

# Christ-Centred Missions

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 23 August 2020

Preacher: Kevin Murphy

- [ 0 : 00 ]     The scripture reading today comes from Philippians 2 verses 19 to 30. I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.
- For I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.
- But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father, he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me.
- And I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier.
- And your messenger and minister to my need. For he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.
- [ 1 : 07 ]     Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him. And not only on him, but on me also. Lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.
- I am the more eager to send him therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men.
- For he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. This is God's word to us today.
- Okay, thank you, my beautiful wife. We are continuing to work through the book of Philippians. And we are about halfway through.
- If you're new to Watermark, we are working through this amazing, amazing book in the New Testament. And I encourage you to get hold of a Bible, maybe ask someone to lend you one or download one, and read this book with us.
- [ 2 : 15 ]     It's a wonderful book of the New Testament. Now, this passage that we're looking at today follows on very closely from the flow of thought of the last couple of weeks.
- There's a flow of logic that Paul is applying here. And so let's just recap where we've come from so we can see what it is that Paul's actually saying to us today.
- But maybe actually, let me just interrupt my own flow of thought and say, let's just pray quickly that God will speak to us this morning. So, Heavenly Father, again, as we come to your word, we come with humility and trepidation.
- God, it's incredible how you've put together your Bible, your word. And this morning, God, we pray that you'll speak to us. We pray that you'll grip our hearts. Lord, we pray that you'll allow us to see inside of our own hearts.
- And you'll allow us to see the motivations of our hearts. That, God, we really will respond to you. Christ, won't you not just fashion and shape our behavior, but shape our hearts, God.
- [ 3 : 17 ]     God, may our hearts be shaped around the gospel and who you are. God, we pray that we, not that we will be numbered with the earthly wealth you're successful, but that we really will experience the true blessings of spiritual blessings, God.

And so, we pray that for ourselves. We pray that your word come and speak to us. In your wonderful name, amen. Okay. So, sorry about that. I forgot to pray a little earlier. But prayer is more important than what I've got to say.

We want God to speak to us. So, that's okay. So, remember a few weeks ago, two weeks ago, in fact, we looked at Philippians chapter 2. And Paul writes this amazing passage where he says, Do nothing out of selfish ambition or out of a sense of self-importance, but consider others more significant than yourself.

Let each of you not serve his own interests, but the interests of others. And then Paul gives kind of the gold standard of motivation. And he says, For the reason for this is, remember how Jesus treated you.

That though Jesus was God, he didn't grasp or hold on to his godness, but he poured himself out. He laid aside his majesty in humility.

[ 4 : 29 ] He took on humanness and ended up on the cross. And it's in a picture of Christ's incredible selfless service, pouring himself out for the sake of others.

And not just anyone, not just his friends, but his enemies. The very people that had shaken their fists at him and said, We don't want you to be our God. And had rebelled against him. Jesus poured out his life for us.

And Paul says that life of Jesus becomes the paradigm for the Christian life. Remember, a Christian is not just somebody who believes in the existence of Jesus or the deity of Jesus.

Even demons believe that. A Christian is someone who's following Jesus. Who says, I want you to be my Lord, my King. Whose life is imitating the life of Jesus as they follow him as Lord and as King.

Pouring out our lives like Jesus did for the interests of others. And Paul actually uses a great illustration here. He says his life, like Jesus, is he's pouring it out for others.

[ 5 : 32 ] And he says, my life is like a drink offering which is given in the service of others. And the illustration here is how in the Old Testament, someone would bring an offering to the temple.

And they'd bring their offering. But the offering wasn't quite complete. Maybe a goat or a lamb. It was completed when the priest would bring a drink offering.

Maybe a glass of wine or some kind of sacred drink. And pour it out on the offering. It was a way of completing the offering of the worshiper. Paul says, your life, you've offered your life to Jesus.

And I am pouring myself out like a drink offering. I'm giving myself away to supplement, to complete your worship and affection and adoration for God.

This is the pattern of Christ's life. This is the pattern of Paul's life. And then we saw how Paul uses this phrase when he encourages the Philippians to do the same. He says, therefore, work out your own salvation.

[ 6 : 33 ] And what that means is, you Philippians, I'm calling you to live out this gospel-shaped life that has been given to you. Because you've been given salvation, this free gift of grace, we need to live it out.

And we saw that salvation doesn't just mean forgiveness of sins. Salvation doesn't just mean that one day when you get to heaven or when you die, you get to heaven not to go to hell.

Salvation in the Bible means that once we were separated from God and now we've been reconciled, we've been reunited. Once sin got in the way and there was division, but now we've been brought back to God.

Salvation means we are united, our union with Jesus by the work of the Spirit and work in our hearts. So now that we experience not only His forgiveness and grace, but also His love, His acceptance, His fatherhood, His welcome.

Salvation means no longer living independent of God, but walking in deep relationship with Him. Salvation also means that once we lived for ourselves and our own self-interest, where once we were curved in on ourselves, making ourselves king and lord and our ruler, now we realize that God is king.

[ 7 : 51 ] And our lives no longer revolve around ourselves, our lives start to revolve around Him. And salvation means that rather than living inwardly for ourselves, we now get to live outwardly.

For God and Christ our King, but also for others. Remember, hundreds of years ago, everyone thought that the sun revolved around the earth.

We were the center of the universe. Until some scientists discovered, actually, we revolve around the sun. Salvation has come to the place where once we thought we were the center of the universe, life revolved around us, to come to realize that actually, life revolves around the sun, the Son of God.

Our lives revolve around Him. And so salvation is not just pardoned from sins, it's reconciled relationship with God, where He becomes our life and our reason for being, following Him and orientating our whole lives around Him.

And so Paul says, live out this salvation, work out this salvation, work out this Christ-centered, gospel-shaped life. Imitating Jesus, setting your heart on Him.

[ 8 : 57 ] So that's where we've come from. Okay? Now, in this passage we're going to look at today, in chapter 2, verse 19 to 30, Paul is going to do two things.

The first thing that he's doing is he's giving some travel plans to the Philippians. There are these two guys that are with him, Timothy and Epaphroditus, and he's updating the Philippians on their travel plans.

But the second thing that Paul's doing, the deeper thing that he's doing, is he's holding up these two lives, Timothy and Epaphroditus, as examples, almost exhibit A, exhibit B, of what he's been talking about the whole time, of what the Christ-centered, gospel-shaped, others-focused life looks like.

Okay? So let's look at what the passages say and see how that makes sense. So firstly, let's understand the travel plans. Look at the first section, verse 19 to 24 with me.

Paul's writing to these Philippians, and he's wanting to tell them that he's going to send Timothy. So Paul's in prison in Rome, and he's going to send Timothy to visit them.

[ 10 : 04 ] And the reason he's doing so is because Paul has heard from Epaphroditus, who we're going to meet in a few minutes' time, about the opposition and the challenges that the Philippians are facing.

Remember in chapter 1, Chris preached about it a few weeks ago. Paul writes and he says, Stand firm, one heart, one mind, not afraid of any opposition you face. Paul has heard from Epaphroditus that the Philippians are facing this opposition.

And so he wants to find out how they're doing. And so he's going to send Timothy to them, get a report, and then Paul is going to meet Timothy somewhere else, maybe Ephesus or one of the other cities.

But he's sending Timothy to get a report. And so look what he says in verse 19. I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I may be cheered by news of how you're doing.

Verse 23. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, and I trust in the Lord that I shortly will come myself also. So what's happening here is Paul is in jail.

[ 11 : 07 ] He's expecting that he's about to have a trial. And he's not sure which way the trial will go. He might be executed for disturbing the peace or offending the emperor. But he actually anticipates that God has got more work for him to do.

And so he's anticipating to be released from prison and to go on his way. And so he says, as soon as I find out which way my trial goes, I'll send Timothy so that he can let you know what's happened.

And then as soon as I'm released, I myself will come and visit you. So that's what's happening in that section. And then he writes updating travel plans about Epaphroditus. Look at verse 25.

He says, Now Epaphroditus is the guy who's actually going to carry this letter from Paul in jail to back to Philippi and hand it over to the Philippians.

So Epaphroditus is going to go now. Now Timothy's going to go a little bit later once he finds out what's going to happen in Paul's trial. And then when Paul's released, he's going to come later on further still.

[ 12 : 22 ] But the background that's what's happening here is in Roman times, when somebody got put in jail, the state didn't see it as their responsibility to look after their prisoners.

Things like food and blankets and clothing. They didn't see that as their responsibility. That was the responsibility of the family members or friends of the prisoner. And so Paul gets arrested.

He's under house arrest in jail in Rome. And the Philippians, this other church a couple of hundred miles away, they hear about what happens to Paul.

And they're not a very wealthy church, but they take it upon themselves to take up a financial offering and to send it to Rome by way of this guy Epaphroditus and maybe one or two others to bring this offering to look after Paul's needs while he's in prison.

And so Epaphroditus and one or two friends, they go on this long trip all the way from the city of Philippi around the coast, sail all the way to Rome to look after his needs.

[ 13 : 25 ] But somewhere along the trip, Epaphroditus falls ill. Very ill. In fact, so ill that it looks like he may die.

And word gets back to the church in Philippi that their messenger, their minister, Epaphroditus, is on death's doorstep.

He's about to die. And that's the last thing they hear, is that Epaphroditus is on his deathbed and we don't know what's happened to him. It's kind of like, imagine you get a message, a text message, saying your mom or your child or your brother or sister has collapsed, has fallen over, the ambulance is on their way to the hospital, please pray desperately, we don't know what's happened.

Your heart races and you suddenly feel like, what's happened? But you don't have any news. And so you're desperately trying to phone somebody, what's happened? You can't get through to anybody. And all you've got is the bad news.

And you don't know, what's the situation? Are they awake? Are they conscious? Are they not conscious? Is everything okay? Is everything not okay? And you're frantically wondering, what's happened?

[ 14 : 35 ] Are they okay? That's something of what the Philippians are going through. They've heard news that their dear friend, Epaphroditus, has collapsed and has almost died. And that's the last they've heard.

And they don't have any update. And so Paul is sending Epaphroditus back to them, now that he's better, to show them and to encourage them in their faith, to see that he is doing well and to ease their anxiety.

So that's kind of what's going on here in this passage. That's the first thing. But as we said earlier, there's something deeper going on here. Paul is holding up these two guys as almost examples of what the Christ-centered, gospel-shaped life looks like.

In fact, we actually see a third cameo. We see the life of Paul himself. Let's look at Paul here. Paul is, as we said earlier, he's in jail. And I don't know about you, but I've never been arrested.

I've never been convicted of a crime. Not yet anyway. And if I do, I'm going to call on my friend Tiffany, the barrister, to come and bail me out. And I'm going to put in a good word to Justin Ma, the prosecutor, and hopefully things will go all right.

[ 15 : 48 ] But I've never been in jail, but I have been sick. And when I am sick, I am very grumpy. And I feel very sorry for myself. It's called man flu.

Ladies somehow are able to suffer so much better. Ladies just suffer and don't feel sorry for themselves. But as men, we tend to feel sorry for ourselves when we've got a bit of flu, right?

And so when I get sick, I feel very sorry for myself. Woe is me. And I just am miserable. Paul is not just sick.

He's in jail. And he's in jail for something that he hasn't done. He's just preached the gospel. He hasn't disturbed the peace. He's not trying to overthrow the empire. He's not a rebel or political prisoner.

He's just trying to tell people about the love of Jesus. And because of the jealousy of people, he's ended up in jail and he may lose his life. But look at how Paul responds.

[ 16 : 46 ] While he's here, he's got these friends around him. He's got Timothy. And look at how he describes Timothy. He says, Timothy, he says, I have no one else like him. The Greek word there, actually means someone like-minded or someone like-souled.

He says, I've got nobody else that has the same heart as me. He goes on to describe Timothy as someone who has served me like a son serves his father. Later on, Paul will write to Timothy and he'll say, Timothy, you are my true son in the Lord.

Now, if I was Paul, I would want to keep Timothy close at hand. At least I've got somebody who's with me. I've got a friend, a brother, a son. But what does Paul do?

He sends Timothy on his way to serve the Philippian church. And likewise, look what he does with Epaphroditus. You would think he'd want to keep Epaphroditus close and serve his own needs and look after his own interests.

Maybe Epaphroditus can go and buy some nice clothes, some nice bedding, make his situation a little more comfortable. He describes Epaphroditus as a brother in the Lord, as a fellow worker, as a soldier.

[ 17 : 57 ] He says here in verse 26, you heard that he was, that he almost died. Indeed, he did nearly die, but God had mercy on him, not only on him, but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Paul is saying, if Epaphroditus had died, I would have experienced sorrow upon sorrow. So dear and close is Epaphroditus to Paul.

And yet, rather than Paul holding on to him and saying, listen, I need him for myself, what does Paul do? He pours out his life and says, listen, you guys need him more than me.

I'll send him on his way. Here is Paul, rather than grasping and demanding his own needs, he's giving away his friends, his brothers, his laborers, his sons in the faith for the service of others.

Look at how, look at Timothy. Paul writes here in verse 20, he says, I have no one like him, no one like mine, like sold, someone who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.

[ 19 : 04 ] For all the others, they seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. Now remember, where else has Paul spoken about seeking the interests of others?

Remember in verse 3 and 4, we spoke about it earlier. He says, everyone, don't serve out of selfish ambition, thinking of yourself more important than others. Seek not your own interests, but the interests of others.

And then he goes on to remind us, this is the attitude of Jesus, who, though he was God, didn't grasp at his Godness, but in humility poured out his life, taking on humanity, that led him all the way to the cross.

He's saying, let your life imitate the life of Jesus, not seeking your own interests, but the interests of others. Now look at how he describes Timothy. Timothy, I have no one like him, someone who is genuinely concerned, not for his own interests, but for the interests of others.

All others seek their own interests, but not Timothy. Paul is holding a Timothy here as exhibit A, another example of the Christ-centered, gospel-shaped life.

[ 20 : 15 ] Someone who's not looking to seek and serve their own interests, but one who's genuinely concerned about the interests of others. And notice here the contrast. The contrast is not just others seek their own interests, not the well-being of others, but Timothy, he sought your interests, not his own.

Look at how he describes Timothy. He says, all others seek their own interests, not those of Jesus, but Timothy. What marks Timothy out?

Timothy is a man whose life is set on Christ. Timothy seeks not his own interests, but the interests of Christ. And having done that, that results in his concern for the welfare of others.

The contrast here is Timothy is someone who's like Paul, doesn't seek his own interests, seeks the interests of Christ, and therefore is living for the well-being of others.

This is the Christ-centered, gospel-shaped life. And notice when Paul says here, Timothy is not like others, all of whom seek their own interests rather than those of Jesus.

[ 21 : 18 ] He's not talking about the pagan temple down the road. He's not talking about the priests or the Roman worshippers of foreign gods. Who is he talking about?

He's talking about other believers. He's talking about those believers who, in chapter 1, he describes as those who preach the gospel for their own ambition, their own needs. Those who preach the gospel seeking to damage Paul and stir up more trouble for him.

Friends, it's possible to call yourself a Christian, to even be involved in Christian ministry, in Christian leadership, and yet still our lives are revolved around ourselves.

Friends, it's possible for us to call ourselves Christians, to be involved in Christian activity, to serve on committees and be leaders in the church, and yet the orientation of our heart is around ourselves.

Paul says there are other Christians in the city of Rome who are seeking their own interests, not those of Christ. Conversely, the Christ-centered, gospel-shaped life, as we see in the life of Timothy, is one whose life is set on Christ and therefore is set on seeking the interests of others.

[ 22 : 33 ] Friends, Christian faith is not demonstrated by those who go to church. A mature Christian is not just someone who reads his Bible. A mature Christian is not just somebody who is appointed to serve as an elder in the church.

A mature Christian is someone whose life has been so impacted by the gospel that they are shaped by the gospel who, like Jesus, like Paul, like Timothy, are seeking not their own interests but to pour themselves out for the interests of others.

Friends, I know we've gone on about this quite a bit the last couple of weeks and so I apologize for the repetition but you see how strongly Paul is making his argument here that the life of the follower of Jesus is someone who is following Jesus, who is imitating their life on Jesus, who is like Jesus learning to not grasp their own self-interest but pour themselves out for the glory of God and for the interests of others.

Like Paul, like Timothy, like Jesus, let our lives be shaped around the gospel poured out for the interests of others. And then we see the third little cameo.

We see Paul, we see Timothy, thirdly we see Epaphroditus. He says here in verse 25, Now think about this.

[ 24 : 10 ] Why is Epaphroditus being sent from Rome where he's working with the great apostle Paul back to Philippi? Well the reason that he's is because he got sick and he's now better.

But notice the reason here. The reason is not because Epaphroditus is saying, Listen, I'm a little homesick. It's been a long time. I just want to get home. I just want to experience some of my mom's cooking.

I just want to sleep in my own bed. It's been a long journey. I just want to get back to Philippi. That's not his motivation. What's his motivation? Look at what he says. He says, He wants to go back because Epaphroditus heard that you were distressed upon hearing upon his illness.

And he was anxious. He was worried about you guys. He was worried about the church back at home. And so he's desperate to get back to you so that he can comfort you and encourage you and stir you up and minister to you for your own peace of mind.

Here is a man who's risked his life and laid down his life, almost died for the sake of the gospel. And now that he's better, the motivation of his heart is, How can I go back and encourage those guys back at home?

[ 25 : 24 ] Epaphroditus is not thinking about himself. Everything about his life oozes this ethic of, How can I serve and bless and minister to those around me?

Look at how Paul describes them. He says, Receive him in the Lord with all joy and honor such men for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service.

The Greek phrase there actually says, His life came to the point of death. And that little phrase, to the point of death, is only used two times in the whole New Testament.

One, to describe Epaphroditus and two, to describe Jesus in verse 6 or verse 8. It says, Jesus humbled himself becoming obedient, obedient to the point of death.

See what Paul's doing here? Paul is saying that Epaphroditus is an imitation of Jesus. And then he says, He did though, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

[ 26 : 31 ] And the word service there is actually, it's not just generic service, it's ministry, it's priestly service. Paul is picking up on the language that he shared a little earlier, the image of pouring a drink offering out on the offering that someone brings.

And this is what Paul is saying. He's saying that the Philippians, when they took up this financial offering to serve Paul, that was like a follower of God, of Yahweh, bringing their offering to the temple.

And Epaphroditus poured his life out like a drink offering to complete their offering. Epaphroditus, like Paul, was pouring his life out to complete the offering and the worship of these Philippians.

Friends, here we see the Apostle Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, these three cameos of people who poured out their lives for the well-being of others.

We may be tempted to look at the Apostle Paul and say, yes, well, he was the Apostle Paul, right? He wrote most of the New Testament or much of the New Testament. Timothy has two books of the Bible named after him.

[ 27 : 39 ] He's like a hero in the faith. But what about Epaphroditus? Here's a man that we know very little about. He doesn't appear anywhere else in the New Testament apart from these few verses and chapter 4.

We don't know whether he was rich or poor. We don't know whether he was educated or not. We don't know what socioeconomic background he came from. We don't know whether he was very wealthy and therefore he could afford to go on this trip or whether he was unemployed and didn't have anything else to do.

Here was an ordinary, not very sophisticated, not very famous, not very well-regarded man who briefly appears in the New Testament and then disappears.

We know almost nothing about him and yet God puts him here as an example of what the Christ-centered, gospel-shaped life looks like.

A man who is willing to pour out his life, literally willing to risk his life, not for his own interests, not to serve himself, but for the well-being and the interests of others.

[ 28 : 42 ] As we come to close, I want to tell one other story of another very ordinary person who follows this ethic. It's a person none of you would have met.

She was not very famous when she died. She was my grandmother. My grandmother, we used to call her Granny Joan when I was growing up. She died about three or four months ago.

She was 91 years old. She had cancer and passed away very peacefully. When she died, I remember thinking about her life and thinking here was a life that most epitomized Jesus' command to love God and serve others.

Her whole life revolved around that. When she died, she was 91 years old. A few years ago, she was very upset because the traffic department in South Africa where I come from took away her driving license.

They wouldn't renew her driving license because they said her eyesight was too bad and she was a danger to society on the roads. And that was a good decision but she was very upset.

[ 29 : 43 ] She couldn't believe that they were taking away her driving license at 87 years old. But part of the reason was, apart from just that hassle of shopping and groceries and that, there were a couple of things that she loved to do and she could no longer do now that she wasn't driving.

One of the things she loved to do, she loved to go to the police station and bake some goodies and pray for the police officers. Now, just by the way, in South Africa, the police force is not very political.

She is not deeply blue. She wasn't a political activist trying to make a statement. In South Africa, the police force is a bit of a shambles. People are overworked, underpaid, and many police officers actually, in the stress and anxiety of their jobs, turn their guns on themselves.

There's many unfortunate cases of people killing family members and taking their own lives because of the stress of the job. But often, she would go down to the police force and just listen and talk and pray with the officers.

One of the things she also loved to do is she would go and take communion to the old people in the church that were too elderly to go to church service. And I always laughed how she used to say, I'm going to take communion to the elderly folk as if she herself wasn't elderly at the age of 87.

[ 30 : 58 ] But here was a life who never wrote a book, never preached a sermon as far as I know, didn't have a social media account, didn't have 50,000 followers on social media.

Here was a sweet old lady who lived to pour herself out for others. She was not famous, not that many people knew her, but in the courts of heaven, I'm convinced when she died, she got a mighty cheer because here was someone whose life was Christ-centered and shaped on the gospel.

Friends, some of us within the Watermark family may literally pour out our lives as God calls us to serve Him in dangerous places. Some of us may be called to be missionaries to places like Pakistan, or India, or North Korea, or Afghanistan, or the Middle East, or somewhere in North Africa.

Friends, some of us in this church may literally risk our lives as we go and serve God in those places. And some of us may even lose our lives. And friends, if God's calling you to serve Him in a place like that, it would be our joy as a church to get behind you and to stand with you and to encourage you.

We would love to be partners in the gospel with you as some of us literally risk our lives for the sake of the gospel. Go for it. Do it. We're right behind you. May it be, Lord.

[ 32 : 17 ] Send us out. But friends, for most of us, we're not going to go serve God as a missionary in those places. For most of us, the call of God is nothing less.

To serve God as a missionary, to pour out our lives. The point of the book of Philippians is that God's call on our lives in Hong Kong is nothing less. It's the same.

That for the Christian to live is Christ and to die is gain right here in Hong Kong as we serve Christ and serve others. Living not for ourselves, but for the glory of God and the well-being of others.

Friends, for those of us that are school teachers, may we go into that classroom or on that Zoom call for the glory of God and the service of others. May we spend our days praying for the children that we get to oversee.

For those of us that are hedge fund managers or investment bankers or lawyers, may we go to the office place saying, I exist for the glory of God and the service of others. Friends, for those of us that are graphic designers or restaurateurs or waiters or artists or stage managers.

[ 33 : 27 ] Friends, for those of us that are sales people or foreign domestic helpers, may our heart, our motivation be nothing less than the missionary that goes to India. God, I'm pouring out my life for the glory of God, for the advancement of the gospel and for the service of others.

Friends, in Paul and Timothy and Epaphroditus, we have these amazing examples of the gospel-shaped life, of the Christ-centered life.

People who didn't seek their own interests but laid them down like Jesus for others. Paul tells us that Epaphroditus put his life on the line, almost risking, risking his life, almost dying for the service of these believers.

Friends, at the heart of the Christian faith is not just an ethic or a moral imperative to lay down our lives for others. At the heart of the Christian faith is one who didn't just risked his life but he really did lay down his life.

At the heart of the Christian faith is the author of life himself, the one from whom all life comes, who died on a tree, who died on a cross, that we who are separated might find life.

[ 34 : 44 ] Friends, at the heart of the Christian faith is Jesus Christ, the only one who is perfect, never did anything wrong, who allowed himself to be treated like an outcast, hung on a cross to bring those of us who truly were outcasts into his family.

Friends, at the heart of the gospel is Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane staring the cross in the face and praying and praying this prayer saying, God, if there's any other way to bring salvation, any other way to reconcile sinners back to you, any other way to redeem those that have been separated from you, to bring them back into your family, God, let it be.

But then he says, not my will, but your will be done. Not my interests, but your interests be done. Friends, this Jesus, when we see not just how great and glorious he is, when we see how gracious he is, when we see what he's done for us, friends, it will transform us into the kinds of people who naturally, joyfully, willingly pour out our lives for the interests of Christ and for the well-being of others.

This is the Christ-centered life. This is the gospel-shaped life. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we get on our knees before you this morning because we confess, God, that the natural disposition of our hearts is to be self-seeking and self-serving.

Father, like John the Baptist, we want to pray the prayer, may you increase, may we decrease. we want to, like Jesus, say, not my will, but your will be done.

[ 36 : 40 ] Father, won't you open the eyes of our hearts. Holy Spirit, won't you open the eyes of our hearts to see the gospel more clearly, to see who you are and what you've done for us, that we, Christ, may follow you, that we may imitate you, that the ethic of our lives may not be what's in it for me, but how can I serve the interests of others.

Father, pray for us as a church that though we may not be a particularly fancy church, may not be a particularly big church, God, may we be a church that radically and disproportionately pours ourselves out for the interests of Christ and the interests of others.

Father, come and change us. Come and start with me, God.

God, won't you come and radically rewire, reoriented, reshape my heart, God, to be like you, Jesus. Do that to us, we pray.

Father, this morning, we want to give you permission to wreck our neatly packaged, well-orchestrated lives and say, God, come and be God.

[ 38 : 05 ] Come and be king. Come and have your way. There's maybe just one last thought is one of the reasons why I guess we don't do this.

Let's just keep our eyes closed and keep focused on God. One of the reasons why it's so hard to do this is because it feels like we're going to lose out. If we give up our lives for the sake of others, we feel like it's going to be a loss.

One of the things Paul does is he gives us the example of Jesus who died on the cross, but then he shows us Jesus didn't stay dead. It wasn't the end of the story. Paul goes on to say, therefore, God has highly exalted him, given him the name above every name, that the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and given him the title of Lord of all.

The counterintuitive thing of the gospel is that as we lay down our lives, we actually find life. As we pour ourselves out for others, we actually discover abundant joy. The secret to the fullness of life is to pour out our lives for others.

Friends, when we follow Jesus, we don't lose our lives, we gain life. God, why don't you open our eyes to see that.

[ 39 : 23 ] Why don't you help us to see the wonder of the cross, the wonder of the gospel. Help us to follow you, we pray. In your wonderful name, Amen.