

Repentance

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[0 : 00] This week we have had a fun week at VBS. We learned about the Bible. The Bible is a big book. It's really just one long story about God being so good that he sent his son Jesus to rescue us.

Let us show you what we mean. Come with us back to the very beginning. Maybe we can put the banner in front of us.

There, maybe hold it down in front. Down just a little bit.

Okay, so from the very beginning, tell us what the first one says. God is maker. God is king. The fall. We disobey God and the perfect place is ruin.

Abraham and the promises of God. God's special place, God's special people and blessing. David, king of God's people. Solomon that ate raw.

[1 : 15] Exile from the stone. The coming of the king. Jesus is born. Dead of the king.

Jesus is crucified. Jesus is raised. Jesus is king. Jesus promised fulfilled God's people in God's place.

Is? Okay. So now you guys get the pleasure of listening to us sing for a little bit. So we have three songs for you. Okay, kids.

Come on up. So guys, when you're ready, we're going to sing the creation song with actions. you can watch Melissa with the actions at the front. And if you want to join along with us, you're welcome to join the actions of the kids of Dewey.

Day one. Day one.

[2 : 48] Day three days. Day four.

The night had gone on, and it was good to start a tune, As all creation got it full, and by the power of His Word, The power of His Word.

They tied up to the sky, and started a fish on the sea. They saved the fish, and they took a pen, and they brought the land.

And it was good, just as it should, as all creation got it full, And by the power of His Word, the power of His Word.

The second day, when God in this land, on His land, And it was good, just as it should, as all creation got it full, And by the power of His Word, the power of His Word.

[4 : 28] We're going to sing God rules now, so let's have our hands up guys.

We're going to sing God rules, okay, no God's no way, He's the Lord, He's the King, He's the boss of everything, He's the boss of everything.

He's the boss of everything, He's the boss of everything.

He's the boss of everything. Don't make no mistake, don't follow the same, Like Adam and Eve, who trusted Him, Don't make that mistake, and know what it takes, To worship our faith, and know what it takes, God rules, okay, no God's no way, He's the Lord, He's the King, He's the boss of everything.

He's the boss of everything. Don't make no mistake, don't follow the same, He's the Lord, He's the King, He's the boss of everything.

[5 : 55] He's the boss of everything. God rules, okay. And now we'd like to share with you our last song, which is all about the promises of God that He made to Abraham.

Yeah, kids, remember we talked about Louis Armstrong voice? Louis Armstrong voice. For this song, you guys ready? You guys remember the clap for this, right? How's the clap go? Yeah, yeah, something like that.

Beautiful. A long, long time ago, when Abraham was born, God promised him a great big family.

It seemed too good to do, too good to be the truth. Yes, Abraham said, Yes, God, I believe you can.

What a man. What a man. Abraham. Trust in God when he can't understand.

[7 : 23] What a man. Abraham. Abraham. Man, oh man. I want to have faith like Abraham. As well as family. God promised land and trees. A special place to call his Gary home. So Abraham didn't go to see his property home. Abraham didn't go to see his property home. Oh man.

I want to have faith like Abraham. Oh man. I want to have faith like Abraham. As well as family. God promised land and trees. A special place to call his Gary home.

Abraham didn't go to see his property home. And Abraham said, Yes, God, I believe you can.

What a man. Abraham. Trust in God when he can't understand.

Oh, Adam, man. Abraham. Oh man. Oh man. Oh man. I want to have faith like Abraham. And lastly, but not least, God said you will be blessed. Your name will be made great in all the earth.

You'll be my special one. Now I want to have faith like Abraham. Oh man. Oh man.

[8 : 35] Oh man. Oh man. Oh man. I want to have faith like Abraham. Oh man. Oh man. Oh man. I want to have faith like Abraham. And lastly, but not least, God said you will be blessed. Your name will be made great in all the earth.

You'll be my special one. I'll bless the world through you. And Abraham said, Yes, God, I believe you can.

Oh man. Abraham. Trust in God when he can't understand.

Oh man. And man, oh man. I want to have faith like Abraham.

I want to have faith like Abraham. Okay, so CDs will be made available right after this.

[9 : 55] You know, they're for free and all that. Oh, that's okay. It's not a party until something gets broken, so that's okay. Hey, let me pray for these kids. So you see what our week was like in the community center.

And let's pray, guys. Let's pray. And we're going to pray for your teachers and for your school starting up. And after this, Melissa, you're going to get special classes on all the hand signals, right? I'm teasing you.

Okay, let me pray for us. Father, we just thank you for this day. We thank you for every one of these kids. We thank you for Amber and Mimi and all these little kids, Esther and Holly and Javi and Robert and Joshua and Lawrence and all of them, Lord.

We just pray that you would bless them. We pray that they would come to know your son, Jesus, at an early age. We pray for all the kiddos that are about to release as they go to class, Lord. We pray that that would be a place of sanctuary and peace.

We thank you for the volunteers. We're just overwhelmed by people who give their time to serve your children. And so we pray, Lord, for this time that lives would be changed, they would come to know you, and they would do mighty things for your kingdom.

[11 : 01] We love you, and we pray these things in your son, Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks so much, guys. Okay, so Watermark kids are dismissed, and youth are dismissed with—is that right? No, no youth?

Okay. So youth are staying in today. The scripture reading today comes from the Book of Romans and the Gospel of Luke. Please follow along in your bulletin. Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you?

Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin? Now, on the same occasion, there were some presence who reported to him about the Galatians whose blood Palladi had mixed with their sacrifices.

And Jesus said to them, Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Or do you suppose that those 18 on whom the Tower of Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

[12 : 12] And he began telling them this parable. A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any.

And he said to the vineyard keeper, Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit in this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down. Why does it even use up the ground?

And he answered and said to them, Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer and it bears fruit next year, fine. But if not, cut it down.

This is the reading of God's Word. How you guys doing? Okay. If this is your first time here, you're like, Is this always like that?

Yes, this is always like that. It's like our home. We're trying to model something after the average home in Hong Kong. So it's crazy and out of control. But welcome to Watermark Community Church and the family of God, because I think that's what Christian life is supposed to be like, crazy and out of control sometimes.

[13:19] Well, all my family got back in yesterday at 3 o'clock. So our house, we had kids waking up. I came in about a week early, a week and a half early. And we had kids waking up at 3 o'clock and 4 o'clock.

And so we've been basically up since about 2 o'clock this morning, which is good. And it's neat to have everyone back. After about two days of being by myself, I started walking around the house talking to myself.

And that was not good. You know, on my journey with Christ, I think that I've been very blessed, because my dad was not always around.

He was flying in the military, that God brought other men into my life to teach me things and things that I just didn't know, because my dad wasn't there at that time.

And one of these couples was a couple that I stayed with in seminary in Dallas. And so they gave me free housing. And there was a great, the Mayborns, Don and Cheryl.

[14:25] And I learned so much about being a husband from Don. And I watched them for about a year as I lived with them. And I noticed that every Tuesday night, they would go out on a date.

And I was trying to figure out, what is this all about? You're already married. Why are you dating your wife? You don't need to date your wife because you got her, right? So at least that's how I was thinking as a single guy, right? And so he told me, he said, you know, you need to date your wife. Just because you're married doesn't mean you don't spend time with each other. In fact, once you have kids, you probably need to spend more time with each other, because your life is chaos and out of control, and you don't know what's going on. And so single guys, I wrote down, date your wife.

Yes, that's good, right? And so then Christina and I started dating. And I said, okay, let's try this. And so we started a date night. And ours in Hong Kong now is every Thursday night.

But we have this tradition in America, and this tradition is that the last time we can get away before I come back, we have a date night. And I'm always just so looking forward to this date night.

[15:31] We need the kids and grandparents, and we go out and get something nice to eat and just talk about life and things like that. With four kids, we need to talk about a lot of stuff and just trying to connect with each other.

And so I was really excited about this date night. And so we go to my favorite restaurant in the States. It's called the Cheesecake Factory. If you go there, you know why Americans are so fat. Because it's unlimited refills on all drinks, which I'm trying to get that into Hong Kong. I just don't understand that yet. And the portions are like massive.

I mean, they're like huge, huge portions, right? And so we go there and we get fat. And so I was looking for this date night. And so we went on date night. We went to the Frisco Mall in Texas area, right above Dallas.

And I'm still looking forward to talking to Christina and just debriefing. And we sit down. You don't know I'm going to share this. And we sit down, and there's a couple beside us that are talking.

[16:32] And they're not married. I don't know if they're dating, but it's obvious from their body language that the girl likes the guy. And the guy's life is a mess. I mean, it is just a mess.

And the reason I know it's a mess is because they're talking so loudly that we can't even hear each other talk. We just hear all of his problems. And he's had some serious problems go on with death and just poor choices and all of these things in his life.

And so I'm trying to talk and engage to Christina. And in the back of my mind, the pastoral part of me is like, I want to go over there and talk to him about Christ and things like that.

And I want to, so I'm like, I look at Christina. I go, should I say something? And she goes, no, just focus on me. And just pray.

And so we're praying. And as this guy shares his whole story, he basically then shares everything. And this girl goes, well, I know what your problem is. And I'm like, okay, go, go, go, go, go.

[17 : 38] She goes, well, your problem is is that you just have the wrong focus. I'm like, okay, you're moving in that right direction. You're right. Your problem is is you have the wrong priorities.

Okay, yes, go, go, go, go, go, go, go. Your problem is you have the wrong perspective. And I'm about to go, preach it! You know, but I didn't say anything like that. Christina's like kicking me under the table, like, be quiet, be quiet, be quiet.

And she goes, the problem is is you have the wrong perspective. She said, you need to put, and I'm sitting there going, okay, here it goes, here it goes.

You need to put, and I want to say, Jesus. But I didn't. She goes, you need to put yourself at the center of your life. The problem with your life is that you're thinking too much about other people and you haven't thought about yourself.

You need to put yourself at the center. If you focus on yourself, your whole life is going to be great and everything's going to be good and there's going to be no problems whatsoever.

[18 : 43] And I'm like, the world is filled with five million people just focusing on themselves. And we have a lot of problems. And Christina's kicking me underneath the table because I'm saying that underneath my breath. But I don't say it loud enough for them to hear it.

You need to focus on yourself. And all of a sudden I want to yell out, that's terrible! Oh! But Christina looks at me and gives me this eye and starts kicking me underneath the table.

And we just listen to that, you know, and I've been thinking about that perspective for weeks. And I realize that most of us, including myself, we have the wrong perspective.

I mean, even as a pastor, it's often easy to lose focus in perspective. When I talk to people, they want the view of Jesus as a wise man, a good man, someone who's never confrontational, someone who never passes judgment or talks about judgment, someone who seeks peace at all costs, someone who never challenges people or their false beliefs.

When we think of Jesus, we want this person who never forces anyone to make a hard choice. He's always inclusive. He's always free and lets everybody think about that.

[20 : 13] And as I think about it in my life, I have to be brutally honest because I think sometimes that's true. That I want a God who's soft.

I want a God who's fluffy. I want a God that owes me. He owes me happiness. He owes me fun. He owes me prosperity. He owes me sickness-free life. I want a God who's for me. And sometimes when we come to churches and we listen to sermons, that's what we hear over and over and over and over.

God owes you. He's let you down. We want a fluffy and sexy version of Christianity where God is soft.

When we sin, he kind of winks at us. It's funny. Javi was up here singing and I winked at him. And Javi goes, winks at me back. But that's the type of God we want, right? That we're about to do something we know we shouldn't do.

[21 : 28] We want a God who just looks at us and kind of winks at us. And sometimes we want to, as pastors, we want to preach sermons like that because we know that they're fun. And we know that they're fluffy.

And we know that people will come because they like to hear fluffy things and soft people come.

And the problem is in the churches when that happens, people don't change.

There's no reason to change. There's no reason to grow. There's no reason to be maturity. There's no reason to think about things. And as a pastor, I am so tempted sometimes to look at passages like today and look at things like sin and judgment and accountability before God.

And I want to be nice and I want to be soft and I want to be fluffy and I want to be sexy. And I want you guys to come and hear it. And you go, wow, that was really cool. That was really neat. Tobin's a really nice guy. He didn't say anything that I disagreed with.

Now, if you come to church and you never hear something you disagree with, that's bad. Because if God is working in your heart, the unfluffy God is going to try to show you something and change something in your life.

[22 : 37] But as a pastor, I struggle with wanting to tie all of these things in a nice, neat bow and make them really cool and fun so that when you leave here, you like us and you ask your friends to come visit us and you want to do these things and you change these things and you bring them here to the soft, fluffy, fun church.

But the problem is, is if we live like this, if we lose perspective on Jesus, if we don't see him as he really is, we've lost everything.

We miss the gospel. The gospel becomes something nice and fun and cool. We miss change of life. We miss hope. The only hope that we give people if we don't preach the gospel is the same hope the rest of the world has.

And what is that? If you're good enough, if you're kind enough, if you don't hurt anybody as much as you can, you get a pass. You get to heaven.

And we want to shrink sin and accountability and judgment to make it really small so that we can swallow it. But the problem is, is when we do that, we make our God really small.

[23 : 52] We make the cross really small. We make grace really small. We started preaching in the gospel, Luke, and we started preaching, and you're wondering, well, when are we going to finish?

Because we're at chapter 13 and we've been doing it for a year and a half, and I promise you now it goes faster. The first 13 chapters are all about Jesus' life, and we've covered his life in three years of his ministry.

And after chapter 13, it's chapter 14, right? You don't have to be a genius to know that. You don't have to go to seminary to learn that either. But in 14 on, it's just a bunch of parables and stories, and it's the last three weeks of Jesus' life or four weeks of Jesus' life, and he's heading to Jerusalem.

But we preached Luke because we realized that we were going to get to places that were going to be uncomfortable, and we needed to talk about them. We couldn't skip them. And so last week was a very tough place, and this week is a very tough place.

This week and last week are messages that are kind of like punches in your stomach to me or punches in the arm, and God is seeing how soft we are or how fluffy we are or how we've lost perspective on his holiness and his goodness.

[25 : 16] Luke 13, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. You have it in your bulletin. Ultimately, he's going to be crucified for us.

He's in Capernaum, his hometown. It's by the sea. If you go to Israel with us this next May, you'll see that. You'll see where Peter's mom lived. You'll see the synagogue that Jesus preached in. It's pretty amazing. And as he's preaching in 13, some people come to him, and they bring him news that is like CNN-type news.

Everybody knows it. This is on all the wires. It's Bloomberg. Everybody's talking about it, and everyone knows it, and everybody's discussing it. And you read in verse 1, now on the same occasion, at the same time in Greek, there were some present.

They came there, and they reported to him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. So this is a story. The pilgrims go to Jerusalem to sacrifice.

[26 : 23] This probably happened on a Passover because it was the only time that a pilgrim would actually sacrifice the offering. The priest would normally do it. But there were too many people. And in a Passover, sometimes there'd be 500,000 animals killed in that one day.

Can you imagine the smell in the blood? And just what it was like. And what we're told by historians is that Pilate, who was the procreator, he's overseeing all of Judea for the Roman Empire.

He has this battle going on with Herod. Herod was a Median, and he was overseeing the Jews. He's kind of like the puppet governor for Jerusalem.

And Pilate hated the Jews. And so on this occasion, Pilate had several of his men dress up as pilgrims. And as the Jews were making sacrifices, all the soldiers took off their clothes, they had uniforms underneath it, they had clubs, and they beat to death.

Everybody making a sacrifice. At one occasion, we were told they killed over 2,000 people. And he did it just for fun.

[27 : 44] And so they come in, and they share this news, and they're like, this is terrible, because they were in the middle. They were the closest to God that they could be.

They were at the safest place they could be. They were in the sanctuary. They were in the temple. They were where it was off limits. It's where they're worshipping God. If God were to be any place, he would be there.

And in the middle of their sacrifices, these soldiers come in, and they just kill everybody. Everybody. It says it mixes their blood with the blood of the sacrifices.

It would be like if you and I were having communion last week. And in the middle of communion, some men came in, and they shot every person in this church.

What do you think the people in the other churches would have been saying after that event?

[28 : 50] What do you think the news would have been after that event? What would the other Christians have been saying after all the church was destroyed in the middle of a holy time for Passover or communion?

Jesus goes on in verse 2 and 3. And Jesus says to him, Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this fate?

I tell you no. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Now the question on everybody's mind, the question that everybody wants to ask, it's the question why these guys brought this thing up because they want to ask this question.

They bring this event up, and they want to say, These people must have been really bad for this to happen to them. Right? I mean, they must have been terrible, terrible people because they were in the middle of a holy thing.

In the middle of that holy thing, they got slaughtered, and obviously God was catching up with them. Their karma ran out, and people who were sacrificing, if you get killed this way, you must be really, really, really bad.

[30 : 05] That's what they were thinking. Now they didn't ask that. But that's how Jesus replies in verses 2 and 3.

And I've been thinking about that for a long time. I mean, we think that sometimes, don't we? When somebody has something really bad happen to them, what do we think?

When you're the last one on the floor because everybody else has been fired, and you're still standing, when something really terrible has happened, all the other people's kids are falling apart, but your kids are doing amazingly well, and they all get into Auburn University or some higher educational place like that.

What do you think? Jesus' disciples thought that. Remember in John 9, they're walking by, and they see this blind guy?

And the disciples looked at him and said, Hey, who sinned? His mother or him? And Jesus said, No one.

[31 : 16] And when I look at this passage, I realize that in my life, we tend, I tend to compare myself to other people. I mean, if I'm spared the bad things, I tend to think, we tend to think, well, I must be pretty good.

I must be pretty moral. I must be pretty clever. I must be pretty intelligent. My life is better, so I must be better. But when bad things happen, what do we ask?

Oh, man, terrible. I'm cursed. God's out for me. And sometimes in our life, if we're honest, when things are going really, really, really exceptionally well, we think to ourselves, God likes me better. I found more favor with God. I wonder what I did. I better go back and do that again because I need to do that again. But in this passage, Jesus says to you and me that often, listen to this, often our circumstances do not dictate our relationship to God.

Often our circumstances do not dictate our relationship to God because God is beyond that.

[32 : 44] And so Jesus says in verse 3, no. He's basically saying if you really saw yourselves, if you really saw your heart, if you really saw what was inside of you, the question you'd be asking is, how come the tower didn't fall on top of me?

Because I deserve it. Jesus is looking at his disciples. He's looking at the crown, and he's saying, repent because you're self-righteous.

Repent because you're selfish. Repent because you think that your circumstances are dictating your relationship to God, and that's not true.

Jesus goes on to tell us another story in verse 4 and 5. Now again, everybody would have known this. Everybody would have known this. Or do you suppose that those 18 on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits, the word in Greek is debtors or sinners in Hebrew, than all the men who lived in Jerusalem?

I tell you no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. So here's what he's saying here, and we have a picture of this. Do we have a picture of this? We have a picture of this. This is Christina by the Pool of Siloam.

[34 : 07] This was eight years ago. If you go today, it's amazing. If you go with us in May, they've restored it, they've redone it, and it is amazing. But this is the picture here. Because I think the idea of towers today has changed a lot since Jesus' time.

But in Jesus' time, especially in New York, right? But in Jesus' time, a tower was a place of safety. It was a place of refuge.

It was a place of security. It was a place where you could make your living. It was the strongest place in the wall's fortification. And the guy goes in, and he kisses his wife, and he gets on his camel.

He goes to Jerusalem. He goes into his tower, and as he's about to pick up his phone to call his wife and tell her, hey, I'm not going to make it today, hey, you know, save some stuff for me to eat later on, the wall just collapses.

The whole tower just crushes on top of him. And this place that he thought was a place of security, hope, financial stability, success, a haven of safety, a future, all of these things that he was putting his hope in, all of these things crushed him as if tower fell on top of him without a warning.

[35 : 40] Jesus tells these two stories. One is evil, pilot, evil. One, one is natural, but in both stories, the end comes quickly.

But in both stories, the end is unexpectedly. In both stories, the groups are doing what they would normally do. It was a place of safety. They would be okay. In both places, the people felt comfort. In both places, the people felt security. And these places, these things that they were hoping in, that they were drawing on, that they would say, this would give me meaning, this would make me happy, this would give me security, this would make me closer to God, all of these things destroyed them.

Have you ever felt that way sometimes? That there are things you cling to in your life, there are things you hope will bring meaning, there are things that you're expecting to bring purpose, there are things that you are, you're looking at, and when you grab onto them, or when you go to them, or when you stay in them, ultimately, they cause your destruction.

Jesus says again in verse five, no. He doesn't answer the question how, or why, or who's to blame.

[37 : 00] I always find it interesting that he doesn't go after Pilate, say Pilate's a bad person, you should know this. He doesn't say all these, any of those things. He just says no, repent. Repent because you are radically self-centered.

Repent because you are radically selfish. Repent because you believe all these things are happening to you because you're good, and somehow your goodness, God, owes you.

Somehow, if I do all the right things, if I answer all the questions, God owes us, right? I wanted to start the service off by having a card in everybody's chair and just say, before we begin, I want you to write down on your card what you think God owes you.

And we're gonna talk about that. Repent, Jesus says, because we all deserve to have towers fall on us.

Do we deserve anything from God? Do we?

[38 : 16] And we're talking about perspective here. And we walk around like we think we do. But do we? Repentance is a scary thing.

I mean, it's a word that we use here, we don't talk about, but in Jesus' day, when his, remember his audience is all religious people. He's talking to people in church. He's talking to good people.

He's not talking to outsiders, he's talking to the family members, he's talking to insiders. And when he used the word repent, what they would have heard is, okay, I need to feel sorry for my sin. I need to think of the consequences.

I need to think of, what if somebody sees me? What if somebody catches me? What if I lose? Lose my job? I shouldn't do that because I might look really bad in front of other people. The focus is on self, self, self.

There's some image management going on here. When they heard the word repent, they would have thought things like sacrifice. I need to sacrifice more.

[39 : 21] I need to kill another lamb. I need to kill another sheep. I need to kill a cow because my sin is really bad. I need to pay for my sin. I need to do penance. I need to kill a cow because I did something really bad and I got to pay for that.

Or maybe I'm going to make myself feel so terrible. I'm going to act so bad. I mean, my little two-year-old, three-year-old, she's five now, right? Six.

Okay. You can tell the jet lag's still not gone. My six-year-old does that still. When she's going to get in trouble, she feels so bad and she just puts on this face and she mourns and she cries and she wails and it's terrible and she thinks, if I make myself feel terrible enough, then everybody's going to forgive me.

Sometimes we do that, don't we? I was walking to an amazing cathedral in Italy and about two miles from the cathedral, people were on their knees, scuffing up their knees and getting up and they'd walk and they'd scuff their knees again.

You're like, what are you doing? I'm doing penance. I got to do something and work out what I did wrong. I got to show people that I deserve to be forgiven.

[40 : 44] One of my favorite movies of all time, and don't watch it because you'd be totally bored, but it's called The Mission. And in The Mission, Robert De Niro is a soldier. He accidentally kills this friar. He feels such a weight of guilt on him that as they're going up into the mountains to reach out to the Indians, he's carrying this large load behind him on his string and for miles and for days, he's carrying this armor and he's pulling it and he's beating them up and he's bloodied, he's terrible.

It's an amazing scene. And finally, the priest, Jeremy Irons, comes and he takes a knife and he cuts the load loose. And he said, you've done enough. You've done enough.

And that's what Jesus' followers would have been thinking when they heard that. When they heard the idea of repentance, they would have said, okay, I gotta change my lifestyle, I gotta look outwardly, differently, I gotta do something so that when people look at me and when God looks at me, if I do it enough, hopefully God will bless me.

Because if I do it enough, then God owes me because I've done it all the right way. But you know, that's not what this passage is about and that is not the repentance that Jesus talks about and that's not the repentance of the Bible.

When you hear the word repentance in these verses, what he's talking about is seeing yourself as you truly are. Seeing yourself as broken.

[42 : 10] Seeing yourself as radically self-centered. We are all radically self-centered. NBC Wild World Sports said it.

They're interviewing the gymnast after she got a gold medal and they said, how did you become a gymnast and how did you do so well? And she said, well, you know, to be an athlete, you have to be very self-centered. I mean, she says it right on TV so it must be true, right?

But the Bible says it over and over and over again. To repent sees that we are self-centered. To repent sees that we are needy. To repent sees that we are hopeless.

No matter how much penance we do, no matter how many times we scrape our knees, no matter how many times we give money, no matter how many times we serve in the Sunday school, no matter what we do, it's not enough.

Repentance is seeing each one of us as deserving a tower falling on top of us. Think about that next day you go to work and you get fired. Aren't you angry?

[43 : 13] And you go, well, at least I didn't have a tower fall on top of me. Now, don't ever counsel somebody that way, okay? If they're in bad mood or things are bad, don't go, you know, but it could be worse.

You could have a tower fall on top of you. That's not the meaning of this passage, right? But it is for us. Repentance is seeing us as we really are and seeing God as he really is.

The God is holy. The God is merciful. The God is just. The God is gracious. The God comes to you and me and we don't deserve it.

Repentance is not being self-centered but being God-centered. The next time you're tempted to cheat on the books or cheat on your wife or husband or go to the internet and look at things you shouldn't look at on your company computer or cheat on your taxes or owe people money and not pay them back or just be mean to your wife or your spouse.

Remember that repentance isn't about I'm feeling bad, I'm bad, I'm bad but repentance in the Bible is saying look at what I just did to God. Look at how much I just hurt God's heart.

[44 : 43] Look at how much I just ruin God's testimony in my office or with my kids or with my friends.

Repentance is being radically God-centered instead of self-centered and understanding that when we sin we dishonor God and we displease Him and that's it. Repentance is not doing penance.

It's not trying to earn our salvation. Not trying to earn forgiveness. Jesus suffered for our sin. Jesus did everything. There's nothing you could add on to what Jesus did.

Nothing. Repentance means understanding that and saying that what Jesus did was enough and I cannot work and be good enough because it's never going to happen.

I just have to receive that salvation from Jesus. Repentance is knowing that I cannot live good enough. That no matter what you do, no matter how you try to do it, no matter where you put your hope, no matter what you do, you can never live good enough.

[45 : 53] Only Jesus lived good enough. And so when Paul and Luke and the gospel writers talk about repentance, they talk about this incredible realization that Christ did it all and that we need to see Him as our hope and if we see Him as our hope, if we surrender to Him, our lives are going to change.

Our minds are going to change. Our hearts are going to change. Our actions are going to change. Our intellect is going to change. Our will is going to change and eventually our feelings will change, our emotions.

You know, a lot of times I just obey what God calls me to do and I really don't feel like it. It's inconvenient. It's really bothersome.

I'd really just go home and take a nap or read a book. But as I continue to repent, as we continue to come before the Lord and realize who we are and who He is, God slowly changes those feelings in you.

God slowly changes your mind. He changes everything. And so when we repent, Jesus is changing everything in you. I don't know if you know that, but the scripture says very carefully that as we repent, the more that we repent, the more that we come to Him, the more that we grow in our relationship to Christ and the more that we trust Him.

[47 : 27] Jesus continues with this parable which to me has been one of my all-time favorite parables, especially as I've been studying it over and over.

He tells this parable that drives the point home. He tells this parable that everyone in his audience would have understood. Now we don't understand it because we're, I think that one time I said I'm the only farmer in here so I'm the only one that kind of understands a little bit of farming but every agricultural person would have understood this and the parable is this.

Verse 6, He began telling this parable, example, a man had a fig tree which he planted in a vineyard and he came looking for fruit. In Greek he's saying he came every day.

The man in Greek is a very important person and so he plants this fig tree in the middle of this vineyard so there's grapes everywhere. Often you would do that because you'd want the grapes and the wine to get some different taste so you'd plant an apple tree in the middle of it or you'd plant a fig tree in the middle of it and as the animals pollinated the wine acquired that taste and the man came and it says often he came and he looked for fruit a harvest and he didn't find any and he said to the vineyard keeper behold listen up for three years I've come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any cut it down why do we even use up the ground now this is this is the law of agricultural you find very few farmers keeping things in the ground that aren't benefiting them or producing fruit and everybody would have understood what he was saying here he's basically saying if it doesn't produce fruit cut it ground it's using up too many resources it's using up too much water its leaves have grown over and he said he answered and said in verse 8 let it alone in Greek the words actually mean forgive it forgive it sir for this year this period of time too until I dig around it and put fertilizer in the word is manure and it bears fruit next year fine but if it doesn't cut it down see the story here so Jesus says this guy plants this fig tree in the middle of the garden it grows huge it shades everything it's taking up resources it's taking up sun it's using the soil it's using care and for three years the vine keeper has come into that garden and for three years he's taking care of that fig tree for three years he's taking care of it and finally the owner comes and it says he comes fairly frequently and he's looking and he sees no change he sees no fruit he sees no harvest he sees nothing different and he says cut it down and in verse 8 he says forgive it leave it alone and this is what the vine keeper does the vine keeper comes every day and he puts massive that's a watermark word

I think massive amounts of time in energy grace and mercy I mean the tree it says here is being stunted by things that are clinging to its roots and so the keeper comes in and literally in Hebrew and Greek what it says is he's doing is he's breaking the hold that the earth has on it because the earth is clumped up so much around the roots of the tree that the tree cannot get nutrients and it

cannot grow and so the vineyard guy comes in and he literally breaks away everything that's clinging to it he breaks away things that are going to stunt his growth he breaks away pride he breaks away idols he breaks away self he breaks away money he breaks away relationships he's breaking away everything because he wants that tree to grow the Romans passage says that he gives us all good things he gives us all good things so that we grow it's not because we're good and so this guy comes in every day he puts all his energy in there and he's digging and he's tearing and he's breaking loose and the passage says that Jesus is constantly digging into our lives to free us from things that are preventing us from growing fruit that Jesus is coming in he's constantly digging up things he's constantly taking away things because he wants fruit in your life and you hear the passage fruit is repentance and worship fruit is repentance and worship and it says that [52 : 31] Christ comes in to your and my life every day and he gives us mercy he gives us grace and he comes in there and he breaks up all the things that cling to us traditions and doctrine and religions and family and culture and he breaks up all these things because they're not allowing us to grow they're not allowing us to be the tree that we're supposed to be and he puts manure over us he puts relationships over us he puts the church over us he puts community over us he puts his word over us he puts the Holy Spirit all around us he puts everything in our life to help us grow maybe maybe even this sermon is manure think about that but the parable tells us the keeper Jesus is committed to saving the tree from what it deserves did you hear that

Christ is committed to saving us from what we deserve he's committed to saving us he's committed to rescuing the tree he's committed to getting fruits of repentance and worship out of the tree and the Bible says clearly it's not the tree that does it by itself the tree has no energy in and of itself the vine keeper doesn't come in and break up the stuff the tree cannot produce fruit and as all Jesus parables we don't know how it ends I think he does that on purpose I mean we don't know how it ends we don't know what's going to happen here we don't know if it produces fruit we don't know how long the vine keeper is going to come in we don't know how long we have until our end we don't know when a tower is going to fall on us or we're going to get in a car accident or we're going to find a speck on our lung we don't know how long but we know that Jesus is committed to saving us from what we deserve and everyday mercy and everyday grace and everyday and amazing things are poured out on us and this story basically tells us that we are called to respond that you and I we have an obligation and that obligation is to respond to God working in our life we're called to say am I going to bear fruit am I going to do it am I going to be a part of this am I going to repent see Christ as he really is see myself as I really am realize that there's no way that I can get to him on my own surrender my life to him and allow him to change me and to heal me and to fix me and put fruit in my life both stories tell us that we don't realize how bad off we are sometimes we might be walking around and everything's perfect and this passage says it might be perfect because God is putting amazing things into your life because he wants you to repent you know why your life has gone so well up to this point

God is just putting amazing things into your life because he wants your heart he wants you to repent he wants to worship he's doing all these incredible things don't think that all these great things are happening because you're doing it the passage says all these great things happening because the vine keeper is going in there and he's breaking up those things he's changing those things he's giving you all the things that you need and the question is how do we respond to that that's why Jesus didn't answer the why or how or who's responsible question in the parable and in the story because that at that point wasn't important what was important was that life is short and at any time these things will be taken away and the question is what are you going to do with that okay we're way over two minutes God has really been working on me in this place on this passage in our hearts and I realized in Jesus day the church was filled with people the church was filled with people who just sat in the garden and they did nothing the church was filled with people who just sat there and watched they came to church they observed but there was no fruit there was no life and this passage says don't be an observer don't just sit there don't just do nothing but to repent and know how good

God is the passage isn't saying you can come as much as you want and you see all these things you're observing all these things and just take your time because you got all the time in the world the passage doesn't say that and remember he's talking to believers he's not talking just to non-believers he's talking to everybody and he's saying you don't have all the time in the world you don't know how much time you're going to have and one day God is going to remove his grace and

his mercy from your life he's going to stop nudging your heart and in that day you're going to meet him and the whole part of this story and the whole part of this sermon and the whole part of this passage is we love you too much for you have a tower full on you and you come before a holy God and you say why should you let me in here and he goes well I've done all these things I'm great I've done it all I mean that's just the wrong perspective it's why we're here it's not why God has come into your life it's not why Christ continues to break your roots up don't keep sitting in church and doing nothing don't keep sitting in church and not growing fruit don't keep sitting in church and not repenting and realizing that everything you have is because

God gave it to you he wants an amazing life for you he wants a fruit and he wants abundance he wants incredible things but he wants your worship and he wants your heart and that's why Jesus says repent the kingdom of God is at hand repent father we just come before you and we just are humbled by your mercy and your grace lord we come before you and we just we repent we realize that when things are going good maybe you're just fertilizing us really a lot because you want a change of heart and lord we realize when things are going bad for sure they're not as bad as they can be we will never as christians we will never get all that we deserve lord we realize that we realize we'll never get all that we deserve because your son took all that we deserve on the cross and so we just come before you now we ask you to change our hearts to look at our hearts break away the soil that's clogging up the roots in our life help us to see you as you truly are help us to see us as we truly are help us to walk in the tension of realizing that we're lost and we're broken but that you're amazing and we're your child and amidst that tension help us to live and be in community every day and to worship you father we come before you and we just repent of our self-righteousness we repent of our sin we repent of our smugness we repent of our pride i confess lord just the pride of my life and just the arrogance and just the anger i feel sometimes when people don't do things the way i want them done father i just repent of that and i know that i'm not the vine keeper that you are and so we trust you and we're so thankful for everything you've done we pray these things in your son jesus name amen you know if god has worked in your heart we would pray that you wouldn't leave here you know there'll be people up here up front who are trained to pray with you and i would love to pray with you christina and so please don't leave here if you have a burden on your heart or you want to talk to somebody about the message today the next step if you're here for the first time or any time is community groups i have a picture of our community group up here i think and so that's where everything happens in the church that's where people gather that's where people do things and so we would encourage you that if this is our community group if you're not in the community group please sign up it's where we sharpen each other iron on iron and it's it's kind of the lifeblood of our church because we believe that we're on a journey together in community and so there'll be a table out there to sign up for the community group ours meet on friday night about 200 yards from here but they're different places on the island we have one starting up in tst in a week and we have a couple others around so please take that step of faith and there's a table out there to sign up and there's no one there come see me and i'll make sure that you get in one on september 2nd we have churchwide uh buffet i get in trouble when i say picnic uh and so we have a churchwide buffet so you're not going to be able to get out of here that way you have to go through that way there'll be food and fellowship and it's just a great time so if you have a friend who's not in church please uh this is a great time to invite them to come and meet the watermark family and be a part of that one of the things that we prayed about a lot is the church is that everyone would do something they would use their gifts that we wouldn't be trees just sitting in a garden but we would produce fruit where god has us and one of the the blessings for us has been we've had

[62 : 55] volunteers and interns people who actually raise support from america to come work at the church at your church which to me is amazing you know free late people come and they want to be here that's that's incredible and they do an internship here from two months to over a year and so one of our interns jonathan is leaving jonathan will you come up here i'm just i'm not going to put you on a spot but jonathan's been here all summer he's going back to indiana he's going to get married he's going to work in his dad's business and work in his local church and so if you get a chance jonathan's basically been loving on our kids taking care of them pointing them to christ uh just to thank him for that and uh we i feel like we're sending you out as a mission and i want to pray for you before that but but don't leave yet and we have one other person i have a i have a slide here do you have that slide here of uh so this is kind of a sack maybe it's not a sacrilege we had the picture of the our kids uh trick-or-treating and so in 2004 uh our kids we take our kids

trick-or-treating because we feel like it's a way to get to know people in the community and people like that and um we might not have it and and so in 2004 we were taking our kids trick-or-treating here they are so this is kip that's rachel that's rebecca and caitlin isn't even born yet which is amazing but on this halloween chase anderson chase came to our house he's checking out hong kong wondering if he should move here and so this is chase's first halloween with us and in hong kong and we have this tradition where he comes back every halloween and he helps us take all that we take about 20 kids around we get to meet their parents and so this is what this is what our kids looked like in 2004 so chase can you come up here just really quickly and chase so chase has been with us for that long he's he's one of the original 44 who signed the covenant to come over and plant the church uh he's been overseeing he's actually been an intern in the church for free uh for over a year just serving in the church and helping with prayer and everything else and so chase is moving uh back to dallas uh to to continue work there with his family's business but he has been a huge blessing to us and so uh i just wanted to bring him up here just because he's been leading the prayer ministry and he's been doing incredibly incredibly he's been doing amazing things and so god has been doing amazing things in his life which has been amazing to see just the change the gospel and repentance and all these things god does in our life so i'm going to pray for both you guys and then uh i think we're dismissed father we just thank you for our brothers here thank you for jonathan just for his faithfulness and just coming for these two months and pray that you would go before him in his future marriage pray that he would date his wife often um and that he would do well as he works as a businessman and shares your love and the gospel and just the need for people in his community and in his church and father we thank you for chase you brought him here for so many years we've seen him in probably the worst times of his life physically and we've seen him in the best times and in between and what a privilege it has been to see your hand move in his life and see just what happens when the gospel comes in and you as the vine keeper get into the garden and you start breaking away things that prevent all of us from growing and so we pray for chase as we send him out as one of our missionaries back to dallas where dallas really needs a lot of missionaries uh if you're from there you can say amen and uh so we just pray for chase that you would go before him just give him favor and that you would help him to find a great community where he could plug into and continue the journey that you have him on and father for all of us i just pray for this message and for your spirit that you would change us help us to realize that you are amazing that you're pursuing us that you're trying you're trying

to prevent us from getting what we deserve you're trying to prevent us from getting what we deserve father help us to see that and help us just to worship you and just to realize that you are amazing and we love you and so we pray these things your son jesus holy name amen god bless you guys thank you for hanging in there with us and we'll see you next sunday take care