

The Story of God's Plan

God's Plan in Scripture

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Isn't that a great song to be able to sing together to the King. I realize that a number of you are called to serve in places all through the week where you're surrounded by men and women in some cases who don't believe like you and they're singing to somebody else. They might even mock your biblical value system and your love for Christ and all of that sort of thing and I recognize that can become wearying. I came up on the site of an accident a couple of days ago and it didn't look like anybody was seriously injured but it certainly appeared that the folks involved were not exactly in agreement with what had happened. There was a police officer from our church in the middle of it and it just reminded me of the challenging responsibilities that many people from our church family have day in and day out, under significant pressure. And you want to live for God in that situation, I know you do, but isn't it marvelous that the Lord has designed one day in seven where we can come together and we can sing to the King and we can do it together. I realize that we're all at a different place in our relationship with the Lord and where we are in our spiritual maturity, but I think most if not all of us would say that Jesus is our King and we love singing to him. Whenever we're out in our community, whenever we're out in our family but it's a delightful thing to be able to come together on the Lord's Day and sing to him together. So, thank you, Worship Team, for your ministry to us.

It's really great to have you in our services today and if you're here today for the first time or you've just started coming and you've not yet introduced yourself to us, if you're ready to take that step, we'd be delighted for you to. The way we do that around here is on the back of the program you received there is a Connection Card and you can fill that out with whatever information you would like to share with us and then tear it off and put it in the offering plate when it comes by. You can also leave it at the Welcome Center near the main entrance when you leave today. That just gives us an opportunity to know who's coming and also know how we can best serve you and how we can start to connect with you. We'd love to encourage you to do that if you're ready.

Also, folks who are a regular part of our church, please note the prayer requests in your program. There are some very significant needs that we want to be praying for as a church family. That's another one of the ways that we serve together. I want to encourage you to do that. Also, add Richard Longenecker to your prayer list. This just came in but

Richard is going to be having surgery tomorrow down at the IU Cancer Center in Indie. I know that his family would appreciate your prayers for him.

You'll also in your program notice there's a panel right on the back of the Connection Card this week. It's an opportunity for you to think about whether or not you'd be interested in attending our 10:15 service. We're anticipating when Faith West starts in about 10 weeks now, that a number of the college students from the current 10:15 service will probably migrate in that direction. We're glad for that but that will give us some room over in that service and if you don't have child care needs and you would like to try that, that would actually help us. We're trying to redistribute everyone around here so that we're in a position to grow this Fall. We're glad you're coming whenever you come. If that would work out for you, if you would just check that box and leave that in the offering plate or at the Welcome Center that will help us communicate with you and see if we can get that all organized. That's part of the excitement around here regarding Faith West.

A couple of other things regarding that, just as a matter of stewardship whenever we do a project like that we try to pick out a few things that we can do together as a church family to keep the costs down because we're all about that for sure. Now those are upon us and we're not talking about raising steel together or any of that sort of thing but we are talking about two things near and dear to our hearts: cleaning and landscaping. You feeling it? We are now at the place where we can do that. In fact, there's about 140 really big trees over there that need to be planted. I don't know much about trees. Green side up, that's all you need to know. If you could help us with that, especially if you're a guy as they're pretty heavy. If you have a vacation day coming up over the next two weeks, you can sign up in the foyer right after this service. It's a fun time and it's an important thing for us to get done and so will you help us with that. There's also some cleaning opportunities. You can go out there any time you want. If you call the church office, we'll get you lined up with that and I appreciate those who are already serving in those ways. Exciting times for sure around here and we'd love to have you serve with us. We really need you to do that right now.

Today we're going to be celebrating the Lord's table as part of our morning service. We don't do that very frequently. The Bible doesn't really say how often you should remember the Lord's table or even how we should do it. It just says something like this, 1 Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup." And we would take from that that there ought to be some level of regulatory in the way we celebrate the Lord's table. So, typically around here we remember the Lord's table as part of our church family nights. We have those once a month. Those are for anybody who is attending our church to come. We have one tonight, by the way. It's going to be a great time.

But a lot of times we have the Lord's table then, but we have designed some of our Sunday morning services this year to include the Lord's table and that's going to be true today as well. We're doing it for a lot of reasons. One is we're trying to build a family atmosphere within each one of these four services. That is why you have a service pastor

who serves you as well. When we get to six services this Fall, that's going to become that much more important. I think it's also very appropriate for us to do it today because we're beginning a brand new study today that we're going to do for the next ten weeks. It's called "God's Plan in Scripture." I cannot tell you how excited I am to be part of this particular study with our church family. I think it's going to be helpful for so many of us.

Essentially, we want to provide an overview of the entire Bible in the next ten weeks. In fact, my job is to tell the entire story of the Bible this morning in one sermon. So, I hope you brought a lunch and a pillow, maybe took a few days off next week. That's my job. Then next week, we're going to back-up and take the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible and try to summarize those in a message. The plan is to march our way all the way through the Bible to gain an understanding of the big picture.

Here's why that's so important. A lot of us, we know some parts of the Bible. We know individual verses, we might know a particular story, etc. We don't know how it all fits together. Someone I think has wisely said it's like pieces from a jigsaw puzzle. We may have a few individual pieces but we've never seen the picture on the cover of the box. Well, that's what we intend to provide in this series. God's plan in Scripture.

I'm also going to be sharing this series this summer with other members of our pastoral staff for a lot of reasons. One is, the Lord has blessed us with a very strong staff and I believe that a healthy church functions like a team of many staff members and godly lay-people working together as opposed to a church that's organized just around a few people. I think that's actually dangerous and unhealthy. So, my job, according to passages like Ephesians 4, is to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. And one of the ways you can tell whether or not I'm doing my job is the strength of our staff and the strength of godly, committed, lay-people. Also, these messages are going to require a lot of research, a lot more than we would typically put in to a general Sunday morning message. We want to be sure that we're giving our church family our very best. So, we're going to be sharing this.

There's also the opportunity for our church family to benefit from the particular gifts and strengths, experiences, insights of each one of our staff members. I think that's most beneficial for our entire church family. And as I said, there's this desire to have our service pastor speak from time-to-time in these services just to continue to build. Sort of like a church within a church. That's such a crucial element of us not just getting bigger but getting stronger.

On a practical basis, too, you say, "Well, what are you going to be doing?" Well, that's a fair question I suppose. It allows me to put some attention on some of our other priorities that we decided on as a church. Remember, our larger theme is planning to grow. You have that laminated under your pillow and I appreciate that. Along with these three key ways we're trying to get this done this year. Planning to grow by just discussing and refining and implementing our discipleship process, I think this series will help us with that along with a number of other initiatives that are already taking place. We're seeing some very good things on that one and we ought to be.

But there's also the matter of Faith West. Many people in this church, in fact, the majority, are giving not just regularly to the normal ministries of this church but are giving additionally to the capital campaign that is funding Faith West. And you have every reason in the world to wonder, are all the ministries that are about to be launched over at Faith West, are they well organized and ready to go? That is a fair question. Part of my job is to ensure that that happens and so I want to devote some special time to this. A lot's gone into it already but we want to be sure that the level of organization for those ministries is commensurate with your sacrificial giving in order to make it happen.

Then there's also the matter of our five year strategic ministry plan. And this one, too, is right where we wanted it to be but it's now going to require a lot of administrative time. You have so graciously completed your surveys and many people have been brainstorming initiatives. We have hundreds and hundreds of things that we could possibly be doing together as a church family and we're moving into the multi-vote phase. Which means, we're going to give you an opportunity then to look at all of these hundreds of things we could possibly do and rank the ones that you think are most important. That's a lot of fun, by the way, because you get to look at all that through the grid of the mission. You also begin to be able to communicate about this with our church family and that's then what provides the basis of the plan. We've made great headway and that along with these strategic site plans we're trying to make for all three of the properties that God has entrusted to us but we've got some work to do.

I'm fired up about this and I hope you are too. All of it is organized around this series of now "God's Plan in Scripture." Here's what I want to ask you to do, be thinking about how you would summarize the message of the Bible? If we asked you right now to come up and summarize the Bible for us, how would you do that? How would you draw the picture on the front of the puzzle box? And, how would your answer to those questions fit in with what we're about to observe and celebrate in our remembrance of the Lord's table.

With that frame of mind, let's sing some more together.

One day when heaven was filled with His praises,
One day when sin was as black as could be,
Jesus came forth to be born of a virgin—
Dwelt among men, my example is He!

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever:
One day He's coming—O glorious day!

One day they led Him up Calvary's mountain,

One day they nailed Him to die on the tree;
Suffering anguish, despised and rejected;
Bearing our sins, my Redeemer is He.

One day they left Him alone in the garden,
One day He rested, from suffering free;
Angels came down o'er His tomb to keep vigil;
Hope of the hopeless, my Savior is He.

One day the grave could conceal Him no longer,
One day the stone rolled away from the door;
Then He arose, over death He had conquered;
Now is ascended, my Lord evermore.

One day the trumpet will sound for His coming,
One day the skies with His glory will shine;
Wonderful day, my beloved ones bringing;
Glorious Savior, this Jesus is mine!

You know there are many different ways to summarize the message of the Bible and if you go on our website today, under Additional Resources, we've placed there for you some of the leading evangelical pastors in our country and how they have attempted to summarize the message of the Bible in one message as well. If that's helpful to you. There's also some resources about Walk Through the Bible. If you want to do additional study in what we're talking about this summer, I know many of you will, we're going to try to feed you as many resources as we possibly can.

How would we summarize it? Maybe we could start by saying it like a seminarian. God's plan is to manifest the fulness of his glory to his creation by establishing his kingdom upon the earth in which God dwells through Jesus Christ with his people as the King for eternity. I realize that's a mouthfull but our various pastoral staff members are going to be unpacking aspects of that throughout the summer because everything there is very, very important when we're trying to understand the message of the Word of God. However, let's try to make it simpler than that. Not simplistic, but let's try to make it simpler than that. What if you were only given one word? Summarize the message of the Bible in a word. What would the word be? I'm not suggesting that you can only do this one way, but for whatever it's worth, here's the word I would use: it's all about Jesus. The Bible is all about Jesus. If we only get one word, he's the Word. Are you with me with that?

With that in mind, open your Bible to Luke 24. That's on page 69 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you if you need that this morning. This passage gives fairly strong support for the statement that we just made that the Bible is all about Jesus. This is the delightful story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Do you remember it? Jesus has just resurrected from the dead, he's in the process of appearing to various groups of people and Luke tells us that there's two men traveling from Jerusalem to

Emmaus. It's a trip of about seven miles. Let's pick the story up in verse 13, "And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus," which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about all these things which had taken place. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself, remember now he's resurrected, approached and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are these words which you are exchanging with one another as you walk by the way." And they stood still, looking sad. Are you picturing that in your mind. They're standing right next to the resurrected Christ and they're standing still, looking sad because they don't yet know the identity of the person that the Bible is all about.

What happens next? Look at verse 18, let's continue on. "And one of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to him, 'Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days? And Jesus said to them, 'What things?'" And they said to him, "Well, the things about Jesus the Nazarene who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people. How the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to the sentence of death and crucified him but we were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel." Indeed, besides all this, it's the third day since these things happened. Also, some women, you know how women are? "Women among us amazed us when they were at the tomb early in the morning, they didn't find his body. They came saying that they had seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive." Some of those with us went to the tomb and found it exactly like the women had said, but him they did not see. So, we're going to stand here looking sad. Are you picturing this in your mind? I mean, Cleopas, this man, is actually lecturing Jesus about being the only one who is unaware of what has been occurring. The irony is just so delicious, isn't it?

You might say, "Why is Jesus messing with them? Why doesn't he just make his identity immediately known?" Perhaps the answer to that is because he wants their faith not to be in an experience, not even the experience of actually seeing him resurrected. He wants their faith to be an understanding that the resurrection was the culmination of the message of the Bible. Like Paul said, "Faith comes from hearing and hearing," not by an experience but, "by the Word of Christ."

Then what happens in verse 25? "And he said to them, O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all the prophets have spoken." Hear that? All the prophets have spoken. "Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and to enter into his glory? Then beginning with Moses," at the very beginning of the Bible, "and with all the prophets he explained to them the things concerning himself." There it is, concerning himself. "And all the Scriptures." See there's a very real sense, friends, in which your Bible is all about Jesus. Just ask the disciples on the road to Emmaus. That's why Jesus would later say in this very same chapter in that beautiful story of the restoration of Peter, he says this, "This are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you that all things that are written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms must be fulfilled." See, it's not just the gospels or the epistles or the Book of Revelation being about Christ, it's also the law of Moses. It's also the prophets. It's also the psalms.

That was the Jewish way of summarizing the entire Old Testament. That was written about Jesus as well. Which is why the Lord could say it of those who were rejecting his message and planning to take his life in John 5, he said, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. It is these that testify about me for if you had believed Moses, the beginning of the Bible, if you had believed Moses you would believe me for...” why? “for he wrote about me.”

Friend, in a word, the Bible is all about Jesus. That’s why God has that same goal for us as children. One of our bread and butter verses around here, we use it all the time and we should, says that “God can work all things together for good if we love him and be concerned for his purpose.” What purpose? You see it in the text, don’t you? That we would become conformed to the image of his Son. If the Bible is all about Jesus, it shouldn’t surprise us that God’s ultimate goal for us is to progressively transform us into the image of his Son. The sooner we get on board with the practical implications of that plan, the better, if that’s what the Bible is all about.

That then directs our purpose as a church. You say, “Why does this place even exist?” Here’s a great summary statement, it’s Colossians 1:28, “We proclaim Christ...” that’s what we’re about, “We proclaim Christ admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom.” Why, what’s the goal? What’s the purpose? What’s the end? Here it is, “So that we may present every man complete in Christ.” You see, there are so many things that a church like us could focus on and get wound up about and direct our energies and our resources toward. That’s why a series like this one this summer can be so helpful because it helps all of us keep the main thing, the main thing. Which is why somebody like the Apostle Paul would say, can you say this? “But one thing I do...” You see I’ve got one main thing because I understand who the Bible is about so I’ve got one main thing. “Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

So, in a word, the Bible is all about Jesus. Please think about that as we sing and as we receive this morning’s offering.

Father in heaven, thank you for giving us a book, the Bible, that stretches us in so many ways but on the other hand, can be summarized. And we want to praise you for Jesus, the one that the Bible is all about. Lord, I pray that we would even begin thinking about whether we’ve organized our lives around this one. Lord, help us to think about the practical implications of what that means. Lord, now as we would give our tithes and offerings, we pray that it would bring honor, it would bring pleasure to the one the Bible is all about, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray this in his name, Amen.

O the blood
Crimson love
Price of life's demand
Shameful sin

Placed on Him
The Hope of every man

O the blood of Jesus washes me
O the blood of Jesus shed for me
What a sacrifice that saved my life
Yes, the blood, it is my victory

Savior Son
Holy One
Slain so I can live
See the Lamb
The great I Am
Who takes away my sin

O the blood of the Lamb
O the blood of the Lamb
O the blood of the Lamb
The precious blood of the Lamb
What a sacrifice
That saved my life
Yes, the blood, it is my victory

O what love
No greater love
Grace, how can it be
That in my sin
Yes, even then
He shed His blood for me

Aren't you thankful that God created music? And aren't you glad that he has gifted men and women in our church family who serve us so well? What a great, great song. Thank you Worship Team.

I think we would all say that surely the Bible is all about Jesus. What would happen if we gave you a couple more words? One word, that was hard, obviously it was the greatest word of all but what if we wanted to broaden it out? What if we gave you three? What if we gave you three? Say it in three words. We said it like a seminarian, we said it in one word but in what key areas is Jesus revealed in the law and the psalms and the prophets and the gospels and the epistles and the Book of Revelation? Perhaps the best way to answer that is with these three words: creation, fall and redemption. I really want to encourage you to remember that. Remember, obviously the Bible is about Jesus and then organize that around those three ideas of creation and fall and redemption.

Let's think about that. How is Jesus revealed in creation? You know, many of you are going to be able to take vacations this summer and you'll visit places a little bit more

picturesque than Lafayette. This is a beautiful place, right? But there may be some prettier places that was taken over by the wildcat. That one's by the Tippy River. There are just some beautiful places in God's world, is there not? Let me ask you this, did Jesus, the person that we're saying the Bible is all about, did he have anything to do with that? You'd better believe it. The Apostle John said it this way, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, through Jesus. Apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being. You say, "Oh, you don't really believe that God created the world, do ya?" Yes, and those who choose not to are attacking Christ.

Colossians said it this way, "For by him," by Jesus, "all things were created both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things have been created through him and for him." He is before all things and in him all things hold together, if there is any question in your mind, by the way, about it.

Well, you know we're going over to Purdue at Faith West, are we going to dial down our belief in the creation of the world by Jesus Christ alone? Absolutely not. We have zero interest in somehow diluting the gospel, diluting the message of the Bible in order to make it more palatable to the minds of unredeemed people. Make no mistake about this, we are going to West Lafayette loud. All God's people got that? I don't mean loud to draw attention to ourselves, but loud in the sense that we have zero intention of being ashamed of the gospel. And you understand that there are some dear folks down that hill who like to say in a state sponsored institution, that nobody believes the Bible anymore. Well, welcome to look up the hill. Welcome to Faith West. It's all about the faith that was once and for all delivered unto the saints and we still believe with joy and confidence that this world was created by the one whom the Bible is all about, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this series we're going to see Christ's creative power not just emphasized in the book of Genesis but we're going to see it all through the Bible. For example, the writer of Hebrews says it this way, "God after he spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many portions and in many ways in these last days has spoken to us in his Son whom he appointed heir of all things." Now, listen to this, "through whom also he made the world." There it is. Jesus. He is the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his nature and he upholds all things by the word of his power.

See friends, that's what motivates many scientists in our church. We're not the enemy of good science. Our Christianity motivates us to want to do science. Why? To see the beauty and majesty of Christ revealed in the intricacies and predictability of aspects of creation. Elizabeth Barrett Browning captured that well in this poem,

"Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries."

The scientists in this church want to do science well because they're looking for evidence of Christ in their research and in their work. This is what motivates us, our belief that Jesus is the creation, the seed, because of what the Bible reveals about those who choose not to glorify God in that way. You're familiar with Romans 1? We want to be the polar opposite of Romans 1. We want to be Romans 1 in reverse. Listen to this, Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness because that which is known about God is evident within them." God made it evident to them, the creation of his world. You see, he gave every human being creation and he put the knowledge of himself in their hearts. "For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen being understood through what has been made, so they are without excuse. For even though they knew God," they had that knowledge in their hearts, "they did not honor him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." You see, the seed did not have the impact that God had intended. "Professing to be wise, they became fools."

We want to live the opposite of that. We want to be Romans 1 in reverse. We want to see Christ in creation and we want to honor him and we want to give him thanks for the beauty of his creation. Remember this too, this is what Jesus chose to personally identify with.

In just a few minutes we're going to remember the body of our Lord. Please keep in mind, we're worshipping someone who is powerful enough to create the world yet who humbled himself and took on a body to become part of the world. Tabernacling among us so he could pay the price for our sin. That's why in this same chapter, where John had talked about Christ being the creator, he went on to say the amazing truth, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we saw his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father." If you want to see it, or I suppose you can sit around eating blackberries. If you want to see it, "full of grace and truth." The message of the Bible is that Christ is our Creator.

Well, what's the second key category in which Christ is revealed? It's through the Fall. We don't even get out of the third chapter of the book of Genesis before we're introduced to rebellion and deception and the fall of human beings into sin. And the message of the Bible cover to cover is that sin ravages human beings and ravages culture resulting in mankind constantly sinning to the point of this terrible diagnosis in Genesis 6. We're not even six chapters into the Bible. "And the Lord that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Resulting in mankind now living in a sin cursed world. There is great suffering in every direction that we turn.

Satan told Eve that she could rebel against God and she would not surely die. A larger lie has never been told. So, Adam and Eve sin and they immediately experience guilt and shame and they begin fighting with one another. "It's her fault." "It's his fault." That started in the garden. Then they're banished from God's created garden and the joy of

work is turned into difficult toil and the fear of death is real and it's always at hand. We could make this point from any book of the Bible, the impact of sin, the impact of the Fall. Here's one summary verse, it's Job 5:7, "For man is born for trouble as sparks fly upward." If you're trying to diagnose the condition of man without talking about sin, you're missing the point.

The DSM5 was just published, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. That's the psychologists' and psychiatrists' Bible. It was just published? I thought it was supposed to be published a couple of years ago? It was, they were fighting about all the different classifications because it's not based on anything that is close to hard science. And I'm not here just to fuss about that, but I'm simply saying that is mankind's best attempt to explain his condition. There are literally hundreds of brand new psychological diagnoses now. The book is fatter than ever.

Guess what one word you will not read from cover to cover? The word "sin." You won't read about Christ in that book anywhere. We're simply saying that the Word of God is going to be the lens through which we interpret our condition. We have to be honest about the power of the Fall which is why we're so amazed at the perfection of Jesus. That's why we're never going to stop believing in the virgin birth of Christ. Mock us if you want, we are not going to stop believing that because it's such a crucial piece of the puzzle. That's why it's so important that Christ was tempted in all points yet without sin. Finally, there is somebody who's not been impacted by the Fall. He's not constantly sinning. He has power over our sin cursed world.

So, we have creation. We have the Fall. And thank God there's a third one. It's the beauty of redemption because the Bible is a story of God reaching down and redeeming a people for his own. He has an answer for sin. And we read in places like Isaiah 53, and I have to be honest with you, I do not understand how anybody could read this passage and not choose to become a follower of Christ, and not choose to embrace this one that the Bible is all about. If you're honest about the existence of sin and if you're not, maybe we could run a tape of what went through your mind the last seven days. Ok, then let's not do that. If we're going to be honest about the existence of sin, then what are you going to do about it? And what am I going to do about it? How about seek a redeemer?

Isaiah 53:10, "But the Lord was pleased to crush him, the Messiah, putting him to grief if he would render himself as a guilt offering." This was 700 years before it happened. "He will see his offspring, he will prolong his days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in his hand. As a result of the anguish of the Messiah's soul, he will see it and be satisfied; by his knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as he will bear their iniquities." These verses are speaking about the substitutionary death of Christ, about the possibility of being redeemed through what Jesus Christ did in your place. Then under his lordship being progressively conformed to his image. And not by ourselves. That's the beauty of it, too. Not just by ourselves but with a body, followers of Christ, who are being redeemed together which is why Peter would say this, "But you're a chosen race, church. You're a royal priesthood. You're a holy nation, a people for

God's own possession so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

And as if that's not enough, we also have the future hope of living in heaven where King Jesus will eventually include us in establishing his millennial kingdom on this earth. And there's all sorts of tremendous things that we could say about that but perhaps nothing better than this, "The city has no need of the sun," Revelation 21 says, "or the moon to shine on it for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the lamb." Heaven will be a place where we see the culmination of the beauty of the one the Bible is all about. "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it."

Friends, there it is. The Bible is all about Jesus. He is revealed in creation. He was rejected in the Fall and he's magnified in our redemption. Let's remember now what he did for us.

Here at our church we practice open communion and what that means is, you don't have to be a member of our church in order to participate you simply have to meet the requirements that are outlined in the Word of God. There are two of them: 1. that you know that you know that you know that you're on your way to heaven. There's been a definite time in your life where you've trusted Christ as Savior and Lord. Secondly, that you've examined yourself and you've confessed any known sin to the Lord so that you're able to participate in the Lord's table in a worthy manner. If you meet those requirements we would invite you to join us as we celebrate the life, the death, the resurrection of the one whom the Bible is all about.

Wes, return thanks for the body of our Lord.

Heavenly Father, so many times we look at our lives and we think we have things under control and then we look at the cross and see your body broken for us and realize just how much we need you and your sacrifice. We are so flawed, so sinful and yet you chose to love us. We thank you, God, for your sacrifice of your Son Jesus Christ for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

And once again I look upon the cross where You died
I'm humbled by Your mercy and I'm broken inside
Once again I thank You,
Once again I pour out my life

Jesus Christ, I think upon Your sacrifice
You became nothing
Poured out to death
Many times, I've wondered at your gift of life
I'm in that place once again
I'm in that place once again

Now You are exalted to the highest place
King of the Heavens, where one day I'll bow
But for now, I'll marvel at Your saving grace
I'm full of praise once again
Oh I'm full of praise once again

Thank you for the cross
Thank you for the cross
Thank you for the cross, my friend

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" \

You know, we've tried to answer this question of what's the Bible all about the way a seminarian might do it. We tried to answer the question in a word, the Bible is all about Jesus. We tried to answer it in three words which you'll be hearing over and over this summer as we march our way through the Bible and think about it through the lens of Christ being revealed through creation and Christ being rejected in the Fall and Christ being magnified by redemption. How about if we said it practically? What are we supposed to do with what we've heard today? And one of the answers, surely, is to seek to give Jesus first place in everything. I mean, if the Bible is all about Jesus, then we want our lives to be centered on him as well, right? And there's all sorts of verses that would help us with that, but one of my favorites is Colossians 1:18, speaking of Christ, "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."

I would ask you right now just to be thinking about what does it look like for Christ to have first place in my life? What should it look like for Christ to have first place in my life? What would it look like in this summer if Christ had more of first place in my life? That's a really important question, right? If the Bible is all about him, then we want our lives to be centered on him. Do you agree? You say, "Well, what practically might that look like?" Thanks for asking. It would start right here. Friend, do you know that you know that you know that you're on your way to heaven? Has there ever been a definite time where you've admitted your need and then you placed your faith and trust in Christ as Savior and Lord?

You understand that you were not born a Christian. I love ya, I love ya, and I know your Grandma said we're all God's children. I love you and she was wrong because the fact of the matter is, you were born on the wrong side of the tracks. You say, "You don't even know me." I know what Scripture says about all of us. You were born on the wrong side of the tracks. Nor do you kind of ease into it over time. This is a decision that is made at a point in time and if the Bible's all about Jesus, then I would ask you, has there ever been a definite time when you've acknowledged then the Bible is not all about me? And it's not all about my works, it's not all about how I'm going to earn heaven on my own. And

have you ever humbled yourself before God and said, "Lord, I want to admit my sin and I want to place my faith and trust in what Christ did on the cross as my only hope of eternity."

Friends, that's where redemption starts. That's how the payment for your sin is made. And if you don't know that you know that you know that you're on your way to heaven, here's some good news, God's in the redemption business. And here's some better news, he's open for business today. Do you realize that right now in the quietness of this moment you could pray and there's no magic formula, but you could pray and ask Jesus Christ to be your Savior and Lord. And if you don't know that you know that you know that you're on your way to heaven, can I just ask you this, why wouldn't you make that decision now? And I'm not a pushy individual, that's just not my way. But, for crying out loud, what would you be waiting for? You say, "Well, I need a sign." Really? There's one, there's one, do you see on the side of those lights, behind that screen there's a beautiful one, etc. etc. The cross of Christ. Thank you for the cross. And I would urge you to place your faith and trust in him today.

Believing friend, what would it look like for Jesus to have first place in you more this summer. If the Bible is all about him, then our lives ought to be all about him. Let me give you some specific possibilities. I've been taking some of my vacation days and hanging out at Faith West planting trees. That's a fun thing for me to do. We've had some teenagers come and join us, some high schoolers, some kids who have recently graduated from high school, some college guys. I love working with those guys and I love seeing it. It's not like you have to whip them and all that sort of thing but they're working joyfully. Do you know why? Because they love Christ and their life isn't just all surrounded about what can I do to make me happy. It's how can I serve Christ today? What is that? That's redemption. That's a picture of redemption being fleshed out right before us and if you're that kind of a young person, God bless you for that. You might be here and you'd say, "You know, there's an area of my life that I know is not pleasing Christ." Why not say, "This summer is going to be all about that. I want Christ to have more of first place in my life in that area." And if he's risen, if the Bible's all about him, if he has an answer for the Fall, if he was powerful enough to create the world and he's in the process of redeeming me and making me into his image, why not get more serious about that process even this summer. That would help you in your life to be more in concert with the message of the Bible.

Maybe you're in a difficult marriage right now. Maybe you're ready to throw in the towel. Is it possible that instead of finding your joy in your relationship with Christ and the process of you becoming more like him regardless of what others do, you've been placing your focus on trying to get other people to change. So, therefore, you go through life with this low grade anger and you go through life with this constant disappointment because everybody in your world is not what you want them to be in your petty fiefdom. Did you hear this morning? The Bible's not about you. So, that wasn't very nice. If it's true it needs to be said and at least take delight in this, I have to hear it three times.

The Bible's not about you and maybe it's time to say, "You know what, I want to organize my life more around who the Bible is really about." We have a bunch of people who are getting ready to serve in vacation Bible school. What are they thinking? They're going to work hard all day and then they'll come over to the church house and hand out with somebody else's kids every night for five nights. What are they thinking? That's the process of redemption. That's God changing their life. That's God giving them a different focus and they're saying, "I have an opportunity to proclaim the gospel to children and I don't want to miss it." If the Bible is all about Jesus, I want my schedule to be all about Jesus even when it's inconvenient.

The last couple of days, our school took the responsibility for installing the playgrounds over at Faith West. The one for the preschool, the one for our community which is huge out in the back. They took that job on and it was rain or shine. Friday, Saturday, that's what the guy had who was going to lead it. Rain or shine. Between 50-100 people did that the last two days. By the way, the Creator gave us rain. It was a muddy mess out there. You hear Titus talking about doing Tough Mudder, he doesn't know nothing. I tell you what, if you'd gone over there the last couple of days, you wouldn't have seen a bunch of people dragging around, grumping about the weather, complaining about having to serve God. They were having a blast. They were having an absolute blast. Why? That is redemption in action. That's Christ changing our focus and they were focusing on the fact that these playgrounds are going to be used for kids and for young families where we have the privilege of proclaiming the gospel. And if that makes for some inconvenience and some muddy stockings, well, bring it on. Bring it on.

These trees. I know some of you when you heard me say that we're going to be planting trees for the next ten days you said, "I can't wait to get out there to the foyer. I hope nobody beats me." What's wrong with you? Well, I'll tell you what it is, it's Jesus changing your life. And you love serving God. That is the power of redemption.

I want to ask you to rededicate yourself to making Jesus first in as many practical ways as you possibly can as the men come and wait on us again.

Paul went on to say, "In the same way he took the cup..." Aaron would you return thanks for the blood of our Lord.

Romans 5:8, "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us."

Lord, I just thank you for the love, the deep love that you show for us and I thank you for your Son that he died for us despite our sin. Lord, help us all to grow deeper in our relationship with you. As Pastor Viars said, I just pray that we would all put you first, Lord, in our lives. And I pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,

And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in His day;
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away.

E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

Don't you love that? Redeeming love. Not just the theme of the Bible but that can be my theme. And it's so powerful that it can be my theme until I die. Do you really believe that? That what we're talking about this morning can sustain you and direct you throughout the entire course of your life? Here's what I think, if you start looking for evidences of redeeming love, you'll see them all over the place. That's one of the things I love about being part of a church is we're a group of people who are evidences and more and more so of the redeeming love of God.

I was at a wedding that I did Friday night for a young couple, relatively new to our church and they wanted me to marry them in Grandpa's back yard. That's what they wanted and I was happy to do that and so we gathered the family together and had that ceremony. Afterward I was introduced to Grandpa and I didn't know this before, but he had just lost his Honey about a month ago after 54 years of marriage. He was pretty soft about that so we had some time just to talk about it and he was mentioning that his wife had had a lot of physical trouble over the years. He actually had some people say to him, "You know, why do you stay with her? Why do you put up with all that? Why do you stay with her?" It's fascinating what he said to me. He is a Christian man and he said, "Well, because I said I would." There it is. Don't you love the simplicity of that? That's redeeming love. That's evidence of Christ working in and through a man to keep the promise he made til death do us part. And shall be til we die.

That's what the Bible is all about and we should worship the one who makes that possible.

In the same way, "In the same way he took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."