

God's View of Singleness

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[0 : 0 0] The scripture reading comes from Isaiah chapter 56. Please follow along on the screen, the bulletin, or on your own Bible. Starting in verse 3, oh, there's no screen, so yeah, follow along on your bulletin or your own Bible, okay?

Starting in verse 3, we read, Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, The Lord will surely separate me from his people. And let not the eunuch said, Behold, I am a dry tree.

For thus says the Lord, To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me, and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls monuments and a name, better than sons and daughters.

I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. This is the word of God. Great, thank you, Soda. Welcome, everybody, again.

My name is Chris. If you don't know me, I'm one of the leaders here at Watermark. Let's just pray together as we get into God's word. Father, I just want to thank you that you're a God who really does know us.

[1 : 1 7] You're a God who really does see us. You're a God who really does care for us. And you're a God who is really good. And I pray this morning, Lord, your word would not just be a word which is in one ear and out the other ear, but I pray, Lord, we would hear good news from you.

I pray that we would encounter you this morning. I pray, Father, for those of us who, as we talk about singleness, Lord, those of us who are wrestling with this, I pray you would just minister to them.

I pray for those of us who this is a topic we don't really want to engage with or talk about. Lord, I pray that you would open our ears to hear what you want to say.

And I pray, Father, that even as we are here in the safety of Hong Kong and we are so blessed in so many ways, we also want to pray around the world. We want to pray for Afghanistan at the moment, for the church there and the believers there.

Father, we pray that you would be their protection. You would be their provision. Father, we ask that you would let your name be known in that nation. We pray, God, would you bring healing.

[2 : 2 5] Would you bring deliverance in that place, Father? Father, we ask. But we know that you are good and we know that you are faithful and we know that you are sovereign. So thank you, Lord, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Great. So we're going through this series looking at a lot of hot topics of marriage, of sex.

We looked at cohabitation and transgender. And today we're kind of carrying on. We're not going light today. We're looking at singleness. And for some of you, you'll feel that this is a topic that is burning on your heart.

Some of you will feel like this is not a topic burning for you at all. But I believe this is a topic for every single one of us to really listen to this morning. And it's something that's really actually very precious on my own heart.

And even in our own family, we've really talked about this issue a lot with my wife over the years. But I don't know if you know that actually singleness is a global issue at the moment.

[3 : 24] There was a book that came out a little while ago by a guy called Robert Putnam. It was called Bowling Alone. And in it, he said, across America, people used to bowl in leagues.

He says now they bowl alone. In Hong Kong, I don't know if you know the statistics, but actually about 30% of men, 30% of women are single. And that is increasing dramatically, especially with the divorce rates increasing.

And in the church, this is actually can also be exacerbated quite a bit because the elephant in the room is that there is actually a 60-40% ratio of females to males.

And which means for many women, and I know talking to some of you, this is a real issue. You know if you want to marry and you want to follow the scriptures call to marry someone who is a godly Christian guy, it often feels like there's just not enough to go around.

And some people leave churches and some people even leave the faith over this very issue. So this is a really pressing one for us as a church. But as I was actually preparing this sermon, I've chatted to quite a number of the singles in the congregation.

[4 : 43] And I also spoke to a journalist called Anna Broadway, who has actually just been going around the world, visiting 41 countries, talking to over 300 singles for a book that she's publishing on singleness.

And so I'm going to share a few things that she said. But actually one of the things that's just come across to the people that I've been talking with is that singleness is complicated.

Okay? There's no one stereotypical single. And by the way, every one of us, hands up who has never been single. That's good.

There's no like birth arranged marriages or anything like that going on. Like every one of us has been single. And if you live long enough and outlive your spouse, every one of us will also be single.

Which means that this sermon is for everyone. And so the different kinds of singleness that we can have are multitude.

[5 : 45] There are dating singles. There are what I call career singles. Career singles, they kind of married their jobs. And so career has kind of become everything. And for some of them, they kind of wake up in their 30s and realize that the pool of their options has shrunk.

And then they decide whether they continue to be career singles. Or maybe they might become what I call reluctant singles. Those who want to get married but for some reason or other, they just haven't yet.

And then there are functional singles. People who are married like, for example, domestic helpers. But actually live apart from their spouses and are functionally single. And then there's others who are vocational singles.

People who have chosen to be single like priests and nuns and maybe some missionaries. And then there are what I call burnt singles. People who have either through divorce or widowhood or bad dating experience just don't want a partner.

And then there are others who I call no choice singles. Maybe because of disability or because of same-sex attraction and following scripture's call for them to remain celibate.

[6 : 50] Celibate in life. And we could go on. Do you see? Singleness is a multitude of things.

Which means actually in this sermon today, I cannot address everyone and every issue. Because singleness for a 20-year-old compared to singleness for a 70-year-old looks incredibly different.

But where we're going to start and where we want to go is in this beautiful passage in Isaiah 56. Because this passage actually comes after Isaiah 53, which is all about a suffering king who's going to come and lay down his life for people.

Taking their sins, which we know is Jesus. And then chapter 55, which we read earlier, is an invitation for in the light of Jesus and what he's done for everyone to come to him and to find life in him.

And then chapter 56 expands that invitation out to the people that everyone thought were excluded from society. To foreigners and to eunuchs.

[7 : 57] And eunuchs are people, well, I don't have to go into the details. But they were the singles of the day. They were the no-choice singles. No possibility of marriage or of having children.

And Isaiah 56, verse 7 says this. Sorry, not verse 7. Verse 3 says this. Let not the eunuch say, behold, I am a dry tree.

Now just think for a minute. Why would he say that? Why would he say that? Because in a culture which is dominated by the biological family, where it sees kind of marriage and having kids as the normal trajectory of life.

You know, you're born, you grow up, you get married, you know, you have kids, then you retire, your kids then look after you, and then you die surrounded by your family.

That's kind of the narrative arc that many people live. That's what people think is a fruitful life. And in Hong Kong, actually, what we do is we kind of add a stage in there, which is like, but don't get married until you've got a stable income and you've got a good career and, you know, you've finished your studies and all those kind of things.

[9 : 17] And so actually, even in Hong Kong, once you get to kind of the late 20s, there's this five to ten-year window where a kind of marriageable period. And if you go beyond that, then often it feels like you become a leftover man or woman, you know, where you're just coming home to either a darkened flat eating cup noodles by yourself or still living with your parents in your 65.

That's kind of the image that we have, isn't it? And so that's the idea of being a dry tree without children, without this family around you.

No name to pass on, feeling shamed in society. And so what often happens is well-meaning relatives and particularly church friends as well come along and they say things like, have you got anybody yet?

And like, let me hook you up with someone. And then there's this extra pressure that comes on. And for women, the biological clock is ticking. And often when every wedding, you know, we had a great wedding yesterday with Zee and Helen, but every wedding can get you thinking about what's wrong with me.

Am I too ugly? Am I too independent? Am I too poor? Am I too successful? What's going on with me? And many of us feel that shame. We feel nameless.

[10 : 42] We feel like a dry tree. And in response to this kind of traditional narrative, actually, modern culture has given something else. It says it's not just about loneliness, although it has that.

Singleness is also about liberation. I don't know if you know the actor Michael Douglas. He said, being single is pretty good. It's a nice sense of irresponsibility.

Somebody else said, single is the opportunity to live life on your terms and not apologize. You know, it's like, I'm free to do what I want, any old time, any old how, video games till 2 a.m., constant traveling, focus on your career or education, just you do you, liberation from the chains of responsibility and marriage.

And scripture comes to us, and this passage is going to come to us and say, singleness is not about loneliness. It's not about liberation.

It's about recognizing a few things. And the first thing that it's about recognizing is about recognizing that in Christ we have a new identity.

[11 : 51] So that's my first point. Look at me again. Isaiah 56. It says this, let not the eunuch say I'm a dry tree. To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast to my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters.

It's a name that won't be cut off at all. You see, the people of Israel were formed out of a promise to Abraham that he would be the descendant of many nations, of a great nation.

And that promise was to be passed on through children. And just as in Chinese culture, identity, one's identity and one's honor was found in being able to bear children and pass on your name and then be part of this great family.

And so belonging to this people in covenant relationship with God and with each other was expressed actually through keeping the Sabbath. And the thing was eunuchs were excluded from this community.

They couldn't pass on or share in this blessing of the family that God had for them. They were that dry tree. But God says to them, in the light of Jesus coming, for those who trust him, for those who make him their God, you have a status change.

[13 : 23] And it's not a Facebook status change. He says, you're not a dry tree. You're not abandoned to a life of lonely misery. Instead, you have a name.

And it's an everlasting name. And a monument, let me say, a place in my family, in my presence. That's what the house and walls are about. It's about the temple of God where his presence dwells.

You've got a seat of honor in the table. You see, you know, in biological families, you know, we put pictures of our kids on the wall, you know, and we show them.

We say, look at my Johnny or whoever it is. We have pride and honor in that, don't we? And what happens, though, after a few generations where you've kids and then you've got the parents on the wall and all those pictures, you actually forget about, like, your great, great, great, great grandparents.

Does any of you remember them? I don't. But actually, what God is saying here is, in God's family, on his wall is a picture with your name on it.

[14 : 26] It's your picture. And it's a place of honor. And he says it's more honored than sons and daughters because you've been bought by the blood of Jesus.

So you have a pride of place if you are single or if you are married. Because he loves to show off to the world those who are his. And you know what?

He'll never forget you. You will always be remembered. Which means this. In Christ, your primary identity, if you are married, is not married.

If you are single, your primary identity in Christ is not single. It's not shamed. It's not anything else. It's beloved, honored, secure.

That's who you are in God's family through faith in Christ, which means the church should be the one place in all of society where a lot of those invisible, excluding barriers between marrieds and singles are broken down.

[15 : 33] You know, we have more in common between marrieds and singles than we have difference in the family of Christ. Did you know that? Which means then that actually, we also need to be aware of how we unwittingly put up barriers.

You know, as a single, I used to sit in groups with marrieds who had kids. And do you know what they talked about all the time? It wasn't the weather.

It was their kids. And do you know how actually excluding that can feel as a single? You know, if every time a single who's in their 50s, we see them and we think, how sad, let me try and find someone that they can be with, without actually asking them where they're up to, what we're actually saying is, we're saying your primary identity is marital and I need to fix that, rather than your primary identity is in Christ.

So actually, as marrieds and singles, we actually need to get together and talk together to find out what are the things that actually create barriers between us.

So that actually we can truly be a community where we have a name which is better than sons and daughters, it's better than married, it's better than single, it means we're in Christ and we're His. That's the first thing we have.

[16 : 52] We have a new identity in Christ. Second thing, we have a new vision. And here, 700 years later, the Apostle Paul picks up on this vision of the eunuchs being included.

And Paul, by the way, is single. And he doesn't see his new identity in Christ as being loneliness or even just liberation for his own self, but he sees this new vision for his own singleness.

And here's what he says. 1 Corinthians 7, 7. He says, I wish all were as myself am. He says, I wish everyone was single like me.

Now, by the way, he's not saying marriage is bad. In Ephesians, he creates this amazing picture of Christ and the church as being this glorious gospel picture of what marriage is about.

He's not. He's big on marriage. He's also not saying that singleness is great because of all the personal benefits I get for myself. You know, all the extra time or money I have for myself.

[17 : 57] He's not saying that because actually, to be honest, sometimes if you're single, it feels like you have less time and less money. Like, it's much harder to get a mortgage if you're single in Hong Kong.

It's sometimes you work longer hours because you don't have the family reason to go home. So you just keep working. Some of us, well, it's not time.

It's not just money. It's also sex, right? No sex. And actually, some of us who are single think that sex is all rosy in marriage, and it's not. But actually, at least you get to have it sometimes.

So Paul is not going this beautiful vision, I want you to be like me because it's so free for me. But here's what he says. He says, each has his own gift from God.

One of one kind and one of another. And we carry on in the whole chapter, but I'm going to stop there. He says, he's talking about, he says, singleness and marriage are gifts.

[19 : 03] Some of us think, I hope there's a returns policy on that gift. But what do you do with a gift? You receive it with gratitude.

Some of us think, well, but I don't have the gift of singleness because I want to get married. Paul says, that's not the point. It's not about your desires here. That's not what he's talking about.

It's about your present circumstances and situation. That's what he's talking about. So if you are married, you have the gift of marriage.

Some of us hope that we have the gift of singleness. But you have the gift of marriage. If you are single, you have the gift of singleness. And it can change.

If you're married, a spouse may die and you become single again. If you're single, you can get married. It's not necessarily a fixed condition. But we have different gifts at different times.

[20 : 00] And you can wrestle with a gift. If you're single, you can desire to be married. That's a good desire. He's not saying, don't desire it. But what our tendency can be, whether you're married or single, is to look at everything that you don't have rather than everything that you do.

To look at the whole rather than the donut, if you know that analogy. And what can happen is bitterness can creep into our hearts and we end up with this state of actually saying to the gift God has given, God, you're not good.

God, I can't trust you. God, you're not loving to me with this gift. Page Benton Brown says this. He says, I'm not a single because I'm too spiritually unstable to deserve a husband.

Nor too spiritually mature to need one. I'm single because God is good and this is his best for me. Some of us need to hear that. Some of us need to hear that.

Scripture says God so loved you that he gave his only son for you, that he also gave a gift of singleness to you right now for this season.

[21 : 17] It's not always easy. But can you trust him that he's actually good and he's loving you with this situation right now? But if this is the gift, what is the gift for?

If it's not just for your own personal benefit, well, the word gift is actually the word charisma, which is the same word for spiritual gift in the rest of Corinthians.

And what are spiritual gifts? Do you remember we looked at the chocolate cake like a few weeks ago? They're gifts of grace given to us for the benefit of others.

Smithhurst, I think that's how you pronounce his name, says this. The world champions the single life because of all you can do for yourself. The Bible champions the single life because of all you can do for others.

That's very powerful because marriage pictures the depth of Christ's love for the church by sacrificing your desires for one person.

[22 : 31] Singleness pictures the gospel and the breadth of Christ's love where you can sacrifice your desires for many others. You know, you may not have more money if you're singles.

You may not even have more time. But what you do have probably is more flexibility. I spoke to Anna Broadway and she said in all of her research of what she had done, she said, as I've gone around the world, the most contented singles I have ever met are not those who don't wrestle with singleness, but those who have a deep sense of mission.

You know, I've got single friends here in Hong Kong, I've got single friends in the UK, who are at the forefront of missional justice. They've even moved into other communities to be able to reach out to low-income people.

I've got friends who are actively discipling others and using their time to do one-on-one Bible study to engage with those who are hurting, those who are sick, in all kinds of ways.

That's something that both marrieds and singles should be doing, but you've got way more flexibility if you're single because you don't have to do kids' homework and you don't have to wake up for like kids' nap times and all that kind of stuff.

[23 : 52] You've just got more flexibility. And that's why Paul says, I wish you guys were like me because he's got this driving missional heart that he wants the gospel to go out all around the world, which he says, I wish you were like me.

You know, the missional justice in Watermark, we need singles to be right at the forefront of helping marriage to actually engage with that because you can actually forge a way for that in a way that many others cannot.

There are so many opportunities. But when singleness is all about your career, it's all about video games, it's all about your travel, don't be surprised if at some point it leaves you feeling empty and deeply lonely because you were made for far more than that.

So let me ask you, how are you losing your singleness if you're single? Do you know who God has called you to serve in this community and even outside the community because it is a gift for his kingdom?

That's the second thing. You've got a new identity. Get a new vision for singleness. Third thing. A new community.

[25 : 04] I'm going to pull this up because I'm going to get the cake. Thank you. This is one I feel really, really convicted by.

You know, it's easy. I'm married and I have kids now. I was single until I was 31 but I'm now married with kids and it's easy for me to say, to those of you who are singles, you have this new identity in Christ.

You've got all this flexibility for the kingdom. I think the spirits are not wanting this to work. It's easy to say that and then you go, yeah, but you don't have to worry about the future of growing old alone.

And I get that. I really get that because we all desire intimacy and we all desire to be loved and to love, don't we? That's what we've been talking about in this series.

And so Satan whispers in our ear, did God really say you can't marry a non-believer? Did God really say you're loved and delighted in when, look, all your friends are getting married and you're still single?

[26 : 17] Satan wants to take these moments and wants to lead us to doubt God's goodness and Isaiah 56 comes to us and it says it's a passage not just about individual eunuchs who go to church on a Sunday.

That's not what it is. It's about the excluded being included in the family of God which is the community of God welcomed in the people of God. Do you remember Jesus, Mark 10, he says this, he says, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the gospel will fail to receive a hundredfold in the present age and he goes houses, brothers, sisters and mothers and children.

Do you know what he's talking about? He's talking about that following Jesus and living for his kingdom at times can tear us away from the most deepest intimate relationships that we crave for.

He's saying loneliness can eat away at the most faithful heart and bring temptation but Jesus says I'm promising to you not just my spiritual presence with you although that is true but also my presence with you through my church because you know when we say Jesus is enough for us that is true I really believe that but you know Jesus doesn't give hugs directly he gives it through his church Jesus doesn't cook meals for us and invite us around directly he does it through his church Jesus doesn't give you a baby to hold or help you to feel part of it or a kid to play with by himself he does it through his church and so most of the singles that I've spoken to from those who are same sex attracted to those who are in the 50s or 60s have told me this one of the greatest ways that singles can experience the love of Christ and stay faithful and contented in their singleness is when marrieds open up their lives and their homes and invite them in and this is this is a call to us who are married you know a number of watermarkers have said to me that even if I can't have kids if I can go and actually babysit someone else's kids or just feel like

I'm part of their family just get a taste of that that is so precious to me but you know as marrieds we often live as if our identity is more as married than as part of the community so we hide ourselves away in our own little bubbles and we end up neglecting those who need us and who God has called us to be around let me make this even more challenging as Christians we cannot say to those who are same sex attracted or those who are otherwise you know who are single we cannot say to them hey listen you should stay celibate or we cannot say to someone you should only marry a believer when they struggle with that if we are not willing to open up our homes and our lives at the same time because if we do that what we're doing we're laying burdens on people but not lifting a finger to help and that Jesus says is hypocrisy is that strong enough it's hypocrisy and we should be called out as marrieds for that because the gift of marriage in the body of Christ is not just for us who are married it's also for the sake of the singles so they can experience the love of Christ through our family relationships one of the great things in Watermark is I just see this happening on multiple layers there are numerous families who I know are already doing this with people from all kinds of different stages but I want to invite

[30 : 31] Angelina and Christina up just to share a little bit of their journey together so come on up let me just move this over the way maybe just excuse me thank you if you just want to come come up here great thank you so much it's not that scary it's okay they're friendly Christina and Angelina you have both I know you've walked together and I know that you've both been in Watermark a while but I'd love to hear maybe Christina could you just tell us maybe a little bit of your experience as a single some of the challenges and some of the things that God has been showing you I think the challenges come from the discrepancy between our cultural point of view and Christian point of view our society set marriage as some sort of a milestone that we need to achieve in our life and if we don't achieve it then we're missing out and people almost see single people who are not married as some you know some people who are not great or you know so yeah and at the individual level you feel like you're struggling a lot with uncertainty in your life you're not sure when God is providing your partner in the future so those are the main challenges

I think great great Angeline do you want to share a little bit about maybe some of your experience with yeah walking and opening your home and your life up with with singles and almost how you got to that stage as well so this is on okay great my husband and I we are a host of a community group at our home weekly and it just so happens that the entire CG is made up of singles so yeah over the years I don't think we intentionally set out to cultivate these relationships but it's been a beautiful thing to walk alongside young adults I'll call them singles and just sharing life with them yeah so maybe tell us a little bit about what that how you've gone about that and actually what that's kind of looked like

I know you talked about a little bit of a two-way relationship and how things have really how you've been blessed through that and what that's looked like yeah I think this is how God shapes gospel community I hope and it's just been very very natural and very organic that we've had the privilege I don't think like a mother or father role but just as a brother and sister in Christ role of walking alongside a lot of singles in their new life experiences for example their first jobs their first experiences of changing jobs their conflicts with work colleagues with boss relationships less so but sometimes relational issues but just doing life and for me personally

I've never felt like I'm in a position of superiority or of having more wisdom I think having more years helps a little and experience life experiences I mean but not from a place of knowing it all but more from a place of just sharing life and I felt that in those relationships it's always been a two way relationship it's never about me telling them what to do or what they should think but actually sharing life on life with each other if you know what I mean you said to me I never thought about the categories of necessarily single and married as we're doing it because it just feels like we're one is that right yes yes for example I'm going through some struggles in my life and I felt very much that when

I've opened up and shared my struggles with our young adults they instinctively understand what I'm going through and they can give me a different perspective like from being a son and daughter to my role as a parent of young adults myself giving me a different perspective so I've always felt very encouraged and yeah by them pouring their life into me as well yeah that's great Christine how like from the other end tell us how you've experienced that and yeah if I can just add on that I feel like of course Angie and Bernard are sharing lots of wisdom and give us lots of good advice but I felt like I was invited to the journey and that we're walking alongside together it's not just them pulling us but their vulnerability is so powerful that it really opens up my heart and I feel like

[36 : 23] I'm being part of their family and I've been in Breaking Bread for five years and now I'm in new CG called The Messenger but over the past five years Angie and Bernard and being part of Breaking Bread really shaped me the way I vision my 30s and 40s and 50s because in the past I've always planned my life focusing on myself but Angie and Bernard opening up their house to people who need to be heard who need some guidance or need to walk the journey together it's just really changed the way I view property you know home basically it's given by God for us to open up whoever needs to come and join the community and so yeah it's such a blessing for me to spend my 20s in Breaking Bread great maybe the last thing in terms of even a sense of how you're going out and serving in different ways

I know you mentioned something about how God has really challenged you in that just even recently so one night I was just praying to God I said God I have so much flexibility like you mentioned in sermon time and energy and I was thinking what can I do how can I spend my singleness in a wiser way so I prayed that before I go to sleep next morning Angie texted me saying hey are you interested in serving at Branches of Hope teaching kids which is an NGO in Hong Kong that supports asylum seekers and refugees and my immediate response was like no I don't like kids but I knew that God was opening up the door and he was asking me inviting me to step outside of my comfort zone and so I started going there with some members of Breaking Bread and we've been going there for almost a year now so every Saturday we go and teach the kids just an hour but really building relationships with them and share the gospel so that's great can I just pray for you you guys thank you so much for sharing father

I just want to thank you for both Christina and Angelina I know they represent many many people here in the congregation at different stages Lord but I thank you Lord that even in their relationship we just see a little picture of what you've called us to be as a church and Lord I pray for them and I pray for us as a church Lord that you just help us to learn how to walk alongside each other well Lord I pray just even with Christina and her the wrestles that she's going through and Angelina the wrestles she's going through Lord I pray that they would just experience continually your presence with them that you would just minister through each other and through the body Lord of just how good you are just how faithful you are just how gracious you are just how enough you are for us so bless them I pray in Jesus name amen thank you so much give them a round of applause thank you so feel free to go up and chat to them afterwards to really hear more but this is just a little taste of what I think God is wanting us to be as a community and so I want to challenge us if you're married generally don't just kind of run off after Sunday just do your own thing invite a single along to lunch for you with you Christmas time is a hard time sometimes for things invite people into your family we have this relationships evening that is coming up often as as we go hey that's just for singles and we check out but no I encourage you to come because actually as married and singles we need to be in the same room talking about the same things and then you'll see ways that God will call you and how to serve so I want to encourage us to do that because in a city which is filled with loneliness and it is a very lonely place it needs to see a community whose identity is not based in a marital status but is based in being having a name better than sons and daughters the last thing

I want to share and by the way we've we've got a few of these booklets which are around I think there's some outside there and some at the back these are on Christians dating and marriage if you're single or if you're married feel free to just pick one up that's got some some great stuff in there because actually there's a whole lot of things I'm not even talking about I haven't even started talking about dating but actually that's something that in community this is where we can actually begin to wrestle with these questions and so we just got this to help begin that conversation the final thing we've talked about a new identity we've talked about a new vision we've talked about a new community that we have the last thing is we have a new hope because even when and here's the kind of caveat even when we do community really really well we get our identity we get that sense of vision and purpose all of us will still have unmet longings in our hearts and that goes whether you are single or you are married all of us maybe will have longings for a partner or maybe longings for a spouse to change and if your hope is ultimately in a relationship sooner or later that will crush you like Hong Kong is a transient place people come and go and we can sometimes feel the loss of friendships right?

can't we? and so Jesus sorry one person said if Jesus isn't sufficient for you when you are single he won't be sufficient for you when you are married because our ultimate hope is not found in just the relationships we have it's found in someone who loves us way more than anybody else ever will because you know Jesus Christ was the most fulfilled single ever but he was also the most abandoned the most rejected the most shamed single ever do you realize how counter-cultural it was for him to be single?

[43 : 00] but it wasn't just that he was not just a dry tree he also died on a dry tree abandoned the ultimate shame and rejection but he wasn't rooted in bitterness because you know his hope was found in his father and in doing his father's will and being one who knew his father that's why do you see all through the gospels he's always withdrawing to be alone with his father do you know there's a difference between loneliness and aloneness you know you can be alone and not lonely because Jesus he's the one who knows that his father is enough for him some of us immerse ourselves in constant activity and being with people because you are terrified of being alone with your own thoughts some of us we like being alone but it's a Netflix Netflix filled self-focused aloneness but actually what God is calling each one of us is to know that the presence that you need more than any other presence is the presence of the heavenly father who loves you dearly and deeply which is why if you are a single and if you are married a daily rhythm of getting into the presence of God in scripture reading and prayer is vital if you don't want to be a dry tree because as a married you know you can be a different kind of dry tree a spiritually dry tree and as a single but actually scripture says if your roots are deeply rooted in the presence of God you will bear much fruit and your life will flow with the presence of the one who says he's never going to leave you or forsake you and so here's the final part that scripture proclaims if you are married one day you won't be if you are single one day you won't be because it says human marriage and sexuality is penultimate one day all of your unmet longings and desires will be ultimately fulfilled in the one who is the ultimate husband the ultimate bridegroom that we are longing for in our hearts and that is

Jesus Christ and we will see him face to face and you won't be disappointed and if Christ is the center of your marriage right now and if Christ is the center of your singleness right now there will be pain because we all have a cross to bear but Jesus shows you the cross always comes before the resurrection and there is resurrection life with him and he is guaranteed it by going ahead of you Jesus is enough for you today he's enough for you with your sexuality he's enough for you with your singleness will you trust him will you trust him find time alone with him find your identity in him and let it push us back into be a community where we don't just preach our identity in

Christ but we experience it and live it through our community relationships let me pray for us and if you're single right now I want you actually to just think what is God trying to say to you where are you up to with your singleness where is Jesus in your singleness if you're married I want to ask you the same question where are you up to with your marriage how are you seeing it as part of something that can serve others rather than just serving yourself and is Jesus enough for you will you trust him just take a minute to reflect on where your hearts are take a minute just to respond in prayer to him I think there's some of you who just really have a there's been things that we've said this morning which actually just really resonate with where you're up to don't run away

I want to call you to come up for prayer afterwards because we want to walk with you as a community there's some of us who this has just been a huge idol in our lives and we've never seen it as a gift and you need to hear the father's voice saying I love you you may not understand it may feel uncertain but just reach out to me surrender to me father we just pray but we thank you that you're the god who brings the excluded into your community lord that was all of us all of us were like that but thank you lord that you've given us a name which is better than any other name that society may label us with that name of being your sons and daughters and I pray lord in this church that that would not just be a theory I pray god that deep in our hearts we would find a contentment in you whether we are married or whether we are single knowing that you truly are enough for us teach us how to love one another well teach us how to use the gifts that you've given us to serve one another we thank you for your grace thank you that you are sufficient in Jesus name amen