

LOVING THE CITY

Micah 6:6-8

“With what shall I come before the LORD and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Let’s pray. Oh God, help us. Apart from your Spirit we will not handle this correctly. We will not see the truths that need to be seen in here or any part of your word unless you speak life into them. They are just words on a page. But when your Spirit comes, it illuminates our soul to see and to hear and to interpret correctly. So I pray for your help, God. I pray that these would not just be great ideas that I have for this church, or man-made concoctions of what it takes to have a better society, but truly – that we would see your hand in this, that you would open our eyes to behold wonderful things from your word this morning. We need you, God. We need you. Help us, we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

What is good? And what does the Lord require? These two questions are here. They are in our text, and you cannot find more important questions in all of life, right? They are questions that we are absolutely asking today, but certainly, this is a piece of scripture written thousands of years ago, and we see the same questions being asked.

- What is good?
- What does the Lord require?
- With what will I come before the Lord?

I have lived in South Florida for a while. I was born in New York and moved down here right at the start of middle school and have been here pretty much ever since. I went to college in Charleston, South Carolina, came back here, got married and we started plantings our roots. We love it here in South Florida. We really do. I know that that is not a common or popular thing to say. You don’t hear it much. You don’t hear people saying how much they enjoy it down here. Usually it’s the

opposite, “Why they don’t like South Florida and cannot wait to leave.” But we love it. This is our home.

I know there is a lot wrong with this place. We have even talked about it. I mentioned a few weeks back how South Florida is the fraud capital of America and we’re just are all about the hustle. We’ve got issues. Absolutely, we have our problems down here. And no doubt, our country as a whole has problems. We are in the midst of an election cycle and it is madness out there, absolute madness. We see it. We see the division in our country on many issues: religious, racial, economic, ethical. There is a loud cry for change and through it all, we are wondering, as we watch it on TV, as we live it out, we are wondering, we are asking the questions: “What do I do? What should I do? What should the government do? What’s good? What does God want?”

I think these are good and right questions. But let’s understand something: They are not easy questions to answer, right? They are not easy. It may be better to say that they are questions that cannot be answered with a simple answer. We understand that we live in a complex world, with complex issues that often demand complex solutions.

I know sometimes we overcomplicate things. But too often we see an issue -- we see it, we identify it -- and our instincts, our experiences, our biases shape how we view that experience and how we want it to be handled. We often respond based on all those things with a simple solution that just doesn’t work or can’t work.

My wife and I were getting CPR certified yesterday because we are in the process of fostering. That’s going to happen soon, and this is one of the last things we had to do. So Saturday morning - - all morning, 9 to 1, no breaks -- we were doing this class. It was really interesting, talking about complex situations. We were talking about what you do if you see someone in distress, in danger, choking, drowning, on the ground. One woman in the class was an older woman who works for hospice. She was like, “Well, what do you do if they have a DNR?” You know, I’m rolling my eyes, like, “You watch them die?” What are you going to do? The instructor was working to just say, “Well, you go ahead and you save their life. You have no idea what they are needing and they are not going to be able to communicate with you anyway.” I felt like this woman kept pushing. I was thinking, “What answer does she want to have?” I was thinking as I compared that experience to what we are studying this morning that we live in a complex world -- to the point where when someone is dying we have to even think twice about saving them. We live in a complicated world.

When we try to respond with simple solutions often it's like telling someone who is addicted to drugs to just stop. Right? That's the simple solution. I am consumed. I am addicted to alcohol, drugs, some kind of substance, and someone comes up and says, "Listen, I have great counsel for you: You just need to stop." You can't, right? Ultimately, we know that's the thing that has to happen, but there is a little more that has to go into it.

Or if someone is really struggling with anxiety (maybe this is something we all can relate to a little more) -- if you really struggle with fear, anxiety, worry, and someone comes up to you and says, "Just don't worry!" You are like, "Thanks, that's great. I know that's what I need to do, but it doesn't work that way."

I think we ask ourselves some questions like, "What's at the heart of this kind of attitude?" I think we tend to lean toward quick fixes. We tend to want to get things off of our plates quickly and just kind of move on, but when we really start to think about what's required to solve complex problems, we realize that it will take time, patience and work and those are three things we don't love. It will usually mean digging below the surface to get at the heart of the matter.

We uniquely deal with this kind of stuff, right? We live in a world where we wait for nothing. I just googled the word "wait," to see what would happen. I googled the word "wait" and in 0.37 seconds I had over one billion results. Just start scrolling through, from definitions to everything else. Over a billion results, and we are not even fazed by it, right? We are like, "Yep, that's right. That even seems slow." We are unfazed at the amount of data.

And time has become so skewed. If you are out of stock of something, there are so many 24-hour options you can just go to. If you are out of stock and you don't want to leave the house, look -- it can be there tomorrow. Pretty soon it will be standard. It will be there today -- the same day. Our devices give us the quickest routes to any destination. They let us order our coffee so that we barely have to slow down the car as we grab the coffee, all the time listening to our favorite novel, our favorite book that we have been dying to read. We just never had the time to, but now we can listen to it.

My wife and I have this ongoing conversation about audio books. I love them. I think it's unbelievable. I think it's a great way to get in content and manage your time well. She doesn't disagree with that, but I will say, "I read that book," and she says, "No, you did not read that book." I mean, this has become intense. I will tell people, "Oh yeah, I was reading this book," and I will look

at my wife just to see. She won't throw me under the bus in that moment, but I know she is feeling it.

We have redefined what it means to read! It's unbelievable! It's amazing! And I love it. I love what we have going on. But just understand: the more that we add into this whole structure, the more complicated things get. Right? We want to stop terrorism and the government comes and says, "Look, let me hack your phones." And the richest company in all the land says, "Nope. We value privacy." Immediately, we all have opinions and ideas like: "Oh, we've got to get ISIS." And other people are like, "No, I'm glad they respect our privacy." We could argue this all day. We are not going to, but we just see that things are not easily solved. We rarely have to want or wait for anything and technology is making it so that our time spent interacting with other humans is down to the swipe of a finger.

So when someone comes knocking at the door, and they have real problems, real issues, complex problems, it's hard. We have to wake up and not say, "Just go google it." You are having marital issues? You could get a billion results in a matter of seconds. What am I going to tell you that Google can't tell you? It may not be that extreme, but certainly you understand what I am saying. We have to fight against the realization or those moments to just kind of say, "Yeah, that's nice. Okay, I've got other things to do. Let me tell you a quick answer to your problem." No. Look, we often want to solve problems by way of convenience rather than by what's needed.

And we see it here, in a way, in our passage. I am going to hopefully pull out from this short, famous passage in Micah some things that I think can help us. You see, Micah is a prophet during the time that Israel is split into two nations. You have the northern tribes and the southern tribes. The northern tribes are still called Israel, and the capital is Samaria. The southern tribes are called Judah and the capital is Jerusalem. Both are under God's judgment because of sin, and there are two nations waiting to pounce on Israel. You have the Assyrians and the Babylonians, and they are coming. God is judging Israel because of sinful practices, things that they are doing. They are worshipping false gods regularly. All their leaders are worshipping false gods. Property is being taken away unlawfully. Government leadership is failing. Religious leadership is failing. The prophets are failing. Their theology is all over the place. They think that they can buy God's favor. And the businesses and businessmen are corrupt and violent.

No, we are not talking about South Florida. We are talking about ancient Israel, but it certainly sounds familiar. So we come toward the end of this book, and God has pronounced judgment. But as always, he promises that it won't last forever and that there will be a time of redemption. And we find in this very important passage some of the most important questions any human can ask, right here in the sixth chapter. What is good? What does the Lord require?

So, what I want to do is talk about this passage and highlight how some of the themes echoed in here are what we are about as a church. We deeply care about our world and our city, and want real change to come. We can't hope that our government is going to do it, or our schools, or the White House, or the media, or any of these other outlets, but the Church needs to be an agent of change. By Church, I don't mean Riverside -- this building. I mean you, us. But how? By asking these questions and understanding how to answer them.

I want to break this down into the wrong answer and the right answer, then talk about some challenges, some dangers that come here. We have these questions: What is good? What does the Lord require? What am I going to come before the Lord with? There are wrong answers here and there are right answers.

Let's look at the wrong answer first. Verses 6 and 7 have a series of questions that serve as answers to this one big question: What does God require? This is something we all ask. What can I bring to God? What can I give? What can I do to get God's favor, to get me on his side?

This is what people all over the world and all throughout history have tried to do or are trying to do to get to God. It might sound fine. It might sound okay, but there is this subtle nuance here, this difference. We can from here really illustrate the big difference in the Christian faith from all other faiths, all other religions. We like to sometimes classify it as the difference between the gospel and religion.

I don't want to always say that religion is a bad word, because the bible talks about what true religion looks like, but we sometimes put these categories up. Okay, here is what religion kind of says and looks like if we put it on a grand scale. Religious institutions, religion looks like this. And the gospel, the Christian faith looks like this.

On Wednesday nights we are offering some classes and one of the classes is called "The Gospel in Life." One of our elders, Navin, has been facilitating that, teaching that class. It is based off of a

study from Tim Keller, who is a pastor in New York City, and an author. He has become a voice for the Church. It is about how the gospel intersects all of life. He does an excellent job of outlining the differences between religion and the gospel. I just want to show you a couple so you can see what I am talking about. I am going to put them in some categories that we all deal with.

1. The first category is acceptance. This is something we want. We all are looking for acceptance in one way, shape, or form. This is what religion says: Religion says that as I relate to God I obey, therefore I am accepted. So, here is my list of things to do. I am going to obey them, I am going to do them, therefore I will be accepted by God. Inevitably that leads us into how we live with other people. This is what the gospel says: I am accepted, therefore I obey. It's different. God has accepted us apart from our "good works" and therefore, because he has welcomed us in, we obey. We live for him.
2. Let's look at obedience. I know I just talked a little bit about obedience, but maybe this brings it a little more into focus in our day to day. "I obey God in order to get things from God." We all can struggle with this. What does the gospel say? "I obey God to get more of God, to delight in him and resemble him." These are important differences.
3. Look at circumstances in our life. When things are going a little crazy, this is how we view circumstances from a religious perspective. "When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry. I am angry at God or myself since I believe that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life." This gets at the heart. When things go wrong, we experience discomfort. We start questioning. We shake our fist at God. We get mad at ourselves. It's like: "Look at what I've done! Look at all the good that I've done, and this is what happens?" What does the gospel say? "When circumstances in my life go wrong I struggle, but I know my punishment fell on Jesus, and that while God may allow this for my training, he will exercise his Fatherly love within my trial. I know that God provides peace and grace and freedom within the trials, because trials will come."
4. Look at criticism, something we all can deal with. Some of us deal with criticism harder than others. I am one of them. Look at what religion says how we view this: "When I am criticized, I am furious or devastated, because it is critical that I think of myself as a good person. Threats to self-image must be destroyed at all costs." The gospel: "When I am

criticized I struggle, but it is not essential for me to think of myself as a good person. My identity is not built on my record or my performance, but on God's love for me in Christ."

When we do things wrong and we are criticized for it, there is that place in us, especially for those of us who are competitive and who deal a lot with this -- we want it broken. "I will not have a single moment of weakness in my life, because it will reflect on who I am and how I am viewed." It's prison. And the gospel comes and says, "First of all, you are not as good as you think you are anyway, and my identity is not built on my record."

5. Finally, identity - the last one in religion says this: "My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work or how moral I am, so I must look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral." What does the gospel say? "My identity and self-worth are centered on the one who died for me. I am saved by sheer grace and I can't look down on those who believe or practice something different from me. Only by grace am I what I am."

This is just a taste, guys. We talk about it all the time. Go to the class. You will see how the gospel intersects all of life. When you think, "Oh, I already understand that. I don't need that kind of stuff anymore, I need to move on," you have missed it. You need it! You need to get back to it, because we all deal with these categories of acceptance and criticism and failure and identity, and we are all tempted to believe the lies that everything is wrapped up in how good I am, how well I perform, and how I stack up to those around me. We all struggle with this in one way or another, some of us worse than others, but the gospel comes in and it absolutely destroys all of it. And it frees us. We need constant reminders of it because we are prone to wander. Religion, in the way that we are talking about it, is a prison. It doesn't get the results we want. It doesn't get us closer to God. It binds us more and more.

We see it even illustrated in our passage, right? These voices that are asking this question: "What do I do for God? What can I bring? What can I do?" Then he starts asking, "Can I bring this? Can I do this?" He goes from the small to the absolutely enormous and absurd. He starts with: "Can I bring a year-old calf? Can I bring a thousand rams? Ten thousands of rivers of oil?" It's ridiculous. Then, what we would consider the craziest, so desperate to get to God, so desperate to find that connection, "I will even give you my first-born." It's an illustration of the human condition. We want that magic key to unlock God's blessing, so much so we will go so far as to promise something that is normally out of bounds. And what do we do? We try to be good. We try to do

the things that we think God wants that will make us look good to him, all the while believing in the end that God has to take me in because I just wasn't that bad.

That's what we are doing. We are just hoping in the end the scales tip more in our favor, if we have the wrong view. This is the wrong answer to the question. I think generally we want God's help. We know we need God's help, but we often want it on our terms. So we try to bargain with God, we try to buy him. "I'll give you this if you give me that. I promise." In those dark moments, we are like, "God, I won't do it again. I won't do it again, just get me through this. I promise that if you get me through this, I won't _____." And what happens? He gets us out and then we start to say, "Did I really.....? God knows. God knows what I was talking about. He understands my heart." He does.

Do you know this all comes down to us having a huge desire to save ourselves, to find salvation through stuff that we can do and bring? But we can't. This text helps us see that. We can't atone for our sin even with the most extravagant sacrifice, because the answers are there. Can I bring you rams? Can I bring you oil? Can I bring you my firstborn? The answer is no! It won't do what you want it to do! We cannot atone for our sin. We need another. We need someone who will, who can -- who can do what we can't, understanding all the while, guys, that God cares how we live. He absolutely cares how we live, but it's the result of a changed heart, not the cause of one.

We live in a way that honors God because he has done something in us. He has changed us. Living a "good" life that honors God is the proof, it's the evidence that he has done something in our lives. And we see from our text that he is interested in how we live. So that's the wrong answer. What is it to be good? What is good? What can I bring? What can I do for God? Well, we don't do that. We don't do what I just talked about.

But what is the right answer? We see it in verse 8. He has told you what's good. What does he want? That you do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God. We can look at this, and we are going to unpack this for a little bit, but we could say that these are three expressions of love. In some way, shape, or form, these are three expressions of love. He is basically telling us to go and love. We could say it in the form of justice, in the form of mercy, and in the form of faithfulness.

Justice. Mercy. Faithfulness. Let's break apart these three requirements.

- I. He says, “What does the Lord require of you but to “do justice”? Let’s talk about “do justice.” We could also say it is “act justly.” The Hebrew word here almost always is in reference to the most vulnerable. This word “justice” -- “mishpat” is the Hebrew word -- it almost always is a reference to the most vulnerable in society. It means to deliver the oppressed and punish the oppressor.

This is why we love superhero movies. We are drawn to them. Another one just came out. I didn’t even see it, because once they told me Ben Affleck was Batman, I was like, “I can’t go see it.” It might have been good, but I haven’t gone yet. We love superheroes because – it’s just the system -- it’s built broken, right? The good guys, the authorities, the normal good guys can’t handle what’s happening. There is injustice in the land and all hope is lost, then someone rises from the ashes to help do what the good guys just can’t do. We need someone who can go above and beyond, someone who will deliver from the forces of evil.

The storytellers understand it. They understand why we love this so much. But we don’t have to be spectators sitting around like in the movies, where all the normal people are just watching superman fly overhead saying, “Go get ‘em!” That’s a spectator mindset. It’s not what we are called to do. We don’t have to just sit and watch. We are tasked to do justice. Not as a vigilante -- we don’t need to put on the mask and take the law into our own hands. No – God is tasking us actually to do something more difficult. He is talking to us about actually caring about the most vulnerable in society.

I think when most of us hear that definition “to deliver the oppressed and punish the oppressor,” we really like the “punish the oppressor” part. We want to see justice served, so we wait for that person to be caught. If it’s in a movie, we wait for the villain to finally go down. We love that. But I think the harder thing to do, and where we are more useful is the first part – it’s caring for the oppressed, delivering the oppressed, the weak, the marginalized, the outcasts.

I hope you know that they exist in our society, because sometimes as Christians, and especially on the political landscape, the people who tend to be most associated with Christians -- it can seem like we just are blind to social issues, except for the big two. We care about abortion. We care about marriage. And we should. And understand, we need to

care about those things. But we understand that there is so much going on in our country. It absolutely involves life inside the womb, but it also involves so many issues like race, poverty, gender issues, and sex trafficking. There is a ton of evil going on in the world, and we have to think, "How are we going to respond? How do we interact with these issues? Do we just say, "Ah, it doesn't impact me"?"

The Christian, Church, has to have thoughtful engagement with these issues. We should have a powerful voice in these causes. Not just a loud opposing voice on the things we don't agree with, but a voice that seeks out conversation and understanding. We should work hard to not just give the simple answer of "stop it" when someone is doing something wrong. We have, more than anyone, the answers, the ability to know what it's like to be caught in sin and be delivered from that. We can provide hope, not just condemnation, hopefully never condemnation. There's a lot we can say here, but we have to move forward. Do justice.

- II. How about loving-kindness? To love kindness. This word "kindness," -- the NIV translates it "mercy." We can kind of interchange those words. It actually is this amazing covenantal word that God uses for his love for us. It's this word "hesed." It's a Hebrew word that means "steadfast love" in a way that we don't fully understand. It is God's amazing, unconditional, covenantal love that he pours out on his people. He loves us without regard to what we offer in return. He loved us when there was nothing lovely in us. So yeah, we are to love kindness, to love mercy. We are to love this kind of life. What does it mean to love it? Who gets this kind of kindness?

Let me ask you this: "Who do we generally like to show kindness to?" Well, the people we feel deserve it, usually the people that are kind back to us. When I tell you that God loves us without regard to what we offer in return, hopefully that flagged something in you, because we think about how we love other people. We tend to love as long as we receive something back. That's what makes loving infants so difficult, for some. Usually not for mothers, but maybe for dads. We have this tiny baby. They do nothing but eat, sleep, poo. They don't provide any feedback. But the reason why we do pour out our love on them is because there is something there. There is a covenant that has been wrought. There is a bond. There is something there that we can pour out in a way that shows God's love for us.

When the bible tells us here to love kindness, to love mercy, it means to love even though we don't get anything back. When we are being let down, it means to love. When it takes a lot of time, it means we are to love and show mercy. When it's draining, we love. We show kindness. This will mean that we actively show mercy to people, but it's more than that. We are to love mercy. We are to love it. When we see it, we are to value it, to call it precious, to love it in others, to love it in ourselves. When we see other people showing mercy, we want to get behind it. We want to say, "Hey, that's amazing what you are doing. Good job! I love that you are doing that. I love that you are fostering. I love that you are going out and caring for people who don't know about Jesus. I love that you are _____."

Sometimes we just are like, "Wow, man, that seems tiring. I'm glad you are doing that and not me."

- III. Walk humbly. It says to walk humbly with your God. This is a characteristic of faithfulness. This is where it all comes together. Listen, without an intimate relationship with God, we can't do these other two. We can't do them the right way. We can do them in a religious kind of way, but we can't do them in a covenantal, gospel-type of way. We will want to take the religious route and say, "Okay, tell me what I need to do. Who do I need to write the check out to, and then can I get my Sunday afternoons back and go boating, or go to the beach, or whatever? How many hours a week do I need to volunteer? Just tell me what the guidelines are and I will do them."

That's what makes this so different, right? He says, "We walk with God." What does "walking" in your mind indicate? It indicates intimacy. You don't go on a long walk with someone that you can't stand. It will be awkward. It will be boring. It will be silent. No, walking takes time. It promotes conversation. It promotes interaction. It promotes accountability. Walking in the bible always means intimacy. And having a sober view of what justice is, of what kindness and mercy are, needs a constant walking with God. Because when we start to drift away from the foundation, the ground floor of who God is and what he wants, then we wander into other things. It just becomes routine. It just becomes stuff that we do. There is no life in it. We just get burnt out. We are like, "Oh, I have to serve in children's ministry again? I don't want to greet people at the doors. I'm not friendly. But fine, I'll do it. They need it. I get it." No, please don't.

But when it changes, when there is that shift and you think, “Wow, man, what God has done for me - I don’t fully understand it, but I love God and God loves me, amazingly enough. And he loves other people -- I am called to show love and to show kindness and mercy even to the people that don’t love him back. So man, I get to do this?! And I get to do it with kids? Or, I get to say hi to people on Sunday mornings? I get to serve coffee? Or I get to go out on Second Saturday and hand out water bottles and just tell people about the church and about Jesus?” Man, it starts to change. Some of you are just so amazing at this - better than me. But you are not looking for something back. I just want to pour it out, because I am getting poured into, not by what you give me, but by what God is filling me with.”

That’s the problem. Marriages - if you are looking for your spouse to be that influx of good stuff in order to get you through life, well hopefully you know by now, either because you are mad at each other right now, or because you have learned -- it doesn’t work. They will disappoint you. They will fail you. Only by God coming and revealing to you who you are in him and what your spouse means do we start getting an understanding, and we are like, “Oh, okay. I can love my spouse and have a great relationship, and of course receive and give in that, but most of it is coming from up top, down into me, so that I can pour it out.”

It says to walk humbly. Taking a position of humility means that your focus isn’t on you. It’s on everything but you. It’s mostly on God, but your eyes are on the world around. That’s the only way you will ever know when justice or mercy is needed.

So what is good? What does the Lord require? The answers may seem simple. Even when we talk about justice, mercy, and faithfulness, they are complex. When we start unpacking it, we see it. It’s not just about going out and doing just things, it’s about having a heart that longs for these things. Jesus talked about this. He talked to the scribes and the Pharisees. He said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.”

I show this to you because we tend to think like, “Oh, maybe that was an Old Testament type of thinking in Micah.” But no -- Jesus is just coming back around and saying, “Look, it’s the same things: justice, mercy, faithfulness. You are neglecting them. Even though you are giving all this stuff out of your pocket, your heart is not in it and it’s worthless. People are dying. They are

drowning in a spiritual vacuum.” It’s too easy to check boxes off. It’s harder to get your heart engaged and love the city, the place, and the people where you live.

Let me give you three things to close with, okay? Real quick -- these are the dangers in the wrong answers. These are the dangers when we start to live in the first part of what I talked about, the wrong answers, the kind of religious-living type.

- 1) The first thing is this: We pursue morality. This is a danger, the danger in pursuing morality. If you take this out of context, you could just look at it and say, “Okay, all we need to worry about is social justice.” There are many who think that this is what Christianity should be. It should be a social gospel, meaning that we don’t care about sin. We don’t care about needing atonement. We don’t care about the cross. All I have to do is justice and mercy. We pursue this, where the main focus is on social structures getting better in society. If we do that, the world will be a better place. So, better society = better mankind.

There are those who say that this is what Christianity should be like. You guys should just be out there doing this stuff. You know, make the world a better place. Listen, you understand, I believe, we believe that it is absolutely necessary for the Church to be an agent of change in this world as it relates to social justice. Absolutely. But it can never be a substitute for the foundational truths of the gospel. A strictly moral gospel is no gospel. It’s not a true gospel, because behavioral change will not change the condition of the heart. Parents, you should know this. Just because you correct behavior in a moment doesn’t mean that your child is now all of a sudden this obedient, perfect child.

Donald Barnhouse was a pastor in the early to mid 1900’s, and he was actually an early pioneer in radio ministry. He speculated on what it would look like if Satan took over a city. We might think that if Satan took over a city there would be rampant immorality, just craziness. It would be horrible. But this is what he said, “If Satan took over Philadelphia, all of the bars would be closed, pornography banished, and pristine streets would be filled with tidy pedestrians who smiled at each other. There would be no swearing. Children would say, ‘Yes, sir,’ and ‘No, mam.’ And the churches would be full every Sunday where Christ is not preached.”

Guys, we have an idea that the devil is running around with a pitchfork and horns, and the ugliness would come out if he had more reign. I don’t think so. This is obviously

speculation. We don't know what would happen, but I think this is an illustration that when Christ is removed from the Church, when the things of Christ -- the cross, redemption, atonement, repentance -- when those things are pulled out of the gospel, it is void of power and it will look moral, but it will be void of everything that we need it to be full of.

Let this impact your parenting. Let it impact your marriage. Let it impact your workplace. Let it impact everything that you do. Morality is fine when it is tethered to the truth of the gospel. When it is apart from that, good things might be happening, but it is not bringing the change that we think. That's the first danger.

- 2) The second is: We pursue separation. We want to run away from everyone who is different, right? Instead of engaging with people who might look a little differently or think a little differently from me, we separate and isolate. This is a temptation for all of us. We want to just pull out.

Always around election time I hear things like, "Man, if this guy wins, I'm out of here. I'm going to Switzerland." There's no sin there. No craziness. Look, I'm not saying that people in other countries and other states don't need Jesus, of course. But really? Do we think that whoever this man or woman is that sits in that chair thwarts God in any way, shape or form? Does God not still sit on the throne? Look at Proverbs 21:1: "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." Guys, we believe in a sovereign God. He raises kings, he destroys kings. He raises nations, he brings them low. We have a responsibility as the Church of Jesus Christ to go and do and love as he has commanded, but we do not put our hope in who sits in that chair or in what laws are passed, or whatever. I'm not saying we don't care about them and don't vote. Go vote! Please be involved, but don't retreat. We cannot run South Florida, North Lauderdale. We need a powerful voice to bring change in this culture.

- 3) The final danger, then we are done: We pursue comfort. Give your life away. Don't be consumed with convenience and comfort. Living this life of justice, mercy, faithfulness -- it will rarely be convenient and comfortable. I know, we love it. We love comfort and convenience. It is a constant battle. You don't need lots of money to live this way, but it will mean actively managing your calendar, your schedule to not be booked so tight, to be available, to be open, to be attentive to needs of others. Open up your home regularly. Pick

your head up from your phone when you are engaged in conversation or walking around. Don't just hope everybody passes you along the way because you are too busy checking what your friend ate for lunch. Guys - there is a world in need of the gospel, and I am challenging you and myself to love Jesus enough and love others enough to give your life away. It's not about how much you will retire with or how much attention you get now or later, but it is about pouring your life out for others and for the Lord.