, middle of verse 13, signs and great miracles being performed, and he was amazed. There's a little turn of—of the tables. Mr. Amazing now is being amazed. He's going wow. Verse 14. Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John. (36:17)

Now, please do not read the book of Acts, particularly passages like this, and think that what we have is some narrative that explains to us normative Christianity. We do not. Acts 1:8, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, which was of the most scandalous place to go with the gospel, but Jesus predicted it. Now how do we know that God is really there working in the Samaritans? How do we know that the forgiveness through the Jewish Messiah has been given, all the benefits to the Samaritans? Well, Philip's out there but he's not an apostle. He's a sent one of the apostles. So we need the big boys to come to town and put their imprimatur on this. They need to authenticate this. So this is unique. What God did when these people believed in Christ and got baptized is he refrained from giving them the promise of the Spirit which is normative in Christianity ever since the end of the book of Acts. This is normative even by the middle of book of Acts. If you don't have the Spirit of God, you are not a Christian. Romans 8 says that clearly. So we know normative Christianity is you become a Christian, you put your trust in Christ, you



get the Spirit of God as the seal, the indwelling Spirit. That's the reality. But right now God has changed the rules up a little bit so he can bring the authentication of Peter and John, the big wheels of the apostles. (37:26)

They came down, verse 15, and they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. But they didn't get the promised Spirit. So, verse 17, they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Now Simon, the formerly great one, disciple of Philip, saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostle's hands—and he reached into his wallet for his Visa card. That is awesome. I mean I did some things here as a non-Christian, and I felt pretty great and important. Man, I made a lot of money being a great guy here, a standout guy in Samaria, but wow. Now I'm a Christian. Look at the power here in this church. Look at the power in the leaders. Look at this apostles coming in, the power brokers laying hands, and here comes the—I want that. I want to be great. I was great out there as a non-Christian. I want to be great in here as a Christian. I want that! And I got some money. I don't know, money speaks. That's my old life. So, hey, what's it gonna cost? He offered them money, saying, verse 19, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." Now, you know, it made sense to him. It's gonna go into the coffers. We're gonna have more money for ministry. I got this money that I made. I mean, come on. How much, what's it gonna cost? I wanna be a part of this. I wanna be great in the church. (38:45)

Peter said this: "Oh, put your money away. You— you probably— no, that's now how it works. Philip! Philip, can you explain to Simon how this works? No, that's not how it works. Oh, you're well-meaning, I understand your heart. You have such a great heart, Simon. I, it's been great to see you come to the Lord, and, we just have great hopes for your future." Ahh, no. That was all sarcasm. Verse 20. Peter, here it comes, is gonna insult him. "May your silver perish with you." Now think about that. Someone's trying to put money in the offering place, and—and the motive, okay. Fine. I wanna be great. I was great in my non-Christian life, I wanna be great in this organization. And the usher says, "Put your Visa card back in your wallet, and may you and your Visa card both die." That's not the response you think you're gonna get from the usher. (39:48)

What are you talking about? You wanna talk about correction. That reminds of Titus chapter 1, verses 12 and 13, when, in Titus, this book is instructions to a guy who's pastoring in a tough place called Crete. And you might remember the line where it says these Cretans—this is where we get the word in our vocabulary that are bad—these Cretan are brutes, they're beasts, they're lazy gluttons. And he says you know what, I know that's what's said of Crete, Paul says. Well, it's true, and because it's true, help them out. Try and give them a few principles to—no. Rebuke them sharply, he says, so that they may be sound in the faith. I want them to be good Christians, and you know what, you're gonna have to impinge on their sensibilities. And they're gonna have to leave some sermons feeling some sting. They're gonna have to feel it. They're gonna have to know it. Rebuke them sharply. (40:37)

May your silver perish with you because you thought that you could obtain the gift of God with money. Verse 21. You have neither part nor lot in this matter. You're not gonna be great here by laying down some cash, this is not how it works. Your heart is not right before God. "I mean, okay, we get it—" No, no, no. I'm not finished yet, Peter says. Repent therefore of this

wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that if possible, and I don't even know, may— maybe you're just like Judas an—an—and degenerate in your heart. I don't know. Maybe if possible the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. "Okay, sorr—" No, not done yet. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. (41:16)

You know, when real Christians see things that are injurious not only to the person but the honor of God, they respond, and they respond with some very stern words. They're willing to bring the truth to people, just like Jesus in this passage where he says, "Woe to you." This is bad. And you want to talk about the fact that you don't want to be insulted? I gotta give you more here so that you recognize just how problem— how problematic your bond of iniquity is. (41:46)

Simon here, look at verse 24. Uh, Simon: "Oh, pray for me to the Lord"—this is an effective rebuke—that nothing of what you sa— what you have said may come upon me." All I'm telling you is you can look from beginning to end in the Bible and you will not find any affirmation, any commendation, for a kind of organization that speaks for Christ, or people that speak for Christ, that make sure they tiptoe around your feelings so you never get your feelings hurt. So that you're never insulted, so that you're never offended by the truth. The problem is you and I need to conform to the truth, and unless you're perfect, the preaching of the truth, the counseling of the truth, the proclamation of the truth, it at some point's gonna offend you. It's gonna offend you and insult you. Be careful with Christianity that has made it their purpose and sought in their founding documents, or their focus, or their purpose statement on their website, to never offend you. (42:41)

Verse 46. He said, no, I need to offend you here. If you feel insulted, okay, here it comes. But you've got a problem. You stand up behind that lectern and you load people with burdens that are hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Here are people standing up and teaching people to do things like Romans 2 says, don't steal, and then they turn around and steal. Don't commit adultery, and then they commit adultery. And worse than that, and all you have to do is read anything on the first century Judaism that was later codified in the Mishnah, which kept talking about how they took the Torah of the Old Testament and added layer, upon layer, upon layer, upon layer of all things that they would say well this makes you obedient to the Sabbath if you do all this. This will make you obedient to what the Bible says regarding coveting if you do all this. They added all these burdens, and then in their own heart they sat back, put their feet up on the table, and said, "Well, you know what? We taught those low-lives how to— how to live this week." And then they went off and did differently. Classic hypocrites. They were the kinds of guys that had someone tailored their first century Judaism to have rules in their belief system, but they were exempt from them. Jot it down that way, Letter D, if you would. We need to beware of a self-centered Christianity. What kind of Christianity? A Christianity that exempts you from the rules. (44:00)

1. Beware of self-centered Christianity.

D. "Christianity" that exempts you from the rules.

Oh, and that's rampant today in the church, by the way. We got all kinds of religious placards we hide behind that say well, the rules don't apply to you. One more passage on this. Talk about Old Testament stories. Turn to 2 Chronicles 26, please. 2 Chronicles 26. I want you to look at a man

who ruled in Jerusalem ten generations, tenth king at least, from Solomon. King Uzziah. And you know the name because you are used to hearing us use his name when we read Isaiah 6, which is a very quotable passage of scripture where Isaiah has this vision of an exalted God with all the seraphim flying around, crying out, "Holy, holy, holy." Well that starts with the statement about King Uzziah dying. Whenever I read the passage, almost everything time, I'll mention to you, well this was a long and prosperous reign. He ruled for fifty-two years in Jerusalem, in Solomon's palace, there on the temple grounds where they had the magnificent temple of Solomon. (45:00)

Well, here's a little bit of the story you may not know. Chapter 26, verse 16. He had quite an illustrious reign for many decades, but verse 16 says—2 Chronicles 26:16. When he, that is King Uzziah, was strong—here's our unifying theme to the sermon this morning—he grew proud. He grew proud—here's the summary statement—to his destruction. That's never a good thing. God is opposed to the proud. This is not just incompatible with what the Bible teaches, it's antithetical to what the Bible teaches. You cannot nurse self-promoting feelings and think you're gonna be in with God. So, we've got a problem. Here's a guy who seems to be with God, and all of a sudden now in his success and his strength he grows proud, and it's to his own destruction. How was that? (45:50)

Middle of verse 16. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. Sunday school graduates, what's the problem with that? Not a priest, man. You're from the line of Judah. Who can be priests? People from the line of Levi. You're in the wrong line, the wrong heritage. You haven't been consecrated. You're not a priest. So the chief priest, Azariah, he goes in after him. He's trying to burn incense in the holy place. Azariah the priest goes in after him with eighty priests of the Lord. Now think about this. That's a big crowd of people following him in. Here goes the king in all his regalia, with a censer in his hand to burn incense, and as he walks in, oh no. Chief priest is going after him, and all this team of eighty men. And I love the way the Bible described them. They were men of valor. And you would have to be, too, to follow a king that with a word could snuff your life out. I mean, you're boss, if you will, at least as you saw it, through the kingdom lens, I mean, he's the king, son of David. And they withstood the king, King Uzziah, and they said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense." (47:01)

Now when you read that, you think, well, they're informing him. Maybe he didn't know. I don't know, let's give him the benefit of the doubt. Don't. Okay? Jot this in the margin if you have to. Deuteronomy chapter 17, verse 18. Deuteronomy 17:18, one of my favorite verses in the— in Deuteronomy, and it says this. When the king—looking way ahead to when the kings would be ruling over Israel—when they ascend to the throne, they sit on the throne of the kingdom, they shall write for themselves in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. So every single king, assignment one. You ascend the throne, your first assignment is write out Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, in a book. And the Levites are looking over your shoulder to make sure you do it right, 'cause that's their job, professional scribes. They know how to do this. And you get your own copy. Your own Old Testament Torah that you get to carry around. It's yours. You—he not only heard it as a kid, he not only had been taught it, he wrote it himself. Hand copied it so that he himself could have a copy as the king. (47:58)

So they explained it like perhaps he didn't know, but of course he did. And they said "Go out of the sanctuary"—middle of verse 18—"for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD." And Uzziah, as you would expect of a proud man, he was angry. Now picture the drama here. He had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests... leprosy broke out on the back of his thigh. No. Broke out on his left shoulder. No. Broke out somewhere around the place where his belt—no. Broke out on his forehead. (48:33)

Now if you know anything about Levitical priesthood, I don't care who you were. I don't care if you were Aaron himself. If you had leprosy you were automatically invalidated from going into the worship place. Ceremonially unclean if you had leprosy. You're talking, and you're trying to, you're getting— you're getting angry. You're trying to defend yourself, and all of a sudden, I mean, as horrific as a sixteen year old on a date getting a zit in the middle of dinner on their forehead, leprosy starts to magically break out on his forehead. Can you imagine? Well, you don't have to imagine. Here's what happened. (49:09)

Leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the LORD, by the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold—that's the Bible way of saying, gasp!—he was leprous in his forehead! And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself got it. He can feel this crawling across his forehead, and he hurried himself out, because the LORD had struck him. Verse 21. And King Uzziah was a leper for three months, and got paroled after a month and a half for good behavior. No. King Uzziah was a leper how long? Gotta make this last. The entire last chapter of his life. He was leper to the day of his death, and being a leper he couldn't even go not only into the temple, he couldn't even go into the royal palace. And being a leper he lived in a separate house. Man, you get the guest house now. For he was excluded from the house of the LORD, including all the, the royal housing there on the temple area. And Jotham his son became a co-regent, was king. And Jotham his son was over the king's household, governing the people of the land. And he lived as an ailing man with a skin disease. (50:20)

Why? Because he thought he was exempt from the rules. God had blessed me a lot. Sometimes the, I gotta think the teachers of the law in the first century sitting in their fancy chairs, going, well, you know, we don't have to do it. We don't have to keep the rules. Well, a lot of the rules were unbiblical, and they shouldn't be giving 'em in the first place, like washing your hands before a meal. You don't worry about that. That's not it. That's not an issue of ceremonial cleanness. But the rules that do exist, you better keep them. And if you're gonna teach them you better keep them. And you'd better be ready to lift them with more than a finger. (50:50)

That leaves us with verse 44. But woe to you! You are like unmarked graves—speaking of ceremonially unclean things. Do you understand, it was no big deal if you came to dinner without washing your hands, at least for ceremonial's sake. Perhaps for hygiene's sake that's a problem, but when it came to the ceremonial laws of the Levites and the Bible, not a problem if you come to dinner without your hands washed. But you don't touch a dead body if you want to be ceremonially clean as you worship. That's not— you don't do that. And you guys, he says, are like the epitome, that— the, the encapsulation and the embodiment of uncleanness. You're like a dead corpse. You're like a grave. And people walk over you without even knowing it. They come

in contact with a dead body, and because you're not marked they don't see it. They think they're going to get help when they come to you, and instead, you defile them as well. (51:41)

Two things here. Being clean and not being clean, and your effect on other people. Number two, let's just say it this way. What we need to do is see why Christ requires humility.

2. Know why Christ requires humility.

And real quickly, here's why. Letter A. Why does Christ require humility? Why is this essential? Why is this the sine qua non of Christianity? Why is it you cannot be a Christian and grow at all in your Christian faith unless you realize you cannot have yourself as the center of all this? Why? Well, number one, because, let's put it this way, you can't be clean without contrition. (52:10)

2. Know why Christ requires humility.

A. We cannot be clean without contrition.

You cannot be clean without contrition, and contrition is a humble realization of your own problem and your own sin. You want to talk about ceremonial uncleanness. You got a guy named Naaman there in the Old Testament, 2 Kings chapter 5. He had leprosy. He was a Syrian commander, and he comes to Israel in desperation, looking for the holy man, 'cause he learns that there's a guy named Elisha that had some power to fix people. And so he shows up, and I've often told the story. I can picture the door where the servant of Elisha goes to the door. When the regalia and all the entourage of this commander of Syria shows up, knocks on the door, he opens the speakeasy—at least, that's how I see it—"Yes, how can I help you, sir?" And the man says, "Well, here I am. I'm, I'm the Syrian commander, Naaman, and I hear that there's a prophet here that maybe he can do something about my leprosy." (52:58)

"Just a moment." *Eeeek-chk* [mimes speakeasy closing]. *Bupbupbupbup*, hear the footsteps, and then all of a sudden he comes back, *eeeert* [mimes speakeasy opening]. "Yeah, the prophet says you gotta go dip yourself in the Jordan River seven times and you'll be clean. Thank you." *Bbpbpp!* [speakeasy closes]. (53:13)

The Bible says that Naaman got angry. Why? 'Cause he told his servants, you know what? I thought this holy man would come out with some big, ostentatious show. I'm an important person. And he'd put his hand up in the air, and he'd put his hand over me, and he'd say some big, magical thing, and then I would be healed. And, he wants me to go dip in the Jordan River? Have you seen that river? There's river rats in that river. This isn't the Colorado River we're talking about. Aren't there better rivers in Damascus? Can't I get in rivers in Syria? Why do I have to dip myself in some Israeli River? Forget it. And it says he went away enraged. (53:50)

So you were not humble enough to do what the prophet said so that you could be clean? Mmm, no. One of the gutsy servants of Naaman, when they were leaving, comes up to Naaman and says, "Hey"—Mike Fabarez paraphrase—"I mean, let's just think about what Elisha said. He did say if you washed you'd be clean. And didn't you come here to get clean? Why can't you just humble yourself and just do what he said?" And he reasoned with him and apparently won the day, because they make their way to the Jordan River. And I always think of the psychology of

this when you're sitting there dipping yourself in the river. Once. Twice. I mean, fiiiive. Siix. I mean, is he rolling his eyes? I mean, what is the—this has got to be humiliating! And the seventh time, here's what the Bible says. 2 Kings 5:14. After that seventh time he dipped himself into the Jordan River, according to the word of the man of God, his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child. I just wanted my leprosy to go away. I didn't know I would have this fabulous, eight year old skin. Awesome. (54:59)

Now of course we're not dealing with skin diseases. The real concern is your sin and mine. Though your sins be as scarlet they'll be white as snow. How do you get that? Contrition? Jesus is gonna tell a story in Luke 18. We're gonna study it, Lord willing, one day soon. And he says, you know, you got the Pharisee who looks down on people. You got the tax collector. One of them was not willing to humbly see his sin for what it was. He did not go home justified. This horrible person, this bad sinner, sat there on the Temple Mount, wouldn't even look up to the sky. But because of his contrition, guess which one went home justified? The one who was humble enough to see himself for who he was. The problem, apparently, with these Pharisees and these—these teachers of the law is they were unclean because they weren't even humble enough to receive forgiveness, 'cause they wouldn't be contrite. (55:49)

Secondly, there are people coming to them thinking they're gonna get an advantage spiritually, but unfortunately they go to their leaders and they become even more defiled. They are like Jesus said elsewhere sons of hell. Now here are the strong, critical words of Christ. And your disciples, you make them even twice as much the sons of hell as you. What's the point? I mean, you're in this role to help people. They come to you, and your— they're contact with you, you make them worse, worse than yourselves. See, humility is important not only 'cause you cannot be clean without contrition. Number two, you certainly can't be useful to God without a servant's heart, and you cannot see yourself as a servant without humility. You gotta have that. (56:32)

2. Know why Christ requires humility.

B. We can't be useful without a servant's heart.

Matthew 20. James and John's mother came to Jesus and said, "Hey, I want my boys, I think they're fabulous. I want one on the right, and one of the left in the kingdom when you're sitting there in all your glory. That's what I want. Please do this for me." Jesus goes, "Do you even understand what you're asking for? You do understand that greatness in the kingdom is determined not by just their inherent greatness or that you think that you got great boys. It's based on service and sacrifice. Are they able to drink the cup that I'm going to drink? 'Cause you know I'm gonna sit there in the garden, and I'm gonna be sitting there pouring out my heart to my father saying, 'Let this cup pass from me. Yet not my will but yours be done.' That's a hard thing to do, and you want your son to have places of prominence in the kingdom? What kind of servants are they?" (57:14)

And then he turns and gives them this lecture. He says, you know, the rulers of this Gentile world we live in, they lord it over them. Their great ones exercise authority over them, but it is not to be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant. Whoever would be first among you must be your slave. For even the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. You want to see greatness in action?



You've gotta see yourself as a servant, as a slave. (57:47)

See, God is not a God as you might picture him, especially if you're uninitiated, you're new here, who's like some schoolyard bully who just wants to have preeminence and dominance on the—on the playground. God is not our peer who just wants to be recognized as the king of the club. Jesus wants to be preeminent because he is preeminent. He wants you to recognize him as the center of our life, and you are the orbiting body around who he is because he is the center. Nothing more perverted than for something to try to assume a position that is not it, particularly when it comes to the distinction and the distance between headship and the rest of it. The center. You cannot take the center and move it out of the center. Jesus illustrates it this way. He is the head and the face of this organization. Everyone else is something else. And there's nothing worse than trying to have a conversation with someone on the patio. You're looking in their face and you're trying to connect with the eyeballs of the person, and you've got this very unruly elbow that keeps trying to butt its way into the conversation. See, it's a real problem when your elbow wants to be the face of things. Put your elbow down, please. Why is your elbow in front of your face? Stop. Nothing weirder than that. (59:07)

You see, I'm not asking you to humble yourself because you need to get into some position that's not real. You need to humble yourself because we should be humble in light of the greatness of Christ. There is no one greater than the one for whom all things were made, and he is to be preeminent in everything. My job is to realize my place in the organization, which is something not the head. You and I are to be humble. Any organization in the name of Christ or any other name that wants to stroke your ego, improve your reputation with the world, never offend you and exempt you from the rules that God has laid out for all of his people—something's really seriously wrong with that. And inversely, there's nothing more beautiful than an elbow that knows it's an elbow. There's nothing more better and more appropriate, and what I like to call *teleos*, that Greek word, nothing more perfect than an elbow that does not think it's your face. That's what you want. Christ is the head of the organization. We're all his servants. When we do everything that he asks us to do, as we've learned in Luke, we ought to say we're unworthy slaves. We've only done that which we ought to have done. And that brings glory to Christ, and you know what? It does something in your heart, bringing some kind of, "Aahh, that's the right—that's what I was made for, to bring honor and glory to Christ." You can't be clean without contrition, and you certainly can't be useful to the kingdom without a servant's heart. May these words and this message be applied to your heart as we go about our lives in a very self-centered world. Be servants of Christ. Let's pray. (60:45)

God—would you stand with me? Let me dismiss you with a word of prayer. God, we are increasingly, so it seems, even among Christian organizations and churches, struggling to maintain the truth of your word that leaves no place for self-promotion, self-focus, certainly not for self-centeredness. God, we are your servants. To be great in your kingdom we're to be everyone else's servant. We're to see every blessing, every intelligence, every accomplishment, every, every asset in our lives as a derivative gift from you. Let us learn from a pagan king that got it and said, now I extol, now I honor, the king of heaven who knows what it is to possess all power and dispense it as he wills, and certainly knows how to humble those who are proud. So God, we don't want that for our lives. We'd much rather humble ourselves. And let that be the reality of this message today for us, so that we never present a Christianity that seeks to indulge



people's egos and reputation. And we certainly ever would want to avoid that in our thinking about Christ. Dismiss us now with a sense of your presence and your blessing, for the sake of your own honor. In Jesus' name. Amen.