

Jesus is...

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Preacher: Tobin Miller

[0 : 00] We're in the midst of a series called Gorilla Letters or Gorilla Sermons. And the idea behind it is that, you know, so much of our lives are spent in situations where we have these nagging questions, we have these questions that we want to ask that are on our hearts, but we're kind of afraid because they're like a gorilla in the room.

We're afraid that if we ask them, it'll stir up this gorilla and the gorilla will do terrible things to us and the people in the room. And so we're going to read a few letters today, letters that have come in anonymously by text from people in our church.

And hopefully these will kind of stir up some gorilla questions that you may have in your hearts as well. So here's the first one. Pastor, I have always struggled with telling my friends that Christianity is the only way.

There has to be something nicer I can say to them. Help. My friends tell me that the reason they are not Christian is that they see so many good things in other religions.

And they think I'm wrong for being so narrow-minded. How do you answer this? Pastor, my struggle with our faith is the fact that Jesus had to die on the cross for our problems.

[1 : 22] Why couldn't God just have forgiven us without sacrificing his son? Is what's wrong with us really that bad? People are pardoned all the time in my country. Tobin, my struggle has always been with knowing whether or not I am really a Christian.

I feel like sometimes my heart and actions have not really changed from that much from before I had invited Jesus into my life. How can I be sure that I'm a Christian and that I can live my life in peace?

Pastor Tobin, I know that this is going to sound bad, but one of my struggles with this idea of Jesus being the only way to God is because of my grandmother. My grandmother was an amazing person.

She was so loving, caring, giving, and compassionate. And yet she would say that she was unsure if there was a God. When she died, I just found it hard to believe that God would banish someone like her who lived a life that would put most Christians, including myself, to shame.

How could God do this? The scripture passages today come from the book of Exodus and the gospel of John. In Exodus we read, Now Moses was pastoring the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.

[2 : 34] And he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush, and he looked.

The Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters. For I am aware of their sufferings.

So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey.

Then Moses said to God, Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you.

Now they may say to me, What is his name? What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, I am who I am. And he said, Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, I am has sent me to you.

[3 : 42] Then in the Gospel of John we read, Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my father's house are many dwellings.

If it were not so, I would have told you. For I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself.

That where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way I am going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going.

How do we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.

If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you know him and have seen him. Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us.

[4 : 52] Jesus said to him, Have I been so long with you and yet you have not come to know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father.

How can you say, show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own initiative, but the Father abiding in me does his works.

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves. This is the reading of God's word. You heard the questions.

I don't know if you've ever gotten those questions before in your life. I get them quite frequently as a pastor. I think it's very interesting sometimes being a pastor, especially when it comes to conversations and people asking questions.

I go into the parties during the holidays and I start talking to people and it's almost the minute I walk into the room.

[6 : 03] They're talking about football or sports or hunting or something going on in Hong Kong or politics or academics. And all of a sudden, the conversation stops. And they start talking about God.

I feel like maybe it's because they think just pastors, that's all we can talk about is God, right?

Because you're a pastor, well, you got to stop talking about sports. Let's talk about God. And it's interesting in that because I can't talk about other things besides God.

I love sports. I love medicine. I love hunting. I love, there's a lot of things I love. I love Diet Coke and I love my wife and all those things, you know, I could talk about over and over and over again. But some reason when I come in, often the questions just go flat and people ask questions about God.

And what I've seen as I've talked to people, as I'd be careful of the speakers, I'm going to shake his head, is that everybody, well, let's put it this way. Most people believe in God.

I mean, they believe in some kind of God. I mean, God is constructed in their mind. They have an idea of what God looks like for them. But everybody believes in heaven.

[7 : 13] I mean, everybody I talk to, they believe in heaven. And it's amazing the conversations we have when we start talking about sports, especially when people are drunk. You know, you go to the parties, no, not a watermark party, but other parties.

We're meeting our friends, right? So not an office party. We don't drink in the office. But when people are just kind of, they've had a couple beers and they're kind of relaxed and they're talking about heaven. And they say things like, well, the heaven's going to be a good place.

It's going to be a great place. And all good people are going to be there. Because of course, because God is good and heaven is good. And heaven's full of good people, right?

Good people go to heaven. And so I just listen and talk. And every once in a while, I'll say something like, well, what does it mean to be good? And they're like, well, you know.

You just know. You know when you're good. You're good. Now I'm like, but what does that really look like to be good? Oh, you just know.

[8 : 10] You know when you're good because everybody says you're good. It's easy. And then if the conversation is really going on and people aren't too drunk, I might ask the question like, how good do you have to be?

How good do you have to be to get in heaven? I had this conversation one time with my students in China. It was really good. And I was not intentionally. They came in. We're talking about different things. And after about six months, I knew I was a follower of Christ.

And so we're talking about heaven. And all of a sudden, the student asked us, well, who's going to be in heaven? And the other guy goes, well, good people are going to be in heaven. And so the other person goes, well, is Chairman Mao going to be in heaven?

Now, I didn't want to touch that with like a 10-foot pole, right? Because I wanted to keep teaching and didn't want to get kicked out of where I was. And I'm like, well, what do you guys think? And people are talking and da-da-da-da. And they go, well, yeah, I don't know.

He's done really a lot of bad things. And they had this big discussion. And finally, the guy goes, he's going to be in heaven. And I said, so why? He goes, well, he's 51% good. I mean, he did a lot of bad things, but he's 51% good.

[9 : 20] Which to me then asks a lot of other questions like, how do I know when I'm 51%? And do I get to 90% and then just goof off until I get down to 60% and then I start building my way back up?

But I didn't ask those questions because I didn't want to freak them out. But today, I want to look at a passage. And we are, I appreciate your guys' time. Sorry that we started late. Next week, you know that we're going to be right here.

But we want to look at a passage that talks about this. I think it is probably the, one of the most conflicting passages in Scripture. Now, I'm wondering if I should move down.

It's one of the most conflicting passages in Scripture. This passage, Jesus says some incredibly intense things. It's in your bulletin.

The story takes place in John chapter 13. They've just had the Last Supper and Judas has gone to betray Christ, to bring him up before the authorities. So in about a day, he's going to be crucified.

[10 : 19] And so as Judas leaves, Jesus talks to the rest of his disciples and he tells them about him leaving and what it's going to look like. He's going to the Father and he's going to do all these things. And they start to panic because they thought that they were going to come to Jerusalem to take charge, to be in control.

But all of a sudden, they hear that their leader is going to leave them. And they wonder, well, what are we going to do? And they ask them these series of four questions. They're very intense. It begins in verse 5.

It's in your bulletin. You can look at it. Thomas basically says, where are you going? How will we know how to get to where you're going? And Greek, he actually says, how can we know the way to which you are going? We don't know.

I thought about that question a lot because I think that's a question that we ask today. And people ask that in the parties. Where are we going? And how do we know which way we're going?

And I think if we look back in Scripture, that question began in the Garden of Eden because in the Garden of Eden, we knew that Adam and Eve walked with God. They had communion with God. They saw truth flowing from God.

[11 : 23] They saw truth as who God really is. They knew the way because they were with him and they had life. We're told they have spiritual life. But then in the Garden, something happened.

They made a choice. They chose not to follow God. They chose to do their own good. They chose to do the thing that seemed right in their own eyes. They did the thing that when God wasn't looking, that God isn't around so I can just do whatever I want.

And when they did this, everything fell apart. So their communion with God was broken. They were alienated from God. Instead of having a relationship with God, they're alienated.

I don't think we understand how intense that would have been. Not only are they alienated with God, but they're alienated with each other. They start to fight and bicker and blame.

They're alienated with themselves. They're alienated with creation. They no longer see the truth. The truth has been clouded in shadows and mystery and deception, much like our world today.

[12 : 23] And so they walk in darkness and they don't know the life because it's told to them that the day you eat it, you will die. And they begin to die spiritually.

And I think that from that time on, every one of us, every man, every person in the human race has asked the question, how do I get back to the garden? How do I find God?

How do I find purpose? How do I find truth? How do I find meaning? And in John chapter 14, Jesus makes this statement that is the most controversial statement he's ever made.

I mean, if he had just kept his mouth shut on this one statement, he would have been loved by everybody throughout the history of the world. But he doesn't because he wants people to know who he is.

He wants to know where they're going, where they're going from and where they're going to. And so in that, after Thomas asked that question, well, how do we know?

[13 : 29] Jesus says, I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. And in the middle of those words, that incredibly intense and controversial statement he makes, it changes everything.

everything. It changes all of history. It changes all of religion. It changes all of faith. When he says that, his disciples are shocked. He says some really intense things.

The first thing he says is, I am. Then the minute they heard that, they would have said, he's saying that he's God. And if Jesus is God, then it makes Christianity different than any other religion ever. The minute they heard I am, they would have thought of Egypt, bondage, the burning bush, Moses. They would have gone, he's God. You're right, but he's saying, amen.

John 8, when he, later later, you know, before this, he's in there and he's teaching. He just saves this woman from adultery and he says, you're free. I don't, I no longer, I no longer count your sins against you.

[14:39] Go and sin no more. And then he says this word, he says, I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you will never walk in darkness.

Ever. And the scripture says that when the Pharisees heard that, they knew exactly what he was saying and they said, stop. You cannot say that because you're testifying to yourself and you're not God.

And he goes, even if I stop, it's still true. I am who I am because I know where I came from and I know where I'm going. And Jesus says to us clearly throughout history and throughout time and throughout his word that he is, I am, that he is God.

And if he's God, then it changes everything. Then Christianity isn't like all the other religions. But Christianity isn't like all the other faiths because Jesus is God.

He's come to bring us back to the Father. The question you have to ask yourself today in these few moments is who do you say Jesus is?

[15:54] Is he just a good guy? Is he a moral teacher? Is he kind of cool? The people you walk throughout the rest of this week with will have different thoughts and different ideas of who Jesus is.

But Jesus doesn't want us to miss the very fact that he says, I am God. He doesn't want us to say he's a good teacher. He doesn't want us to say he's cool. He doesn't want us to say he's moral and right and he's pointing us to the right way.

He wants to say he is the way. The question is who do we say he is? He says, I am the way.

The minute he said that they would have just thought of this pathway from one place to the next.

The words are very specific. He's the way from separation and alienation from God.

He's the way from our sin. He's the way from darkness. He's the way from bondage. He's the way from guilt.

[16:59] He's the way from shame. He is the way. There's no other way. And if he's God and he is the way, it makes Christianity so much different than everything else.

it makes it totally different. Because he says he doesn't need anything else. You just need to follow me and I'm going to take you there.

I don't know if you talk to people about the way that they are traveling but I do a lot. Probably the worst conversation I ever had was in 1997 after Christine and I got married.

We went back to Montana to visit my family and we saw two different groups of people in two different ways. We saw Mildred Mucho Montana who's my grandmother the first person to come to faith in the Miller clan that I know of.

And she was about 80 years old. And we didn't know if we would ever see her again and so we talked to her about faith and she loved the Lord. She loved God. She believed in Christ. Her life was totally dedicated to Him and the only thing she says I can't wait until God takes me because I want to go back to heaven.

[18:10] And we're like well you're pretty strong. You're going to be around for a little while longer. And she goes no I want to go. I want to go. I want to be with God. He's it. And then we left Mildred Montana Mucho Miller and went to my other relatives and we started talking to them because we didn't realize and didn't know if we'd ever see them again.

And we started sharing about Jesus as God and that He is the way and they laughed at me. And they said you can't believe that. Come on.

Are you telling me that it's only through Jesus' blood and sacrifice? Are you telling me that somebody had to die for me? Are you telling me that I'm that bad that I needed somebody to die for me? No.

I'm a little bad but I'm not that bad. But see if Jesus is God and that He is the way it changes everything doesn't it?

We left there and Christina looked at me and she said well what what do we do now? And I said we just we just pray for them. And that I hope that sometime before they depart here they understand

who Jesus is.

[19 : 33] So He says I am God I am I am the way I am the path through my blood through my sacrifice only through me it's not me plus something else it's just me that's how you get back to the garden that's how you get back to the paradise because history begins in a garden it's going to end in a garden we're all whether you know it or not we're all trying to get back to the garden.

We're trying to get back to love trying to get back to truth trying to get back to peace trying to get back to God. So I am the way I am the truth the minute He shared that every Jew's ears would have perked up because the philosophers in that time they didn't believe in truth.

The philosophers in Jesus' time said there was no such thing as absolute truth but when Jesus said that the Jewish people who heard Him would have understood immediately what He said they would have said He's saying that He's God because in that day truth equaled God and when He said I am the truth He's saying I am God and so when everybody heard that they would have thought He's God we don't need to ask the question anymore what God is like we just need to look at Jesus because if He and the Father are one then I just need to look at Him and if I look at Him long enough and I fall in love with Him I'm going to know what God is like I'm going to know He's gentle that He's kind that He's personal that He loves us He wants a relationship for us He's full of compassion He's just He's merciful all I need to do to find the truth all I need to do to understand the truth is to look at Jesus and if I look at Jesus we're told that all of God's truth flows from Him and we know God the question for us today would be what truth are you following because all of us in here are following some kind of truth some of us might say my truth is my job my academics some of us might say my truth is my bank account my God truth

God same some of us might say my truth is my education some of us might say my truth is my relationships and how I'm going down this path all of us are following some truth the question is what is the truth that you're following today the next question I want to ask you is what do you do when that truth fails you what do you do when your relationship breaks up what do you do when you get fired unexpectedly what do you do when you try your best and do everything you can to get into that perfect school or program or job and you don't and you've done everything that was required of you and you don't get in what do you do when your truth fails you what do you do we had a friend that several of the staff members were trying to befriend these last two years and we've met him in different things and two weeks ago his truth failed him and the next day we got this email note that said

I'm so sorry and he took his life the truth that he was holding on to the truth the God the thing that was going to bring him satisfaction and ultimate reality bring him back to the father failed him and Jesus is saying I am that truth and I will never fail you I came from heaven I put on an earth suit I lived as a man I suffered I lived a perfectly sinless life I sacrificed on the cross for you and you and you especially me I really need it no matter where you're at when he says I am the truth what he's saying is I am with you and I'll comfort you and I'll take care of you and you can trust me because I want to take you back to the garden

[24 : 20] I want to take you all the way home what is the truth you're clinging to today is it relationship in Jesus Christ is he your only truth is he your God that you hold on to I think it's easy for me sometimes to forget that truth and add something to my truth maybe that's just me so he says I am the way I am the way the truth and the life finally he says I am the life I am this spiritual life I am the physical life I am what you were meant to have if you hadn't made those poor choices from the very beginning I am here I am here to take you down that path I am here to give you rich and deep and fulfilling life not just in heaven but here on earth the question is do we want that life or are we looking for another type of life you know if

Jesus is God it changes everything he doesn't want you to worship him as a good teacher or a good man he doesn't want you to worship him half heartedly he doesn't want you just to give part of your life to him because if he is God he's worthy of everything everything Jesus said I am the way the truth and the life and the question is what do we do with that today you know as I've studied and looked and talked to friends who have different struggles and who I've had struggles and gone on journeys with I really believe that Christianity is the most just and fair faith and religion in a world that is terribly unjust and terribly unfair let me think about it for a second in Christianity everybody's welcome everybody's welcome you know a while back we had a heart attack and we decided as a family you know maybe our kids are running around we don't have a place for them to run we don't have a place for them to work out we don't have a place for them to do anything we need to get in

the club well I didn't know what it meant to get into a club and so we started looking at all these clubs and we realized man there's a lot of requirements to get into clubs

I mean there's a lot of requirements and there's a lot of money it's kind of like some of the schools we're trying to get into right and you're getting your kids into some of you are signing up before your kids are even born I mean there's a lot of requirements to get into those schools and clubs and so finally he said well there has to be a back door and so we did some research where our friends were going and said okay this is what we're going to do because we need it we need to exercise I justified it in my mind we're going to exercise it's a great place to meet new people who aren't in church our kids can run crazy we can do all these things and so we went to the cricket club and I'm going to go to the cricket club and I'm going to get a sports membership and so I started talking to my friends who were cricketers there and I kind of offended them because I said well how hard can cricket be I mean just I've played baseball for 20 years I have great eye hand coordination and they were really offended so they realized the cricket team didn't need anybody but what needed people was the lawn ball team so I'm just sacrificing for my family because I'm going to be out there in that big old white floppy hat with the white clothes on and I go okay so I spent two days learning lawn ball two days

I do research on the internet I do everything I can do and so we go on our date night Thursday night we go to try outs we come in we walk into the tryouts and I'm ready I've done everything that's required of me I'm ready to go I'm ready to do it and the guy looked at me and he goes we don't need you because we have enough members who are going to play lawn ball usually members don't like to play lawn ball because it's not manly playing lawn ball but they had enough unmanly men I guess I don't know that semester who wanted to play lawn ball so I did all the paperwork I'd done everything but when I got to the club I wasn't allowed in you know Jesus Christ in Christianity says that everyone is welcome everyone the second thing I've learned about Christianity is everyone gets in the same way I mean there's not like a back door there's not like you know a secret way into the misty mountain you know away from the dragons and all those things I just watched the hobbit so I'm trying to be culturally relevant here right but there's not a secret back way everybody gets in the same way everybody gets in the same way and the third thing that's amazing is and this is so it's so it's not so exclusive as people tell you but I think it's the most inclusive because everybody's welcome everybody gets in the same way and everybody the same requirement is done of everybody I mean everybody has to fulfill the same requirement to get into the club and the requirement is this for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him whoever trusts him not whoever does not whoever doesn't do not whoever performs not whoever's really really good you know I always had trouble when people said good people went to heaven because I just like what about me

[30 : 43] I'm not good I mean I know that if only good people go to heaven does that mean what about the dumb and ugly and stupid and mean people what happens to the rest of us Jesus came to put forgiven people in heaven not good people if only good people get to heaven then all of us in here are in big trouble but he came to bring forgiven people there so it's open to everyone the requirements are the same the thing that you have to do is the same and the thing is this whoever believes in me whoever puts their faith and trust in me will have eternal life that's the gospel message it's not about doing it's not about not doing it's not about being but it's about faith in Jesus who says

I am he's God he's the way to take us back he's the truth he's the life that's what Christianity is I know I've flown through this message but I hope you hear my heart here when Jesus says these words he changes everything human history is changed when he says these things and when he does it on the cross so Christianity is not just another faith Christianity is just not just another way to God but if Jesus is God then Christianity is the only way to God and if Christianity is the only way to God the question is what do we do with that message what do we do with that message I struggle with that sometimes it is amazing God's grace and goodness as he continues to teach us and grow us in his faith let's say this chair is Jesus it's Christianity some of us are like this and we say I think Jesus is pretty cool I think he's pretty radical he's really into social justice and I really like those things I admire him a lot and the question I have for you is are you putting faith and trust in him just by standing here and looking at the chair some of us sit on it kind of like this I like Christianity Jesus is pretty cool but let me tell you about myself let me tell you about the things I did yesterday let me tell you about the good things I did let

me tell you what I'm doing in my business how I'm helping people let me tell you about all these things I've done let me tell you about my classroom how I'm nice to everybody let me tell you about my teachers my family how good I am to my wife let me tell you about that am I am I trusting in Jesus I mean if a chair gets knocked out does it affect me this is a class is it this is a sermon you can say yes or no does it affect me no no it doesn't just a little but it doesn't because my feet are here

I'm holding on to something else I'm depending on something else besides Christ and by church but the passage today says that Jesus is God he is the way he's the truth and the life and as Christians we come to Christianity like this we put all of our weight on Christians Christianity we put all of our trust in Christ we put all of who we are in the gospel and what it means in our life we say we say that if Christianity is disproved if all of a sudden they find the body of Christ or something like that happens my life is going to be in terrible terrible trouble because I don't have a plan to I don't have a plan B because as a follower of God I've chosen to rely in Jesus in the message of the gospel so the question for us today is which person are we don't say

[36 : 13] I'm sitting like this well I became a Christian I prayed the prayer I got baptized but you know there's other things I need to keep doing in my life just to make sure I got all my bases covered and the Bible says that when those type of people get to heaven they're and I say this and I want to cry he says when we get to heaven if you're like that he's going to say depart from me for I never do you you just had this idea of what it was like to follow me but you didn't give your life to me you gave your life to your work or to your family or to your finances or whatever those are good things but they're not truth only Jesus is true to follow Christ means to put all of our faith and trust in God in his word who he is all out I don't know if you're in here and you've never done that maybe you're thinking well that's something

I've never heard before saw illustrated that way I wonder how I really am with because this is the question I want you to ask this week are we living like this Jesus pretty cool are we living like this this is pretty cool but I doing all these things I got my my my my my you know beds covered just in case something happens and they find something are we living like this Jesus is God and if he's God he's worthy of all of me everything does that make sense so when Jesus says I am the way and the truth and the life he changes everything he upsets half the world he freaks you out he freaks me out he freaks my friends out the question is as I examine all these faiths is it true and if it's true then I need to give all of myself to it if it's not true if you're here and you think well I'm not sure please keep studying please keep asking questions please keep going to community groups please keep doing all these things because we want you to be sure we want you to understand who Jesus is why he came why he came to bring us back why we needed somebody to die for us how sinful and bad we are but if you're sure my prayer is that before you leave here before you go to bed tonight or this week that you would confess that to God repent of the idols and the sin and the selfishness and the control that you have in your own life and invite Christ to come in Father I thank you for this day we thank you for your goodness and for your mercy in our life we just thank you that you are God we thank you that you loved us so much that you sent your son Jesus to die for us no other faith no other religion would ever say that their founder died for people that would be stupid no other faith would say that their Lord I pray for those of us who are just looking at the chair today I pray that they would hear this message they would ask their friends they would explore they would examine but more importantly Lord I pray that you would open their heart you would open their eyes and their ears and they would see Jesus as he truly is they would understand the gospel and their incredible need for a confess my sins and my selfishness and I surrender my life to you just help me to live in a way that's pleasing to you Father I pray for those of us who are sitting here and at one time we made a commitment into our faith and we prayed the prayer we got dedicated we got baptized whatever it meant like in our journey to get to this place today but if we're honest we look at our life we realize that we only have half of our rear end sitting on the gospel and of you and of Christianity and the rest of it is firmly planted in our deeds and in our works and in our values and in the things we haven't done and as we look at people around us we say we are really not that bad we are only 48% bad but we're 52% good we pray for those of us like that in here that we would just understand anew and fresh that you've come to save us and to walk with you and to believe in you and to have faith in you is to sit fully and to give all of ourselves to you because if you were God you are worthy of all of ourselves Father I pray for those of us who are walking with you Father we know

and you know because you had to send your son because we're not good because we realize that if only good people got into heaven good Christians good Buddhists good atheists good Aussies then Jesus is a liar but good people don't get there forgiven people get there and so

[41 : 47] Lord we come before you and we worship you and we just thank you that you thought of us and you desire to bring us back to the garden back to truth and Lord I pray for our church thank you that you have given us a place to meet thank you that you bring tithe in that we can continue to do outreaches thank you that you bring staff and ways Lord without the family working together we would be no hope we would be hopeless and so we worship you and your goodness and these gifts that you give us help us not to take them for granted help us not to take you for granted help us not to be walking as a church with two feet on the ground and not fully rested in your gospel and your truth and we they don't know your son but we have that message that is the truth and is the way and is the life and help us to as a family as a community go out into these areas at work and play and wherever you send us today and this week and to speak confidently of how beautiful and wonderful your son

Jesus is and how he is God and he changes everything help us to realize as we walk out here that our faith is not just one of many faiths but it is the faith convict our hearts of what we do with that today help us to share it with friends and neighbors and family wherever you send us in this journey so Lord we come before you and we are just in awe of you help us always to be in awe of you in Jesus Christ we are two years old on this journey as a church and one of the things we tell people all the time is we believe that community is essential in the growth of walking with the Lord and encouraging each other and bringing each other along and so we have community groups everywhere in

Hong Kong Island we have 16 right now and we encourage you we don't ask you to do a lot we just ask you to get into community group when you leave here because that's where we think life on life happens and one of our desires is we think of as our distinct as the gospel and mission and community that's our three points the gospel community mission that's those are our main ideas as a church was to have these community groups gather together and look out around where they live and see where things are broken and as they see things that are broken and need to be fixed as a body as a community group and as a church to do that together and it's been encouraging to see what people have been doing as outreaches and other things and acts of service so I wanted to ask Mike to come up Mike come on up buddy Mike you see the banner back there and share what God has put on their heart good morning everybody in your bulletin you have this leaflet from us the Kennedy Town community group we're acting on behalf of you we're all part of the same community here and obviously we're sharing this with you in the sense that we're unified we want to grow together we want to share our journey with our church asked us to be more missional in our approach and in our group we prayed and our intentionality centered on a group called the St. Barnabas which is a shelter for the poor and elderly in Hong Kong and so we had to leave our comfort zones and go out and attempt to understand what missionality was and to give a living worship and what that meant in our lives and like in about November last year we enacted it and we felt very comfortable with the fellowship that we found we loved this community they were so warm they were so courageous they opened their hearts to us and as little as we gave them we got back about 100% more and these people are some of the most vulnerable in Hong Kong they are fragile they are obviously poor and I think to use a bit of Tobinism they are the disremembered part of our community they have forgotten they are unseen and St.

[46 : 36] Barnabas gives them food shelter comfort fellowship but most importantly what St. Barnabas gives them is hope that there is going to be a better tomorrow and a better life and when these people pray and they ask for their daily bread they mean it literally they need their daily bread and they need protection every single day they vulnerable so if it wasn't for St.

Barnabas then they wouldn't get that and a lot of communities around Hong Kong want to just close down in Wain Chai so there's more and more people that grow that need people and need the support and without St.

Barnabas they wouldn't get it so if St. Barnabas is supporting them then the least we can do as a community is to support St. Barnabas and all we can do is pray so we can say thank God for St. Barnabas and we can also give them things we can give them our time they need servers as I say this community is growing they've got about 500 people that need support right now they can only feed a couple of hundred and as I said there's more and more people they need people to give

fellowship they do Bible study they need people to help them reach out to communities they need people to go and be trained as outreach counselors and more importantly they need money to train people it takes money to feed people it takes money they don't have enough facilities they don't have enough chairs so a place like this if you think about it's quite ridiculous on a Sunday because there's just not enough places at the table for them to share bread and so it's in our hearts to help them out in the short term we're asking this church community to fund about 16,000

Hong Kong dollars part of St. Barnabas' purpose is to regenerate to give these people some hope that people love them and care for them and give them some pride and dignity and for Chinese need to be fed and that \$16,000 goes to feed them buys them their food gives them their gifts their daily necessities toilet brushes deodorants just things to keep them with human dignity they need to pay their staff they are trying to change their building they've got an upstairs area they've got some land they want to convert into agriculture where they can plant herbs and spices and get these guys just for the short term we're asking for you to help us now we've got till the 31st of January to collect the money in the bulletin explains how to do it what to do and when to do it and we have a counter at the back or table which has a community chest type money meter so you can see every week that you come and how much money we're collecting so as staff this is amazing for us because we know there's other community groups doing that also so that's why we want you in a community group to serve and that's why we believe

[50 : 03] God has us as a church here is to look out and not just deal with the soul which is most important but to deal with food and hunger and things that people need in our community so as you think about that they're selling muffins and I think in the back and any donation actually we'll go through the church and the church will fund that and our prayer is that every community group will adopt something like that where we're at also we have these little red packets I think they're \$20 for a pack of 10 or 20 of them inside is a gospel presentation I use these all the time with our doormans and people it's in English and in Chinese and it's a great tool so they're on sale back there again we're making no money out of any of these things actually everything that we do as a church comes through your donations as you tithe and give back to the Lord we feel like that's what we do as a church as we understand what Christ has done we give back so we can reach out for others to hear that also so with that

I know the message today maybe for some of you it's the first time you've heard it maybe for some of you you've heard it a billion times and you haven't worked out on it or you haven't made a decision our prayer is that you would not leave here that you would allow this week to finish without thinking about that who is Jesus why did he come and what is my response to that and we would say that response to that is to worship him and to give your life to him let me pray for us father we just thank you for this day we thank you for this venue I just I'm laughing at what other church venue can kids play dodgeball and we have 50 kids back there playing dodgeball and we just are thankful that you have given us this place and we look forward to the next place that you give us as we continue to grow we pray for the outreaches we pray for the people in our world that don't know you father most importantly we just worship you and thank you for your son help us to understand him to fall more in love with him to understand the gospel message and how it is lived out every moment of our life not just to do salvation but every moment we walk with that strength and power in our lives

Lord we love you we pray all these things in your son Jesus name amen next Sunday we're right here so we're going to start a little earlier God bless you have a great week