

Losing Our "Selfie"

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[0 : 0 0] And so when Kevin said I could preach on anything today, so I have a more relaxed style, so actually I hoped that I could finish in a time where we could have a question and answer time afterwards. But he said you could preach on anything today, and I said, okay, what can I preach on? Because I know we always want to be about the Word and God's Spirit and what God's doing in his life and so in people's lives. And so I thought I would just preach on this verse that I have been working on in my heart for 43 years, 43 years. So you would think that God came into my life and opened my eyes to Jesus when I was 10 years old. My family were not Christians. They were just, my dad was a military man. So, but Jesus came into my life and showed me God, the Holy Spirit, and just, I fell in love. And not soon afterwards, this verse, the verse that you read today, was this verse that came into my mind and to my heart, and I started to struggle with it. So I have been struggling with this for 43 years. So you would think if you've done something for 43 years, you should have it perfect, right?

And the amazing thing about the Christian life is, is that God and the Holy Spirit always has a way of turning your life upside down and showing you different aspects of who you are and how much you really need him. Because often we think we have our life all together and we can do it. And so this is the passage today. So I want to share it with you and hopefully you can struggle with me now for the next 43 years. So when I come back in five years, you can tell me how much I bothered you by giving you this verse to think about, which is awesome to be bothered by God's word. So I want to start with a story. A friend told me this story. He and some buddies were canoeing down a river in Northern America. The water was very, very, very, very, very cold. And they were on this canoe trip in Maine. And as they were going down this river, they looked up ahead and they saw this waterfall in this dam, this big dam.

And most of the people left. They got out of the water because they said there's just no way, the water was freezing, there's no way they can navigate, they could do it. But one guy said, I can do this. And so he went and he tried to navigate his way through the dam and he got caught in the waves of the water and he went over the waterfall. And when he went over the waterfall, like my notes just did, when he went over the waterfall, he fell out of his canoe. And he fell out of his canoe and the water was very, very, very, very cold, right? And the dam is like this.

And at the base of the water where he fell into was this whirlpool. And this whirlpool was swirling around and he's trying to fight this whirlpool because this whirlpool is trying to suck him in. And in his mind, he thinks, if I go into this whirlpool, I'm going to die. It's going to kill me. I'm going to drown. Now his friends are helpless because he's so far into the water. The water is ice cold. They can't help. They're yelling. They're screaming. They're throwing ropes. No ropes can get to him. And he's just fighting. And he about to get away from the whirlpool and then it sucks him back in. And he's swimming and he's swimming. He's about to get away from the whirlpool and it sucks him back in. And the water is so cold that eventually he dies. He dies of hypothermia. And the friend said that the moment he died and his body relaxed, his body went into that whirlpool and it went under the water. And like three seconds later, the body popped up 20 yards down the river.

[4 : 1 6] And if he was alive, he could have swam to the shore and saved himself. But he spent so much time struggling and struggling against the current that he had died. And his friends looked at this and they thought, what a tragedy. Because the thing, the whirlpool that he thought was going to kill him would have actually saved him. Because he would have gone down three seconds. He would be over here. He could climb out and he could survive. And the reason I tell you this story is because in his world, safety looked counterintuitive. The safe thing would have been to go into the hole.

But in his mind, he thought that would have brought death. And that's the message of this story today. That often when we walk with God, God's going to take us to places that look at the world. That it's going to look like it's death. That it's going to look like it's very dangerous. That it looks like it's going to be impossible. It looks like there's no way that I can get out of it.

And to save ourselves is going to be counterintuitive. You know, counterintuitive means the opposite of what you think is going to happen. And so many of us today in the world are going to struggle like my friend did in the cold water trying to fight God in their walk with God.

But if they've just given up and let God take control of their life, they would be free. Does that make sense? So I ask a lot. I ask a lot of times. I'm going to ask, does that make sense? Because sometimes it doesn't make sense to me.

[6 : 27] So the passage we read today is in the life of Jesus. And it's the last five days of Jesus' life. So for the last three years, Jesus and his disciples have been going around to Galilee.

They've been doing amazing things. They've been feeding 5,000 people. They've been healing people physically. They've been healing people spiritually. They're casting out demons. They're raising people from the dead.

They're bringing people hope. They're bringing people freedom. And all of a sudden, Jesus and his followers are coming into Jerusalem for the Passover. Now, Jerusalem is a city that's normally like 20,000 people, like the size of Pokh Fulam or like Baggio Villa.

But in this celebration, there's over 1 million people there. I mean, everybody comes to the temple because they want to celebrate. And Jesus is coming, and he's riding on this white donkey.

And it's this prophecy that happened many, many hundreds of years ago about the Savior coming to Jerusalem. And all the people who have been following Jesus, they're on the road, and they're waving these branches, and they're singing, Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna, which means, come save me, come quickly, I need you, come save me.

[7 : 48] Because in their mind, they think that freedom's going to happen because Jesus is going to come, and he's going to bring power. And he's going to fight the Romans. And he's going to bring power.

And he's going to fight the leaders, the religious leaders. And so they want this freedom that's going to happen. But the passage in the Bible says that that's not what Jesus came to do.

Jesus came for one reason. Jesus came to die on a cross. And we're told later on that he came to die for you and for me.

And that if he didn't die, if he didn't give his life, then you and I would be lost. We would still have God's wrath, God's judgment, that we'd have to fix on our own, but we can't do that.

And so Jesus, all the noise, save us, save us, power, strength. But what he really is going to do is he's going to save you and me by dying.

[8 : 54] Does that make sense? And so the passage says that Jesus is probably in the temple and he's teaching. And we're told that these Greek men come up to talk to Jesus. Now Greek just means anybody who's not Jewish.

So these non-Jewish men come up to talk to Jesus and they go to Philip and Andrew because Philip and Andrew have Greek names. And so they said, hey, we're going to go talk to the Greek men. The Greek men are going to bring us to Jesus and Jesus is going to answer all our questions. We really don't know why they're there. But the interesting thing is that when Jesus hears that men are there to visit him, he answers very strangely. He doesn't say, yeah, yeah, yeah, come on in, let's do dinner.

Or he doesn't say, no, no, no, I'm too busy. Or he doesn't say, yeah, yeah, put them on my schedule. Schedule them in and I'll see them Tuesday. He says something really strange.

He says this, he says, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. And what he's saying there is when he says the hour, he means the hour of his death.

[10 : 00] That the time for him has come to die. Glorified. And that word glorified there is a really, really powerful word in Greek. And it means to be made heavy.

To be made important. To be made of ultimate importance. To be made of ultimate significance. To be made the most important thing. And so what Jesus is telling all of us is he says, hey, when I go to the cross and I die, God's going to do something counterintuitive in my death.

Instead of making me weak, he's going to do something awesome. And because he's going to do something awesome, you and I are here today at Watermark.

Because he chose to give his life instead of keep his life. So what I want to do is I want to quickly, and I don't know how much time I have, but I want to look at the passage and I want to look at three things really quickly.

I want to look at a principle. I want to look at a practice. And I want to look at a promise. You got that? A principle, a practice, a promise. A principle. First, a principle.

[11:15] It's found in verse 24. So when you look at your verse 24 and you read it, whenever you see the words truly, truly, in Greek it actually means amen, amen.

So usually you put amen, amen after a really important statement. Like so-and-so is going to win the World Cup. Amen. Like really important, right?

But when Jesus uses amen here in the beginning, when he says amen in the beginning of the statement, what he's saying is, hey guys, listen up. Because what I'm about to tell you is the most important thing you need to know.

What I'm about to tell you as my followers is this is really important, so listen up. And so this is what he says. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. So Jesus uses this illustration of farming. And it's like he has this piece of grain or rice in his hand.

[12:18] And he says, if you just keep the grain of rice in your hand and keep it here, you think you're keeping it safe. But you're not really. Because it just stays by itself.

And it's not safe. But if you open your hand and you give your life away, that grain of rice falls into the ground.

And it looks like it's going to die. But it doesn't die. It produces this fruit over and over and over of more rice and more rice and more rice.

And so Jesus is saying, hey, this is what's going to happen to my life. I could guard my life. I could fight off the Romans. I could do anything. But instead, I'm going to give my life for you.

So that 2,000 years later, you are the fruit of his life. But what he's also saying is we as watermark, we need to hold our life open also.

[13:25] And we need to be willing to give our life in anything that God gives us back to God. And that is scary. And that's difficult.

And sometimes I struggle with that. Because I want to keep my life. And I want to keep control over my life. And when I look around Hong Kong, and I talk to my friends who aren't in church, they tell me things like, oh, man, you need to look out for yourself, dude.

That sounds Mexican, didn't it? Whenever I try to sound Chinese, I always sound Hispanic. I'm sorry. Too long in Texas. But Hong Kong, my friends say, look out for yourself.

Take care of yourself. You only live once. If you don't take care of yourself, no one else is going to take care of yourself. You need to watch out because they're out for you.

Don't be too friendly to people because they're going to use you. That's the message I hear. But the message of the Bible and the message of Jesus, and the messages he wants for us at Watermark, is that don't worry about yourself.

[14:46] Because God will take care of you. The same God who took care of Jesus will take care of you. And so there's this principle, and the principle is this.

Life comes by dying. Can you repeat that for me? Life comes by dying. If you try to keep your life, Jesus says you're going to lose it.

But if you give your life to God, he's going to do something awesome and something amazing in it. So that's the principle.

The second thing I want us to look at is the practice. And the practice is found in verse 25. And this is a word that we get in trouble with all the time in my family.

And the practice basically is paraphrased, and this is what the practice says. The practice says, If you love your life, and the Greek word there is suke.

[15:52] Suke. Suke means me, my stuff, my schedule, my honor, my pride, my power, my reputation, my job, my family, my three houses in Hong Kong where I live in one, I rent two.

All these things, right? That's the way it used to be, right? It still is, right? So those are mine, mine. And Jesus says, If you love your suke, what's he say?

You're going to lose it. But if you hate your life, now this is a really strong word, guys, because in my family, we can't use the word hate.

Whenever the kids say hate to each other, I hate you. Wow, we just get in trouble, and Christina gets all angry, and when Christina gets angry, everybody gets angry, and, you know, it's just, it's not good.

But what he says here is, if you hate your life, if you, if you love God more than the things of the world, that if you love God more than the things of Hong Kong, that if you love God more than comfort in health, in your reputation, in your money, in the awesome schools that your kids go to, in the country club memberships, that if you love God more than those things, then you're going to have this amazing, amazing life.

[17 : 27] Because those things in the culture of Hong Kong look so good, but in God's kingdom, they bring death. And so the passage says this, and I'm going to say something that's going to be very hard, and you can argue with me later, you could peeping me, criticize me, right?

But you can argue with me, but this is what the passage says. The passage says, in this room, the passage says, in Hong Kong, there are only two types of people.

Two types. They're the people who love themselves. And they're the people who love Jesus. They're the people who worship themselves.

And they're the people who worship Jesus. They're the people who try to build this kingdom so that when people look at them, they go, ah. And they're the people who give their things away.

So then they look at them, they go, God. They're the people who live and look like Hong Kong. Or it's the people who live and look like Jesus.

[18 : 46] So I've got to ask you the question. Which one are you? Be honest. If I were to follow you around today or tomorrow or next week and I were to look at how you use your time, how you treat your family, how you use your money, how you love people, how you sacrifice for others, which person would I say that you are?

Maybe I should ask the question, which person do you want to be? Because I struggle in that area. And the interesting thing in this passage is that Jesus doesn't hide anything.

You know, I was coming over on an airplane and we used our frequent flyers to come here and we thought, great, we're going to come to Hong Kong, we have frequent flyers, free miles. But then we tried to use our free miles, there were all these rules and regulations, stipulations, and some of the reading is like really, really, really small, right?

And I was just thinking, I get free miles. No. You have to do this, you have to do this, you have to do this, you have to do this. And the awesome thing about the gospel and this passage is Jesus doesn't hide anything.

Jesus says right away, hey, my gift of eternal life to you is free. It's this gift. I gave it to you on the cross.

[20 : 25] I love you so much, I'm an innocent man, I died for you, I give it away. It's a free gift. Now after we take that gift, Jesus says, we start to change.

Because we thought of that free gift so much and we thought of how God loves us so much that we start to treat people differently.

We start to love people differently. We start to take people differently. We start to take care of people differently. So the gift is free.

But when you come into the family, you start to act like the family. And you can see my kids up here, we all start to act like each other and they look like each other and some of us are more handsome than other people.

But we act the same, right? And that's what Jesus is saying in this passage. It's interesting, in verse 25, he says, he who loves his life loses it.

[21 : 31] He who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. And that word hate there in Jesus' world means a comparison. So what Jesus is saying is like this.

I love pizza and rice. I don't really like rice. Okay, so that's a bad, that's a bad example. I've eaten too much rice. But let's say, I love pizza and hamburgers.

Compared to my love for pizza, I hate hamburgers. Ming Bai, make sense? I said, I love my wife and I love my children.

But compared to my love for my wife, Christina, I hate my children. Now, I love them both, right? You got to hear me.

Because sometimes people hear this and they go, oh, Jesus wants us to hate people. No. What he's saying is, compared to your love for dim sum, you should hate Diet Coke or something like

that.

[22 : 43] Does that make sense? So it's a very, very powerful word. What Jesus is really saying is this. When we come into his family, our love for him our love for Jesus should make everything else that we used to love in the world look like hate.

Look like nothing. So that's what happened in that passage we read about Mary. Mary, Sister Martha, and Mary is there and she comes into this meeting in verse 8, 1 through 8, and she comes into this meeting and Mary does some very strange things.

Mary comes into the meeting, she lets her hair down. You never do that. Mary comes into the meeting and she's weeping and crying and showing emotion. You would never do that. She's losing her dignity.

She's losing face. Everything's bad. No good. Mary comes into the meeting and she gives this perfume bottle. This perfume bottle was 300 denarii.

Now there were not banks in Jesus' day. People lived one denarii for one day. So this thing that Mary had maybe was the most expensive thing in her house.

[24 : 07] It was something that she was guarding. She was protecting it. She was hoping that one day if life got really difficult she would have this money to save herself.

And so she comes in and she breaks this bottle and pours it all onto Jesus as a sacrifice and an offering.

And everybody around her is like, what are you doing? You need to take care of yourself. One day you're going to have a rainy day and you're not going to have a job and who's going to take care of you?

But what Mary was saying was this. Compared to my love for Jesus, everything else looks like hate. And I can give Jesus the most important things in my life because Jesus is going to take care of me. And so Mary was willing to get rid of her sacrifice, her reputation, her wealth, her security, her ego.

[25 : 15] She just laid it all out there and gave it to Jesus because she was in love with Jesus. So every time I read this passage for 43 years, I have to ask myself, do I love Jesus like that?

Am I willing to just give him my ego, my reputation, my American Express card that I always rely on, my kids, my pastorate?

Do I love Jesus more than all those things? And the passage says that as we look at what Jesus has done for us, we realize how much he loves us.

And that if we build our life on anything else but Jesus, we're going to get lost. We're going to fall apart.

Does that make sense? Yes. You got a Dan? Yes or no? Yes, makes sense? No, it makes sense. Dan? Dan, I'm glad to see you finally married Soda. I'm glad.

[26 : 39] Yes. I grew up in the north, Montana. So if you're from Canada and here we call Canada Northern Montana.

Because you want to be just like Montana. Right, Millen? I remember hearing this story of this lumberjack. And he was told to go out and cut down all these trees.

It was about three acres of trees, a lot of trees. His boss said, you need to go in there and you need to chop down all these trees because we're going to cut them all down and we're going to use them for lumber and then we're going to plant new trees.

And so the guy went out there and he's looking at all the trees and he starts to chop on one tree and as he's chopping on this tree he looks up and about four trees down there's an eagle and the eagle is building his nest in this tree.

And the lumberjack is thinking, oh, crap. Can I say crap here? Okay. I get in trouble when I say crap in America. They're like, oh man. So the lumberjack says crap.

[27 : 55] I'm going to have to cut that tree down. And the eagle's building a nest in it. So he goes over to the tree, he takes his axe and takes the flat end and he just kind of beats it against the tree.

Boom, boom, boom. The eagle freaks out and the eagle gets up because the eagle's building the nest and the eagle sees the lumberjack and the eagle flies away and the eagle flies away to another tree about 20 yards away.

So the lumberjack's watching that and he's like, I've got to cut that tree down too. So he goes over to that tree and he takes the axe and he hits it against the tree and it shakes the bird up and the bird stops making its nest and it flies over to another tree.

The eagle does this four times. Finally, the lumberjack goes over and he hits the fourth tree and the eagle flies away and there's a mountain and the eagle starts to build his nest in the mountain. And the story tells us that no matter what tree you build your house in, in the end, all the trees are going to come down.

[29 : 07] You're going to build your life on your health. You're going to build the tree of success. You're going to build a tree of popularity. You're going to build a tree of reputation or money.

In the end, all those trees are going to fall down. And the only tree or the only thing that's going to stand is the rock.

that rock is Jesus Christ. So if you build your life on anything else, if you love anything else more than you love Jesus, you're going to be lost.

Jesus wants us to know that so that we can love him. So there's a principle, there's a practice, hate your life, and there's a promise, and the promise is this.

if you trust God, if you let that piece of rice fall to the ground, if you start to look more like God instead of the things of Hong Kong, if you hate the things that you used to think were awesome because now Jesus is even more beautiful, the promise is that God will never leave you, that he's always there.

[30 : 38] and that he will honor you just like he honored his son. And he's going to do something awesome in your life if you let him.

Does that make sense? I was counseling a friend. One of the great privileges I have as a pastor is I get to talk to people whose lives are in trouble often.

And this friend three weeks ago was talking to me and he said, I've made some choices, I've actually made some choices for God and I feel like my life is out of control.

My wife is leaving me, my kids are crazy, my kids are crazy, I feel like God has abandoned me. Have you ever felt like God has abandoned you?

The passage says it's God's children. God has abandoned me. God has abandoned me. I feel like God is Jesus. That the only person that God has ever abandoned is Jesus.

[32 : 01] Because Jesus hung on a cross and he cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And the message of the gospel and the message of the passage is God forsook his son so that one day he would not have to forsake you.

There's a principle, you've got to die to live. It looks counterintuitive. When you're doing it, he's going to ask you to do these things and you're going to go, man, if I really tithe that much, if I really give up one of my houses for God's kingdom, who's going to take care of me?

It's going to be death. If I really trust the Lord with my children instead of trying to guard them and manage them and do these things, what's going to happen to them?

If I really speak up in my office space the next time somebody says something that just isn't right, what's going to happen to me? The passage says that God's going to take us to a place that's going to look like death, but if we trust him, he is going to do something awesome.

There's a practice, hate your life, and there's a promise that God is always with you and he'll never leave you and he's going to honor you as you trust him and walk with him.

[33 : 45] We're about to enter into a time of communion and I was praying about how to end this sermon because I have no idea because I've been praying about this sermon for 43 years, but my prayer for you, Watermark, as an awesome church, I don't know what God is calling you to die to.

I don't know what God is calling you to hate more than you love Jesus.

You know that. God's Spirit will teach you that. about 150 years after Jesus died, 150 years, there was a large plague, you know, plague like a disease.

The disease hit every city in the Roman Empire. You can read about it. All the historians talk about it. There is a plague and this bubonic plague or some kind of plague.

It's hitting every city in the Roman Empire about 150 years after Jesus died. Thousands and thousands and thousands of people are dying. I mean, people are just leaving their family in the city to die because they are so afraid of dying they're escaping and they're running away.

[35 : 27] And so the cities are just filled with sick and dying people except for the Christians. And the Christians said, hey, Christ died for us.

We don't have anything else to fear. What would it look like if we stayed and we loved these people? people? What would it look like if we stayed and we took care of these people?

And so the Christians did it. And you know what? The Christians died by the thousands because they were giving their life to help their enemies and helping the relatives of their enemies and they were taking care of people and they didn't have immunity.

They actually died serving what God wanted them to do. But a little while after the plague left and all the people came back into the cities, the church, which just used to be really small, exploded because all these people said, I don't know too much about Jesus, but I know love and I know when people sacrifice themselves for their enemy and I know that's what Jesus did on the cross.

And so because the Christians in the early church were willing to give their life, the world was changed. I don't know what the next plague in Hong Kong is.

[37 : 15] I know that there's a lot of serious things happening in Hong Kong. I know that there are a lot of difficult decisions you have to make as a church and as individuals.

But I do know that as you walk with the Lord and hold your life and your church with open hand and ask God what does it look like for me to die at my work?

What does it look like for me to die in my marriage? What does it look like for me to die in my friends? What does it look like for me to die in my sports club? What does it look like for me to serve people who I don't like?

The passage says that as you do that God will honor that and he will take that little bit of sacrifice and do something awesome for his kingdom.