

What It Means to Be Human

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me your Bibles to Ecclesiastes. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We'd love to give you a copy that you can use and have.

If you don't have a Bible, feel free to raise your hand. We'll bring one over to you. We're in Ecclesiastes chapter 12. We are in the final passage of the book of Ecclesiastes, which was a 14-week series.

And we'll be in verses 8 to 14 this morning. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, you have the words of life.

Where else can we turn? To whom else can we go? So we have come once again to you, to your words of life, for your word is truth.

Please address us from your words so that all of our beliefs, all of our attitudes, perspectives, may be conformed to your word.

[1 : 34] Speak to us and transform us so that all of our priorities, all that we say and do, might be conformed to your word. Lord, so that we might be a humble people, governed by the word of God, living in a manner that pleases you.

Give us listening ears, listening hearts, and glorify the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, as we behold him in your word.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please stand, and if you are able, as we honor God, as we read his word, I'm going to read the passage I would like for us, Ecclesiastes 12, verses 8 to 14.

Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, all is vanity. Besides being wise, the preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.

The preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings.

[3 : 03] They are given by one shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books, there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

The end of the matter. All has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is a whole duty of man.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated.

You shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but the cover of a book does tell you important things about a book.

On the front cover, you find the title of the book. The back cover usually has a summary blurb of the book, along with maybe a few endorsements. And the cover of a book frames the book and brings all the pages together into a unity.

[4 : 10] That's the function of Ecclesiastes 12, 8-14, which I just read. It's the back cover of this book, and it matches the front cover of the book, which is Ecclesiastes 1, 1-11, and there are important parallels between the beginning and the end of the book.

In chapter 1, verse 1, we were introduced to the main voice of the book, which is the preacher. It said, the words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

And then in chapter 12, verses 9-10, we're introduced to the same preacher. The preacher also taught the people knowledge. The preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

So at the beginning of the book and at the end of the book, we see the author of the book, the redactor of the book, peeking through. And as it began in chapter 1, verse 2, so here it ends in chapter 12, verse 8, with the refrain, the thesis of the book, vanity of vanities, says the preacher.

Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Throughout our 14-week sermon series in this book, we've seen that word, vanity, 48 times, or 38 times, sorry, and it's a translation of a Hebrew word that means breath, or wind.

[5 : 30] It's the Greek equivalent of the word that is used in Romans 8-20 to describe that all creation has been subjected to futility. That word, futility, vanity, breath.

After Adam sinned and humanity fell, we, ever since then, we have been living in a world that is a mere breath, the merest breath. Our fleeting lives vanish like a puff of wind in the blink of an eye, and all of our earthly strivings and accomplishments come to naught.

In such a world, how then shall we live? Ecclesiastes 12, 8-14 answers that question and brings the book to its climactic conclusion, and this is the main point of the passage and of the book as a whole.

To be fully human is to fear God and keep his commandments. And we're going to see, explore this in two parts. First, we'll look at the words of truth for every season, and secondly, we'll look at the words of the shepherd for every sinner.

Many Bible commentators and theologians think that the author and the narrator of Ecclesiastes is here contradicting the kind of the dark and sobering and grim message of the preacher throughout the book and that he is now finally bringing everything back to the traditional biblical wisdom of fearing the Lord.

[6 : 57] However, that's a misinterpretation of this book and it's only a surface level analysis of this book and misses the main point of the book because this is not the first time that we've been told to fear God.

We've been told to fear God many times already in chapter 3, verse 14, chapter 5, verse 7, chapter 7, verse 18, and chapter 8, verse 12. Far from contradicting the preacher, the narrator here endorses the preacher.

In verse 9 and 10, besides being wise, the preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. The preacher sought to find words of delight and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

The narrator, the author of the book, the redactor of the book is here affirming the words of the preacher that he has been relaying to us all throughout the book of Ecclesiastes. So the main argument, vanity of vanities, all is vanity, is still true.

We live in a fallen world where everything is vanity. All comes to naught. It's all undone by our last enemy, death. And it's when we recognize that our lives are but a breath, that we are fleeting creatures who have no control over the passage of time and no control over the events of life, that we become a humble people who fear God, who are submitted to him.

[8 : 21] There is an intriguing parallel between Ecclesiastes 12, 9 to 10, and 7, 29, that one of our incoming church members, Charles Dye, actually pointed out to me in our conversation earlier this week.

And I have a slide to show the comparison. Ecclesiastes 12, 9 to 10 says, besides being wise, the preacher also taught the people knowledge. weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.

So the preacher sought to find words of delight and uprightly he wrote words of truth. Now compare that to Ecclesiastes 7, 29. It says, see, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

You see the highlighted words that are repeated in those two verses, found, many, sought, upright. It's as if the preacher intends Ecclesiastes to be a corrective, an antidote to what he found.

And what he found was this, he found that humanity as a whole has strayed from the uprightness or straightness in which God created them and have instead sought out many schemes.

[9 : 36] And for that reason, preachers sought to find many proverbs to counteract their many schemes. And uprightly he wrote words of truth so that those who have strayed from their uprightness may be guided back by these words to return to the righteousness of the Lord.

This interpretation is confirmed by the use of the word arrange in verse 9. Arranging many proverbs with great care, the word arrange means more literally to make straight. And that's a word that's used only three times in the entire Bible and two other times also occur in the book of Ecclesiastes. It says in Ecclesiastes 1.15, what is crooked cannot be made straight, cannot be arranged or ordered. 7.13, consider the work of God who can make straight what he has made crooked.

In both contexts, the preacher spoke of the futility and vanity of life. Human beings cannot make straight what God has made crooked. We, no matter how hard we try, cannot undo the subjection to futility due to sin that creation is under, that all of humanity is under.

Only God can make straight what he has made crooked. And so the preacher cannot straighten out this fallen world. So instead, he does, the best thing he can do is to straighten and order the many proverbs, the words of the wise, which are given by the one shepherd, namely God, as it says in verse 11.

[11:08] And it's the word of God and the fear of the Lord that can straighten out the sheep that have strayed away from the uprightness, the path of God. So then the author of Ecclesiastes is exhorting us here to cherish these words of wisdom.

The preacher, whose words the author has reproduced here, was wise. And this wise man weighed and studied and arranged many proverbs with great care.

In fact, Ecclesiastes 1.16 told us that this preacher had acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before him. This is why I think that this is an allusion to King Solomon, the preacher, who is specifically noted in 1 Kings 4 as possessing wisdom that surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt, for he was wiser than all other men.

He also spoke 3,000 proverbs. Verse 10 continues to commend the words of the preacher to us. The preacher sought to find words of delight and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

The word delight in the phrase words of delight is used in two primary senses in the book of Ecclesiastes. In the first sense, it means pleasure or delight and that's the way it's used in chapter 5, verse 4 and chapter 12, verse 1.

[12:29] In that sense, it means that the preacher sought to discover and express the many proverbs not only truly but in a witty and memorable and delightful way which is evident in the poetic imagery and the beauty of the phrasing in both the book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

But there's an important second meaning of that word, delight, and this is the way it's more commonly used in the book of Ecclesiastes and it means matter or way.

For example, in Ecclesiastes 3, verse 1, it says, for everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. The word matter there is a translation of the same Hebrew word that is rendered delight in chapter 12, verse 10.

Again, Ecclesiastes 3, 17 says, God will judge the righteous and the wicked for there is a time for every matter and for every work. Again, Ecclesiastes 8, verse 6, for there is a time and a way for every matter although man's trouble lies heavy on him.

The preacher's concern in this book has been comprehensive. It has encompassed all of human life under the sun. And here are the words that are true and delightful for every time and season, for every matter under the sun.

[13:51] Fear God and keep his commandments. for this is the whole duty of man. These are the words of truth for every season. Whether you are rejoicing or weeping right now in your season of life, whether you are single or married, whether you are healthy or sick, whether you are young or old, pay attention to these words the author is telling us because these are the words of truth for every season written by someone who is wiser than all of us.

And these are also the words of the shepherd for every sinner. I mentioned this already but note that these words of wisdom do not ultimately belong to the preacher.

He is not the originator or the creator of these proverbs. He doesn't say that he thought of these or came up with these or he created these words.

Those are not the kinds of verbs that is used here. Instead, he says he simply weighed and studied arranged, sought, and found them.

The word way, which means to ponder or think about, comes from a word that means year. The Hebrew word for year. It means to listen or consider carefully. The preacher listened to wisdom.

[15:11] He sought and found wisdom because the wisdom of Ecclesiastes does not belong ultimately to man, not to Solomon, but to God. It says in verse 11, the words of the wise are like goads and like snails firmly fixed are the collected sayings.

They are given by one shepherd. The words collected sayings and many proverbs are contrasted with the emphatic word one, the one shepherd. The many proverbs and this extensive collection of sayings all ultimately have one author and one owner and one originator and that is God.

And we know that the one shepherd is a reference to God because of the way he is singled out as the one, the one shepherd and because throughout scripture God is described as the shepherd of his people.

In the first book of the Bible in Genesis 48, 15 at the end of his life Jacob says, God has been my shepherd all my life long to this day. In the last book of the Bible in Revelation 7, 17 it says, the lamb in the midst of the throne namely Jesus Christ will be their shepherd and he will guide them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

And in between the first book of the Bible and the last book of the Bible there are many references to God as our shepherd. We read in the assurance of pardon, the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want Psalm 23.

[16:37] God is the shepherd and overseer of our souls 1 Peter 2, 25 O shepherd of Israel you who lead Joseph like a flock Psalm 80 verse 1 and this is what the words of the shepherd the words of God are like.

They are like goads and like nails firmly fixed. These vivid images convey two different characteristics of God's word. First, the words of God are like goads.

We don't really use goads very much nowadays but this is a traditional farming instrument. It's just a long stick that has a pointed end and the farmers would use it to goad oxen, prod the animals to go in a certain direction by pricking them so that, you know, and if an ox refuses to heed the prodding of the goat then it can stray and fall into a ditch or it would certainly be useless for farming because it's not moving in the direction that the farmer wants it to move.

The words of God are like goads that direct us and keep us on the upright path of God. In Acts 26, 14 Saul, also named Paul, mentions that when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus he said, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

It is hard for you to kick against the goats. Saul was busy persecuting the church of Christ. He was busy trying to stamp out the gospel of Jesus Christ from the face of the earth and Jesus appears to him in a vision and says to him, it is hard for you to kick against the goats.

[18:22] The word of God and the way he is directing the course of human history he is trying to direct Paul, here are the goats pointing to him with the stick, they go this way and Paul is kicking against it and resisting it screaming all along the way but finally he responds to the goading of the word of God and he repents of his sins and turns around and he becomes the famous apostle to the Gentiles who perhaps more widely and more effectively proclaim the gospel and plant the churches than anyone else in human history.

Being poked by goats is not fun. It hurts but it's pain that leads to life and salvation.

It's pain for our good. It's pain that aligns us with the purposes and priorities of God. Where in your life do you feel the poking of the goads of God's word?

is there a sin or a habit that you refuse to give up?

Stop kicking against the goats. Follow where the shepherd is leading you. The words of God also like nails firmly fixed.

[19:58] If you've ever tried to remove a nail that has been driven into a wall with a hammer with your hands you know that it's impossible to do. I'm not talking about a nail that's loosely hanging on drywall that you forgot to use the drywall anchor in.

That's just kind of like barely hanging in there and just falls right out. I'm talking about a nail that's driven firmly into a wall stud into a beam of wood with a hammer.

Unless you have the proper tools for it you will never be able to pull that nail out no matter how strong you are. I have in my bedroom above the bed Matthew 11 28-29 written in Korean calligraphy framed and it's a big heavy frame it's like five feet by three feet it's unwieldy to carry but if I remember correctly that massive frame is hanging by one nail one nail firmly fixed that one nail firmly fixed holds that entire weight of the frame which I would have a hard time holding for more than a few minutes 24 hours a day 365 days a year year after year after year it's amazing on nails firmly fixed you can hang the heavy frames of your life likewise on the words of God which are like nails firmly fixed you can hang your entire life every choice that you make every word that you speak everything you believe every relationship you have you can hang it all up on the word of God and it can bear that weight but if you hang your life on other words words of men the wisdom of this world would be like trying to hang a heavy frame on a plastic thumbtack pushed into a drywall it will keep falling off and you've done this before

I'm sure like you're just trying delicately to make sure it stays it's wobbling and then you walk away and then that footfall boom vibrates and it falls to the ground you can't bear the weight of your life Jesus said in Matthew 24 35 heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away the word of God shall not change and shall not be moved the word of God is like nails firmly fixed are you betting your life on the words of God or on the words of men what do you give more weight to in your life do you care more about what scripture says or do you care more about what scripture says about the social and political issues in life or do you care more about what your friends say or what your social media news feed says what popular opinion says what the newspaper pundit says do you spend more time listening to or reading God's word or more time listening to other podcasts other people talking reading other books magazines every word of man that is posted and published throughout human history will fade and be forgotten but the words of God will remain forever so the author of

Ecclesiastes gives us some paternal advice in verse 12 my son and if you're a woman you can hear my daughter beware of anything beyond these of making many books there is no end and much study is a weariness of the flesh the words many books and much study form an intentional contrast with the many proverbs from the words of the shepherd in verse 9 every single day I mentioned to you a few weeks ago every single day 7.5 million blog posts are published online every single year up to 1 million books are published and if you include self published books that number is closer to 4 million that's about 11,000 books published every single day every year I have I come up with a reading plan for myself at the beginning of the year I work through try to work through all of them I only get to about half of them and and and I feel like I'm making progress and I read every day but guess what my list of books to read or books that

[25 : 17] I want to read just grows longer and longer and longer and longer every single year and with each passing year my conviction grows that it's better to reread an old book that has stood the test of time than to read a new book and with each passing year my conviction grows that the best books to read are books that contain the most scripture books that help me to understand scripture better because scripture is the pearl of divine wisdom amidst a sea of worthless rocks I can't count the number of times I've read something and thought it was all so novel and insightful only to find months later years later oh it's been in God's word all along I can't count the number of times I've read things or and heard things and thought oh that is so true and so wise only to find out in further study in the months down the line or years down the line oh actually the word of God actually contradicts that and that thing very thing is exposed to be false and foolish I talk a lot about scripture when I preach and you know why it's because apart from it I don't have anything useful or helpful to say this is why I take care not to recommend books to people by saying that oh that's a must read I sometimes slip and I do say that but don't believe me when

I say that about any book other than the word of God there is no book outside of holy writ that is a must read second Timothy three teaches us that in the last days people will be lovers of self lovers of money lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God having the appearance of godliness but denying its power always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth second Timothy four verse three continues this morning for the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions academic fashions are always changing new ideas are always being proposed new dissertations are always being written and the people of this world are always learning but never able to arrive at the knowledge of the truth you can study philosophy and theology for decades and cultivate an air of sophistication and an appearance of godliness even yet know nothing of the power of

God for salvation for those who believe you can go to a therapist for decades peeling away layer after layer of your own life and of your own past learn ever more about yourself and about your upbringing and turn every stone and every trauma and trigger in your life and yet never arrive at a knowledge of the truth because transforming power lies not in knowing self but in knowing god in fact you cannot even truly know yourself apart from knowing god john 17 verse 3 says and this is eternal life that they know you the only true god and jesus christ whom you have sent first corinthians 1 21 says for since in the wisdom of god the world did not know god through wisdom it pleased god through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe the wisdom of god is revealed in the gospel of jesus christ in the folly of christ crucified not in worldly wisdom the great divorce is is c.s lewis's allegorical work about a bus ride from hell to heaven it has some theological

problems but it's nonetheless insightful as all of Lewis's writings are in the book there's a series of dialogues between bright what he calls solid people these are the people from heaven there's a conversation there are conversations between these bright solid people and these immaterial ghosts they're the people from hell the bright solid people try to bring the ghosts that they knew in their life on earth to get them to finally repent of their sins to confront their sins to repent of their sins so that they can come to heaven with them in chapter 5 the solid being named uh named Dick tries to get a ghost who was a bishop and a theologian on earth to repent of his heresy and apostasy instead of listening to the solid being the ghost corrects him and tries him saying because because this solid being used to be a heretic along with him but then later in life he repented and but this is what what the what the ghost says to the solid being you became rather narrow-minded towards the end of your life believing in a literal heaven and hell when the solid being tells the ghost that he was right to believe in a real heaven and hell and that the ghost had in fact been sent to hell because of his apostasy the ghost is livid it's like what and this is what he says of himself mine certainly were honest opinions they were not only honest but heroic i asserted them fearlessly when the doctrine of the resurrection ceased to commend itself to the critical faculties which God had given me i openly rejected it i preached my famous sermon i defied the whole chapter i took every risk but the solid being challenges the ghost's delusion what risk what was at all likely to come of it except what actually came popularity sales for your books invitations and finally a bishopric our opinions were not honestly come by we simply found ourselves in contact with a certain current of ideas and plunged into it because it seemed modern and successful at college you know we just started automatically writing the kind of essays that got good marks and saying the kind of things that want applause when did we put up one moment's real resistance to the loss of our faith we were afraid of crude salvationism afraid of a breach with the spirit of the age afraid of ridicule afraid above all of real spiritual fears and hopes the dialogue goes on and the solid being urges the ghost one wrench and the tooth will be out you can begin as if nothing ever had gone wrong white as snow it's all true you know Christ is in me for you with that power and i've come a long journey to meet you you have seen hell you are inside of heaven will you even now repent and believe the dialogue goes on but the ghost demurs saying that he would consider it but that he first needs some assurances these are the assurances and concessions that he seeks from the solid being who is in heaven i think i have this to show maybe not i should want a guarantee that you are taking me to a place where i shall find a wider sphere of usefulness and scope for the talents that God has given me and and and an atmosphere of free inquiry in short all that one means by civilization air spiritual life but then the solid being responds this way no i can promise you none of these things no sphere of usefulness you are not needed there at all no scope for your talents only forgiveness for having perverted them no atmosphere of inquiry for i will bring you to the land not of questions but of answers and you shall see the face of God unfortunately the stubborn ghost insists on his need for the free wind of inquiry of always learning never arriving and then returns to hell we are always swimming in a world of questions and hypotheses and suggestions but here is the book of answers the people of this world are always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth so beware of anything beyond these of making many books there is no end and much study is a weariness of the flesh but here are the many proverbs the words of the wise that are given by the one shepherd are you paying attention to that word this is the end of the matter he says in verse 13 all has been heard fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man the word duty was added there to help us understand the main thrust of the verse but the word duty is actually absent in the original Hebrew so it's more literally that fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole of man this is what it means to be man this is what it means to be human what is man what is humanity's identity what is humanity's duty Plato claimed to have found the answer he defined human this way man is a two-footed featherless animal profound and he was much praised for his definition so another Greek philosopher he may have been the first troll to ever exist Diogenes of Sinope plucked a chicken of all its feathers and brought it into Plato's academy and said behold Plato's man he's exposing the fact that merely describing and distinguishing man from other animals in terms of physical features is not the same thing as defining what man is what is a man's essence what is a man's purpose countless philosophers priests and poets scientists have tried to answer the question what is man and have come up short just like Plato more recently BBC Earth launched a video series entitled [36 : 52] I forget the title but it's a video series attempting to answer that question what is man what is human and this was their conclusion to be human is to be at the center of your own universe

to experience life in all its colors and all its potential to be the greatest wonder in the world that's the first thing that came up when I searched on Google that's a boldly man-centered way of looking at the world but hey at least it's honest because that's how most human beings in this world live like they are the center of the universe like the world and their life and everybody around them revolves around them but the word of God tells a very different tale doesn't it it says fear God in verse 13 the word God is actually fronted for emphasis in the Hebrew so literally it says God you shall fear that's the way it's translated that same expression

Ecclesiastes 5 7 God is the one you must fear the order of the word itself conveys the point that the author is making wisdom does not begin with I or me or you it begins with God God you shall fear I heard this helpful illustration in one of the sermons at the Sovereign Grace Pastors Conference this past week that I was at before Copernicus's publication of the revolutions of the heavenly spheres in 1543 most people in the world believed that the sun revolved around the earth and the planets revolved around the earth but unsurprisingly the math didn't add up because if you observe the planets from the vantage point of earth it looks like they're moving backwards in their orbit which doesn't make sense but lo and behold when you put the sun at the center of this galaxy all the math adds up that's what spiritual life is like man-centered philosophies man-centered theologies man-centered psychotherapies never work the spiritual math simply doesn't add up it's only when God is on the throne of our lives when God is the center and the heartbeat of our lives that everything falls into place seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be given to you as well if your goal in life is to please yourself and make yourself happy by doing what you want for yourself rather than what God wants you will never be happy

I guarantee it because as long as you are the center of your universe the math will never add up but if you put God at the center of your life and make your life about glorifying him and enjoying him and pleasing him then you will be happier than you ever imagined second century church father Irenaeus once said this the glory of God is the human being fully alive because to be fully human is to fear God and keep his commandments that is the whole of what it means to be human this is the end of the matter the fear of the Lord is the beginning and the end of wisdom why verse 14 for God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing whether good or evil because to be human is to be a creature that is accountable to the creator to be human is to be a servant that does the bidding of the master that's why when Jesus the son of God took human flesh took on human flesh and became a man it says in Philippians 2 7 that he emptied himself by taking the form of what form of a servant being born in the likeness of men what does human form and the likeness of men entail servitude that's what it means to be human and we can't rightly understand ourselves with our own dim lights around the world we need the word of God

John Calvin who is probably the most influential theologian of the Protestant Reformation begins his classic work the Institutes of Christian Religion by saying that without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self why because we were created in the image of God and our very being our entire selves are contingent on God in him we live and move and have our being act 17 we can only therefore rightly know ourselves in relation to God knowledge of self apart from knowledge of God is impossible and our standing with God whether you are righteous or not also we cannot understand apart from God's own revelation think about it this way in a dimly lit restaurant sometimes I the cynical side of me assumes that this is why restaurants always dim their lights so you could barely see anything everything in a dimly lit room looks romantic and warm right and then you can't see anything but imagine if you took a whole bunch of fluorescent light bulbs and lit the entire place up right now you can see everything oh those that little stain on that white tablecloth and that oil that grease streak on your plate and your silverware and that oh that cockroach crawling on the edges of the wall and then oh you could even see the food stuck between the teeth of the person that you're eating with you can see everything when we look at ourselves against the darkness of our surrounding world it's easy for us to think oh yeah

I'm wise yeah I'm righteous but when we look at ourselves against the light of the world Jesus Christ then we see all our sins and shortcomings as they really are Calvin puts it this way as long as we do not look beyond the earth being quite content with our own righteousness wisdom and virtue we flatter ourselves most sweetly and fancy ourselves all but demigods suppose we but once begin to raise our thoughts to God and to ponder his nature and how completely perfect are his righteousness wisdom and power the straight edge to which we must be shaped then what masquerading earlier as righteousness was pleasing in us will soon grow filthy in its consummate

wickedness God's perfect word is the standard the straight edge the ruler to which our lives must be shaped we can only know ourselves rightly in the light of the knowledge of the glory of [44 : 25] God in the face of Jesus Christ so then what can we do when we behold our own consummate wickedness the hideousness of sin in the light of the glory and holiness of God what can we do what can we do when Isaiah 53 verse 6 the word of God tells us that all of us we like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way when God's word tells us that God made man upright but they have sought out many schemes that's what we all have done we have all kicked against the goads of God's word heavenly when we are sheep that go against the goat and kick against the goat how can God make us lead us to green pastures and make us lie down by still waters and restore our souls when we're going our way kicking against the goat and we've made a mess of our lives that's where the good news of Jesus

Christ comes in in Ezekiel 34 15 God promised God is the shepherd remember he promised I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep and I myself will make them lie down declares the Lord God because God saw that no human shepherd can lead them to righteousness no human shepherd can feed them God himself he said I will be the shepherd of my people and so he sends his only son the son of God Jesus Christ to become the son of man to take on human flesh so that he is fully God and fully man and he lives a life of perfect obedience that we could never live never once straying from the perfect path of righteousness God set before him and yet it's not us the foolish sheep that are going astray that die

Jesus the shepherd who becomes a sheep to save the sheep dies as a sacrificial lamb of God on the cross for our sins sheep that is why Jesus said in John 10 11 I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep this is all backwards guys the sheep exists for the shepherd the sheep exists to give its wool so that the shepherd might be warm the sheep exists so they might give its meat in times of hunger for the shepherd the sheep exists for the shepherd the sheep is the servant the sheep serves the master how can it be that the shepherd lays down his life for the sheep how can it be that God the son of God dies to save sinful men like you and me and yet that's what he did and

Jesus died as the lamb the sacrificial lamb for our sins and then he was raised from the dead so that all who believe in him might be reconciled to God have eternal life and be clothed with the righteousness of Christ that's the promise I hold out for all of you on the authority of God's word so come to him do you feel him going you come to him where you can be firmly fixed and stable like nails firmly fixed let's pray together father you are such a gracious shepherd thank you for not leaving us to our own devices we had no hope of finding the way