TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

November 2023

November 1, 2023 - Everything as Rubbish

I count everything as Rubbish because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Philippians 3:8

In a recent video that went viral, a 60-year-old New York trash thrifter shared how he makes a living reselling and recycling trash in the Big Apple. From bottles alone, he makes $400 to $800 a week, plus another $1000 from things he resells. He's found gold, cash, diamonds, and Cartier watches ... all in the trash.

But his best find was Jesus Christ. As the interview goes on, the man shares how after being involved in human trafficking and drug markets, he lost everything—his wife, his children, and 10 years of his life in prison. In 1993, three ladies from the Bronx came to his prison to preach the Gospel. It was then that he met the Lord and gave his life to Him.

Just as this man now repurposes trash, the Lord repurposed this man, trashed by sin and shame, for His glory. "I don't deserve it," he said, "but I thank God for his grace." We too can count everything as rubbish compared to knowing Jesus.

November 2, 2023 - Found Faithful

It is required that a man be found faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:2

In December 1938, British stockbroker Nicholas Winton cancelled a ski vacation and instead travelled to Prague. There, as the German military began its occupation of Czechoslovakia, he worked with friends to save the lives of 669 Jewish children. When he returned to London, Winton raised money to purchase train tickets and passports, and cut through red tape so that the children could be placed in foster care once they reached Great Britain.

According to his daughter's account, Winton never knew what happened to the children and never believed he'd done something heroic ... until 1988, when Winton was invited to sit in the studio audience of the television show That's Life. On air, he learned that the people sitting around him were children he had saved, along with their children and grandchildren.

This January, a new biopic of Winton's efforts, titled One Life, will hit theatres, starring Anthony Hopkins. His story is a powerful reminder that faithfulness, not heroics, can change the destinies of thousands. Let us be found faithful like our Lord Jesus.

November 3, 2023 - Our Interest and His Glory

"But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:6)

Do we put the interests of man above the glory of God — do we put our happiness above God's honour? No, we most emphatically do not do this.

To be sure, we Christian endeavour to pursue our interest and our happiness with all our might. We have learned from the Bible that God's interest is to magnify the fullness of his glory by spilling over in mercy to us sinners, who desperately need him.

Therefore, the pursuit of our interest and our happiness, is never above God's interest and God's happiness and God's glory, but always in God's. One of the most precious truths in the Bible is that God's greatest interest is to glorify the wealth of his grace by making sinners happy in him.

When we humble ourselves like little children and put on no airs of self-sufficiency but run happily into the joy of our Father's embrace, the glory of his grace is magnified, and the longing of our soul is satisfied. Our interest and his glory become one.

November 4, 2023 - War with Unbelief

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:16–17)

When I am anxious about getting old, I battle unbelief with the promise, *"Even to your old age I am he, and to grey hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save" (Isaiah 46:4).*

When I am anxious about dying, I battle unbelief with the promise that *"none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Romans 14:7–9).*

When I am anxious that I may make shipwreck of faith and fall away from God, I battle unbelief with the promises, "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). Join me in this battle! Let us make war, not with other people, but with our own unbelief.

November 5, 2023 - Rejoice in the Lord

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. (Philippians 3:1)

God is glorified by our joy in him — that joy in God is the very thing that makes our praise an honour to God, and not hypocrisy.

This was a stunning discovery. We must pursue joy in God if we are to glorify him as the surpassingly valuable Reality in the universe. Joy is not a mere option alongside worship. It is an essential component of worship. Indeed the very essence of worship — being glad in the glories of God.

We have a name for those who speak their praises of God when they have no pleasure in what they praise. We call them hypocrites. Jesus said, *"You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 'This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me'" (Matthew 15:7–8).* This fact — that authentic praise means consummate pleasure and that the highest end of man is to drink deeply of this pleasure for God's glory — is one of the most liberating discoveries we can make as we rejoice in the Lord.

November 6, 2023 - Delight Yourself in the Lord

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)

The quest for pleasure is not even optional but commanded such as in this verse. The psalmists sought to do just this: *"As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1–2). "My soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1).*

The motif of thirsting has its satisfying counterpart when the psalmist says that men "drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; and You give them to drink of the river of Your delights" (Psalm 36:8 NASB).

The goodness of God, the very foundation of worship, is not a thing you pay your respects to out of some kind of disinterested reverence. No, it is something to be enjoyed: *"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:8).*

"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103). As C.S. Lewis says, God in the Psalms is the "all-satisfying Object." His people adore him unashamedly for the *"exceeding joy" they find in him (Psalm 43:4).* He is the source of complete and unending pleasure*: "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11),* as we delight ourselves in the Lord.

November 7, 2023 - We Need Christ

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28

The supremely strange thing about Christianity in anthropological terms is that it takes a topsy-turvy attitude toward weakness and strength. To put it crudely, most cultures look at the powerful and the wealthy and assume that they must be doing something right to have attained such might. The poor are poor because of some failing of their own, whether in this life or the last. The smallness and feebleness of women and children is a sign that they must be commanded by men. The suffering of slaves is not an argument against slavery, but an argument against allowing oneself to be enslaved.

Into this predatory, power-centric pagan world stepped Christ, who defeated the powerful through submission to death—"even death on a cross." After Christ's resurrection, His followers began insisting on the innate and equal value of all human beings and began condemning pagan practices like abortion and infanticide, showing how much we need Christ.

November 8, 2023 - A Better Life

And great crowds came to Him, bringing with them the lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they put them down at His feet; and He healed them. Matthew 15:30

Far from being an otherworldly religion, Christianity teaches both the importance and goodness of life in this world. In fact, from Jesus' healing ministry to the work of modern missionary doctors, a consistent feature of the work of the Church in the world has been to care for the sick and needy, and not just point them to the life to come.

Though the Gospel is a message and must be proclaimed, the early Church saw works of mercy and preaching of the Gospel as two sides of the same coin.

From the earliest centuries, Christians embraced the medical theories and practices of the day. Contrary to stereotypes, the early Church did not attribute illness to demons, though they did recognize demonization as a real phenomenon. The real difference between Christians and physicians of the day was the willingness

to risk death in order to treat the sick, convinced that if they died it would only mean a transition to a better life.

So, let us stand in awe and wonder and let us tremble, that not only our praises of God's sovereignty, but also our salvation through the death of Christ for us is by his good pleasure.

November 9, 2023 - Fellowship and Favour

The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations. (Psalm 33:10–11)

"Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (Psalm 115:3). The implication of this text is that God has the right and power to do whatever makes him happy. That is what it means to say that God is sovereign.

Think about it for a moment: If God is sovereign and can do anything he pleases, then none of his purposes can be frustrated.

As none of his purposes can be frustrated, he is the happiest of all beings. This infinite, divine happiness is the fountain from which the Christian drinks and longs to drink more deeply.

God is never out of sorts with frustration or discouragement. And, as Psalm 147:11 says, he "*takes pleasure . . . in those who hope in his steadfast love.*" So the aim of the Christian is not to avoid this God, our aim is to hope in his steadfast love. To run to him. To be happy in God, to delight in God, to cherish and enjoy his fellowship and favour.

November 10, 2023 - Never Diminishing Love

"I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:26)

That's what Jesus prayed the night before he died. Imagine being able to enjoy what is most enjoyable with unbounded energy and passion forever. This is not now our experience. Three things stand in the way of our complete satisfaction in this world.

One is that nothing in this created world has a personal worth great enough to meet the deepest longings of our hearts. Another is that we lack the strength to savour the best treasures to their maximum worth.

A third obstacle is that our joys here come to an end. Nothing lasts. But if the aim and the prayer of Jesus come true, all this will change. If God's pleasure in the Son becomes our pleasure in the Son, then the object of our pleasure, Jesus, will be inexhaustible in personal worth. He will never become boring or disappointing or frustrating.

No greater treasure can be conceived than the Son of God. Moreover, our ability to savour this inexhaustible treasure will not be limited by human weaknesses. We will enjoy the Son of God with the very enjoyment of his Father. Their love for each other will be our love for them and therefore our loving them will never die, nor ever diminish.

November 11, 2023 - Justice Will Be Done

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (Romans 12:19)

All of you have been wronged at one time or another. Most of you, probably, have been wronged seriously by someone who has never apologised or done anything sufficient to make it right.

One of the deep hindrances to your letting go of that hurt and bitterness is the conviction — the justified conviction — that justice should be done, that the moral fabric of the universe will unravel if people can just get away with horrible wrongs and deceive everyone.

We feel that just to let it go would be to admit that justice simply won't be done. And we can't do it. So we hold on to anger, and play the events or the words over and over again with the feelings: It shouldn't have happened; it was wrong. Our bitterness starts to poison everything.

Laying down the burden of anger, laying down the practice of nursing your hurt with feelings of being wronged — laying that down — does not mean there was no great wrong against you. There was. But it also does not mean there is no justice. It does not mean you will not be vindicated. It does not mean they just got away with it. No they didn't. It means, when you lay down the burden of vengeance, God will pick it up. Justice will be done.

November 12, 2023 - He Works For Us

From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. (Isaiah 64:4)

Only a few things have gripped me with greater joy than the truth that God loves to show his God-ness by working for me, and that his working for me is always before and under and in any working I do for him.

At first it may sound arrogant of us, and belittling to God, to say that he works for us. But that's only because of the connotation that I am an employer and God needs a job. That's not the connotation when the Bible talks about God's working for us.

The proper connotation of saying God works for me is that I am bankrupt and need a bailout. I am weak and need someone strong. I am endangered and need a protector. I am foolish and need someone wise. I am lost and need a Rescuer. God works for me means I can't do the work. I am utterly in need of help. This glorifies God not me. The Giver gets the glory. The Powerful One gets the praise as he works for us.

November 13, 2023 - Doing Good To Them

"I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul." (Jeremiah 32:40–41)

God's pursuit of praise from us and our pursuit of pleasure in him are one and the same pursuit. God's quest to be glorified and our quest to be satisfied reach their goal in this one experience: our delight in God, which overflows in praise.

For God, praise is the sweet echo of his own excellence in the hearts of his people. For us, praise is the summit of satisfaction that comes from living in fellowship with God. The stunning implication of this

discovery is that all the omnipotent energy that drives the heart of God to pursue his own glory also drives him to satisfy the hearts of those who seek their joy in him.

The good news of the Bible is that God is not at all disinclined to satisfy the hearts of those who hope in him. Just the opposite: The very thing that can make us happiest is what God delights in with all his heart and with all his soul.

With all his heart and with all his soul, God joins us in the pursuit of our everlasting joy because the consummation of that joy in him redounds to the glory of his own infinite worth as he loves to keep doing good to us.

November 14, 2023 -The Wisdom of God

We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:23–24)

Over against the terrifying news that we have fallen under the condemnation of our Creator and that he is bound by his own righteous character to preserve the worth of his glory by pouring out eternal wrath on our sin, there is the wonderful news of the gospel.

This is a truth no one can ever learn from nature. The truth of the gospel has to be told to neighbours and preached in churches and carried by missionaries. The good news is that God himself has decreed a way to satisfy the demands of his justice without condemning the whole human race.

Hell is one way to settle accounts with sinners and uphold his justice. But there is another way. God provided another way. This is the gospel. The wisdom of God has ordained a way for the love of God to deliver us from the wrath of God without compromising the justice of God. There it is, The gospel.

And what is this wisdom? The death of the Son of God for sinners! The death of Christ is the wisdom of God by which the love of God saves sinners from the wrath of God, all the while upholding and demonstrating the righteousness and the wisdom of God in Christ.

November 15, 2023 - God put Jesus Forward

God put [Jesus] forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25–26)

These may be the most important verses in the Bible. God is wholly just! And he justifies the ungodly! Really? A just judge acquitting the guilty! He acquits the guilty but is not guilty in doing so. This is the greatest news in the world!

- *"[God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).* He takes our sin. We take his righteousness.

If the most terrifying news in the world is that we have fallen under the condemnation of our Creator and that he is bound by his own righteous character to preserve the worth of his glory by pouring out his wrath on our sin . . .

. . . Then the best news in all the world (the gospel!) is that God has decreed and enacted a way of salvation that also upholds the worth of his glory, the honour of his Son, and the eternal salvation of his elect. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners as God put him forward.

November 16, 2023 - Depart from Iniquity

But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." 2 Timothy 2:19

Paul, in his two letters to Timothy, uses a Greek word with telling effect. We have the word in English as "apostasy"; it is often translated "departure." In 1 Timothy 1:20, he tells us of two leaders who left the faith, who apostatised, Hymenaeus and Alexander. Paul then declares in 1 Timothy 4:1 that many shall depart. Then, in 2 Timothy 2:19 Paul declares, "Let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

What Paul is telling us is that life is growth; it is movement in one direction or another. Our lives are either marked by an apostasy or departure from sin, or they are an apostasy or departure from Christ. We do not stand still. The life of faith is more than words: it is growth.

Time is a constant movement and departure. We can no more stand still in Christ (or against Christ) than we can remain at the age of thirty-nine forever. God has created a world of time and change, and we must therefore be forever growing in terms of His law and Word. The refusal to grow is death so let us depart from Iniquity.

November 17, 2023 - He Himself Gives

"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." (Acts 17:24–25)

We do not glorify God by providing his needs, but by praying that he would provide ours — and trusting him to answer and living in the joy of that all-providing care as we lay down our lives in love for other people.

Here we are at the heart of the good news of Christianity. God's insistence that we ask him to give us help so that he gets glory. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me" (Psalm 50:15). This forces on us the startling fact that we must beware of thinking he needs us. We must beware of serving God, and we must take special care to let him serve us, lest we rob him of his glory.

This sounds very strange. Most of us think serving God is a totally positive thing. We have not considered that serving God may be an insult to him. He aims to be the servant. He aims to get the glory as the Giver as he himself gives.

November 18, 2023 - Kindness Toward Us

. . . so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:7)

A most astonishing image of Christ's second coming is in Luke 12:35–37, which pictures the return of a master from a marriage feast like this: "Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake

when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them."

To be sure, we are called servants — and that no doubt means we are to do exactly as we are told. But the wonder of this picture is that the *"master" insists on serving. We may have expected this during Jesus's ministry on earth, since he said, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).* But Luke 12:35–37 is a picture of the second coming, when the Son of Man comes in the blinding glory of his Father "with his mighty angels in flaming fire" as 2 Thessalonians 1:7–8 says. Why would Jesus be portrayed as a table waiter at the second coming?

Because the very heart of his glory is the fullness of grace that overflows in kindness to needy people. There is no other god like this. He never relinquishes the role of inexhaustible benefactor of his ever-dependent, happy people as we experience his kindness toward us.

November 19, 2023 - Hold Marriage in Honour

Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Hebrew 13:4

In the 1920s, Revolutionary Russia rejected "bourgeois" sexual morality by attacking the institution of marriage and the nuclear family. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels believed the nuclear family was, like religion, just another means of keeping the working class oppressed. According to the Marxist dialectic version of history, prehistoric humanity lived in a state of free love, and the nuclear family only emerged to protect the property rights of the rich through inheritance, keep workers content with less, and enslave women to the home.

When Lenin and the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, they put these anti-family theories into practice. As the 1920s wore on, however, Russia's Soviet leaders were forced by reality to change course and desperately attempted to stem the tide of fatherlessness, crime, legal confusion, and economic disaster.

History is full of examples of societies that tamper with God's design for marriage, sex, and the family. All of them ended in disaster. Let us be blessed and hold marriage in honour.

November 20, 2023 - I Will Heal Him

"I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the Lord, "and I will heal him." (Isaiah 57:18–19)

In spite of the severity of man's disease of rebellion and wilfulness, God will heal. How will he heal? Isaiah 57:15 says that God dwells with the crushed and humble. Yet the people of Isaiah 57:17 are not humble. They are brazenly pursuing their own proud way. So, what will a healing be?

It can only be one thing. God will heal them by humbling them. He will cure the patient by crushing his pride. If only the crushed and humble enjoy God's fellowship (Isaiah 57:15), and if Israel's sickness is a proud and wilful rebellion (Isaiah 57:17), and if God promises to heal them (Isaiah 57:18), then his healing must be humbling and his cure must be a crushed spirit. Do we want our Lord to heal us?

November 21, 2023 - Fullness of Your Joy

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. . . . These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." (John 15:7–8, 11)

Prayer pursues joy in fruitful fellowship with Jesus, knowing that God is glorified when we bear fruit in answer to prayer. Why do God's children so often fail to have consistent habits of happy, fruitful prayer? One of the reasons is not so much that we don't want to, but that we don't plan to.

My exhortation is this: Let us take time this very day to rethink our priorities and how prayer fits in. Make some new resolve. Try some new venture with God. Set a time. Set a place. Choose a portion of Scripture to guide.

Don't be tyrannized by the press of busy days. We all need midcourse corrections. Make this a day of turning to prayer — for the glory of God and for the fullness of your joy..

November 22, 2023 - A Jealous God

"The Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." (Exodus 34:14)

God is infinitely jealous for the honour of his name and responds with terrible wrath against those whose hearts should belong to him but go after other things, like a spouse running after another.

Listen to God's warning. The jealousy of God for your undivided love and devotion will always have the last say. Whatever lures your affections away from God with deceptive attraction cause you great harm. It is a horrifying thing to use your God-given life to commit adultery against God.

But for those of you who have been truly united to Christ and who keep your vows to forsake all others and cleave only to him and live for his honour — for you the jealousy of God is a great comfort and a great hope.

Since God is infinitely jealous for the honour of his name, anything and anybody who threatens the good of his faithful wife will be opposed with divine omnipotence. That's good news for the faithful wife who are the faithful people of a jealous God.

November 23, 2023 - Why We Matter

He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Song of Solomon 2:4

Telling someone to choose to matter is like telling someone to make meaning out of an ultimately meaningless universe with their ultimately meaningless lives.

At the same time, it isn't wrong to imply that mattering to other people is far better than the kind of internalised self-affirmation that typically passes for therapy. Our world leads us to be inwardly focused and untethered from anything outside of our own feelings and will.

We were made to find meaning outside of ourselves, which is why deep connections and relationships matter, and help us know that we matter. This is the way God designed us. We only truly know ourselves in reference to our most important relationships—first with God, and then with others. This is why we matter

November 24, 2023 - Joy in Marriage

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour. (Ephesians 5:25–27)

The reason there is so much misery in marriage is not that husbands and wives seek their own pleasure, but that they do not seek it in the pleasure of their spouses. The biblical mandate to husbands and wives is to seek your own joy in the joy of your spouse.

Husbands are told to love their wives the way Christ loved the church. How did he love the church? *"For the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2)*. What joy? The joy of marriage to his bride, the church. The joy of presenting the church to himself in blood-bought splendour.

Jesus does not intend to have a dirty and unholy wife. Therefore, he was willing to die to sanctify and cleanse his betrothed so he could present to himself a wife "in splendour." He gained the desire of his heart by giving himself up in suffering for the good of his bride.

Jesus had said to husbands and wives — and everyone else — *"Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:39)*. Marriage is an extraordinary place of application. It is not merely "as" you love yourself. But you are loving yourself. When you love the person with whom God has made you one flesh, you are loving yourself. Your greatest joy is found in seeking the greatest joy of your spouse giving you joy in marriage.

November 25, 2023 - Joy of the Beloved

No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. (Ephesians 5:29–30)

Don't miss that last phrase: "because we are members of his body." And don't forget what Paul said two verses earlier, namely, that Christ gave himself for us "so that he might present the church to himself in splendour." So in two different ways, Paul makes plain that Christ pursued his joy in pursuing the holiness and beauty and happiness of his people.

The union between Christ and his bride is so close ("one flesh") that any good done to her is a good done to himself. Which means that the clear assertion of this text is that the Lord is moved to nourish, cherish, sanctify, and cleanse his bride because in this he finds his joy.

By some definitions, this cannot be love. Love, they say, must be free of self-interest — especially Christlike love, especially Calvary love.

Yet what Christ does for his bride, this text plainly calls love: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church . . . " (Ephesians 5:25). Why not let the text define love for us, instead of bringing our definition from ethics or philosophy? According to this text, love is the pursuit of Christ's joy in the holy joy of the beloved.

November 26, 2023 - Have Done Well

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' Matthew 25:23

Many millions around the world care for an older parent, spouse, friend, or neighbour with medical limitations. It is costly, beautiful, and important work, especially as so many push to eliminate suffering by eliminating sufferers.

There are, as a full-time caregiver put it recently, important lessons learned and blessings received in bearing each other's burdens: Over the years, I have prayed many prayers for the people whom I've been entrusted to care for. But … more times than I can count, … the script has felt flipped, and it is I who walk away feeling tended, knowing I have received nurture, kindness, and patient love.

Any culture in which the call to care for others lessens, and the pressure to eliminate the sufferer intensifies, becomes an impoverished culture. As theologian Stanley Hauerwas put it, "In 100 years, if Christians are known as those who do not kill their children or their elderly, we will have done well."

November 27, 2023 - The Power of God

"Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." (Matthew 6:9)

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches that the first priority in praying is to ask our heavenly Father to cause his name to be hallowed. In us. In the church. In the world. Everywhere.

Notice that this is a petition, a request. It is not a declaration or acclamation. It is not an expression of praise, but petition. It is easy to misread the Lord's Prayer as if it begins with praise: "Praise God, the Lord's name is hallowed, revered, honoured!" But it is not acclamation. It is supplication. It is a request to God that he would see to it that his own name be hallowed.

Jesus is telling us to ask God, who is infinitely jealous for the honour of his own name, to see to it that his name be hallowed, which means honoured, revered, exalted as supremely precious.

This teaches us two things.

1. One is that prayer does not move God to do things he is disinclined to do. He has every intention to cause his name to be hallowed. Nothing is higher on God's priority list. But we should ask anyway.
2. The other is that prayer is God's way of bringing our priorities into line with his. God wills to make great things the consequence of our prayers when our prayers are the consequence of his great purposes.

Bring your heart into line with the priorities of God to hallow his name, and you will pray with great effect. Let your first and all-determining prayer be for the hallowing of God's name, and your prayers will plug into the power of God.

November 28, 2023 - The Marriage Union

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31–32)

Here in Ephesians 5:31 Paul is quoting Genesis 2:24, which Moses spoke — and Jesus said God spoke through Moses. (Matthew 19:5) Paul says this word of God, spoken before the fall into sin, is a reference to Christ and the church and contains therefore a great mystery.

What this implies is that when God engaged to create man and woman and to ordain the union of marriage, he didn't roll the dice or draw straws or flip a coin as to how they might be related to each other. He patterned marriage very purposefully after the relationship between his Son and the church, which he had planned from all eternity.

Therefore, marriage is a mystery — it contains and conceals a meaning far greater than what we see on the outside. God created man male and female and ordained marriage so that the eternal covenant relationship between Christ and his church would be imaged forth in the marriage union.

November 29, 2023 - Joy for Husbands and Wives

Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. (Ephesians 5:24–25)

There is a pattern of love in marriage ordained by God. The roles of husband and wife are not the same. The husband is to take his special cues from Christ as the head of the church. The wife is to take her special cues from God's design for the church as submissive to Christ.

In doing this, the sinful and damaging results of the fall begin to be reversed. The fall twisted man's loving headship into hostile domination in some men, and lazy indifference in others. The fall twisted woman's intelligent, willing submission into manipulative dealings in some women, and brazen insubordination in others.

The redemption we anticipated when the Messiah finally came in Jesus Christ was not the dismantling of the created order of loving headship and willing submission, but a recovery of it. Wives, redeem your fallen submission by modelling it after God's intention for a joyful church! Husbands, redeem your fallen headship by modelling it after God's intention for the lavishly loving Christ! Then we will have joy for husbands and wives.

November 30, 2023 - By His Son

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son. (Hebrews 1:1–2)

The last days begin with the coming of the Son into the world. We have been living in the last days since the days of Christ — that is, the last days of history as we know it before the final and full establishment of the kingdom of God.

The point for the writer of Hebrews is this: The Word that God spoke by his Son is the decisive Word. By the Son's own design, that word has been captured for the ages in the writings of the New Testament. He explicitly made provision for this, lest every generation be left to itself to dream up the decisive word of God. This word will not be followed in this age by any greater word or replacement word. This is the Word of God — the person of Jesus, the teaching of Jesus, and the work of Jesus, captured by inspiration in the apostolic writings we call the New Testament.

God is calling us to hear his final, decisive, inexhaustible Word — to meditate on it and study it and memorize it and linger over it and soak in it until it saturates us to the centre of our being and we understand the word of God spoken to us by his Son..