Thank you everyone for being here today. I am excited to have the privilege to be able to spend some time talking with you this morning from God’s word.

When you are about to die it is important to talk about what matters most. But many of us don’t have the opportunity to know that we are about to die. We just die. But this idea of last words; if you knew you were about to die, what are some of the things that you would want to express to your children, to your husband, to your wife, to your friends, or to your enemies? What are the things that you would want to say?

This idea of last words has been intriguing to me for a while. Let me just share some last words. Here are some words that were said that maybe you would rather not be remembered for after you died. Humphrey Bogart, who was an actor who died in January of 1957 said this: ‘I should have never switched from scotch to martinis.’ That might not be what you would want to be remembered for as your last words.

Winston Churchill, before slipping into a coma, said this: ‘I am bored with it all.’ And then he died in January of 1965. Vespasian, a famous Roman Emperor who died in AD 79, said this: ‘Woe is me. Me thinks I am turning into a god.’ Now that is not what I want to say when I am about to meet the God of the cosmos. Right?

Joan Crawford, who was an actress who died in 1977, said this to her housekeeper who had started to pray for her aloud: ‘Don’t you dare ask God to help me.’ And if you were Charles Darwin you would not have wanted to say this as your last words: ‘I am not the least afraid to die.’

But here are some words you may want to be remembered for. Thomas Becket, who was the arch bishop of Canterbury in AD 1170 said: ‘I am ready to die for my lord, that in my blood the church may obtain liberty and peace.’ Lou Costello, the comedian who died in 1959 said: ‘That was the best ice cream soda I ever tasted.’ That wasn’t a bad set of words to say right before you die. Right? ‘That Cold Stone, sweetheart, that strawberry cheesecake mix is wonderful.’

Here is what James Polk, a US president, said before he died in 1849: ‘I love you, Sarah, for all eternity. I love you.’ What nice words to be able to give his bride. And then perhaps you don’t care about your last words. Karl Marx, basically the one who is often talked about around the idea of communism, who was a revolutionary that died in 1883, said this to the housekeeper who urged him to tell them his last words so that they might log them down for posterity: ‘Go on, get out. Last words are for fools who haven’t said enough.’

So that was some last words. And we are kind of at this place in the gospel of John where we are hearing some of the last words of Jesus. And one thing we know about Jesus is He was intentional with His words. We are going to come today to John
Chapter 16 and we are going to finish Jesus’ basic last speech to the disciples. He is
going to pour out some last words to them. It is still not His final, final set of words. The
final words that Jesus would say was, “Into your hands I commit my spirit,” when He
was on the cross.

But Jesus had some final statements to help prepare His disciples. He will have a
few more words when they are in the Garden of Gethsemane and He is praying to the
Father. And He asked His disciples to keep watch for Him. But right now we are getting
close to His last words, as He knows He is about to die. We are in the final hours of
Jesus’ life. He will be dead in less than 24 hours. He is going to be crucified. So it is
important for us to understand that whatever Jesus says is important. And what He says
in the final moments of His life becomes really important.

And what Jesus wants His disciples to understand is the gravity of the gospel. He
is going to help them understand the gravity of the gospel, because that is why He came-
to actualize the gospel. Now some of you might be wondering - what is the gospel? You
have heard that term, and it may kind of weird you out. You may feel like you are sitting
in some weird old traditional church with about five peo-
ple there and ‘hearing the
gospel.’

So what do we mean by the gospel? Well, it is a word that means ‘good news.’
And the gospel speaks of everything that Jesus accomplished for us through His death,
burial and resurrection. And so the gospel is good news. And Jesus wants His disciples
to really resonate with the glory of the gospel. And I want that for you today. I want you
to get it.

Now do me a favor and don’t check out. Maybe you are thinking, ‘Well, I
already know the gospel. I’m a Christian. It makes perfect sense to me.’ But the gospel
is not a point; it is a process. We always need the gospel. The gospel reminds us that
without God we are nothing; that apart from God we can do nothing to gain entrance into
Heaven. The gospel shows us that we are totally separated from God and that we
desperately need a relationship with Him. The gospel shows us that when we continue to
sin that God’s grace abounds. The gospel shows us that there is not condemnation for
those in Christ Jesus.

Some of you as Christians might sin, feel bad, beat yourself up and then you
determine to no longer do this anymore. And your focus begins to be on how you are not
going to sin, and you are making yourself the standard of righteousness. You are
forgetting that you have been declared righteous, and that is the gospel of grace. It is not
about what we are not going to do, and how we are going to try and hold on and not do
this. We have been declared righteous, and we serve Him. We seek to be holy because
our hearts are filled with gratitude because of what Jesus did on our behalf, and not because we are trying to earn His approval.

The most shocking thought of all when you sit out here, before I begin to explore these verses, is if you are a child of God you are looked at with the righteousness of Jesus. I know you don’t feel it; I don’t feel it either. I feel very woefully undone. And it is hard for me to even grasp the grace of Jesus, when I am overwhelmed with my own sin in my own heart; and I desperately need Jesus to help me realize I have been declared righteous. I am looked at with the righteousness of Christ. And that will preach!

Let’s take a look at the gravity of the gospel. In John Chapter 16 Jesus has just shared a message with His disciples about how the Holy Spirit was going to arrive and convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. And He says in verses 16 through 18: “A little while and you will see me no longer, and again a little while, and you will see me.” Verse 17, “So some of His disciples said to one another, What is this that He says to us, A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me; and because I am going to the Father? So they were saying, What does He mean by a little while? We do not know what He is talking about.”

Now it sounds like a bunch of redundancy we just read, right? But can you just picture the disciples sitting around and Jesus telling them this. They get over in a little huddle and Andrew is like, ‘Hey Peter, do you know what He is talking about, bro? I am just really confused. He threw a real conundrum there.’ And Peter is saying, ‘I have no idea. What do you think He meant, John? What is going on here?’ And John is scratching his head and he goes, ‘Guys, I don’t know either.’

So here they are and they are confused. And here is where I step back and I think how glad I am that those disciples were confused. I am so glad that the Bible records their confusion, their sin, the dumb things that they have done, because it makes me feel better about myself ultimately. And I like that they are confused because I get confused too. And if they were confused, after they had walked with Jesus for three years, after they knew Him intimately, and if they knew Jewish law better than any of us ever will, and if they were still scratching their heads, just remember that we are 2000 years removed. It is a given that we are going to have those moments where we are kind of scratching our heads too.

Some people don’t read their Bibles because it is confusing. But what I love about the disciples is they talk about it. They tell each other that they don’t understand. Some people don’t have the humility to say they are confused. And the disciples were willing to show their humility and admit they didn’t know what Jesus meant here. We have so many people that want to act like they always have it figured out. When is the last time you said, ‘I don’t know. I just don’t know the answer to that.’ I can feel the
pressure of that. I get all of your questions. Actually I get all of your homework assignments. ‘Bobby, what does this mean?’ So I can feel that.

Now as we step back, understand that scholars today are still confused by Jesus’ words in verse 16. “A little while, and you will see me no longer, and again a little while, and you will see me.” What is Jesus talking about? Is He talking about the Holy Spirit that is going to come, that He has just been discussing? Is He telling them that they will see Him working through the Holy Spirit in a little while? Is He talking about the second coming when He is going to come again? Is that what He is talking about?

This is what I think He is talking about, that in a little while He is going to die and they won’t see Him. But then in a little while longer He is going to rise from the dead and they will see Him again. I think He is telling them they will see Him showing up on different occasions and appearing to them, showing His glory. That is how I understand it.

Now with that being understood, let’s see what else Jesus says. Verse 19, “Jesus knew that they wanted to ask Him, so He said to them, Is this what you were asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me?” We could make a little saying out these words, ‘in a little while, in a little while, in a little while.’ And this brings me to my first point because Jesus knew what was going on with the disciples.

And the first thing that we have to understand about the gravity of the gospel is this: The gravity of the gospel causes remorse. Look what Jesus says in verse 20, “Truly, truly,” and in the Greek the word truly is where we get our word ‘amen.’ And amen means not unfinished, but so let it be, or truly. And so when Jesus says, “Truly, truly,” we should listen up. Our ears should perk up. “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful.”

Now I know some of you are sitting out there and you are thinking, ‘Bobby, this isn’t really talking about the gospel, because Jesus is just telling the disciples that they are going to be sad when He is no longer walking with them.’ And on a surface level I would say that is exactly right. The disciples have spent three years with Jesus, and their hearts are going to be remorseful when He dies, and is no longer walking with them. They are going to hurt. They are going to feel sadness. They are going to miss their friend. I am sure they are going to reminisce those good old days when Jesus provided all you can eat fish and chips. I am sure they are going to remember the day when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

But this is deeper than all that. Because when Jesus dies they will understand the gravity of the gospel. They have not understood that before. Over and over and over again, Jesus has been letting them know that He is going to die. But they didn’t get it. Why? It was because their Messiah, Jesus, was not supposed to die. He was supposed to come and set up the kingdom. The Messiah was supposed to set the kingdom up, reign and rule in royalty. But before Jesus would
reign and rule in royalty, they didn’t understand the great mystery of the New Covenant, the gospel that Jesus had to die. And once they understood that, then their heart would be cut by the gospel. They would experience the reality of the gospel. They would know the depth of it. They would feel a sense of sorrow in their lives. They would feel it in a deep kind of way.

The gospel always starts with remorse. If we never felt remorse over our sins, if we never felt sorrow over our sins, then have we come to the place where we realize the gravity of the gospel? It is important for us to understand that the gospel cuts before it heals. The gospel wounds before it restores. The gospel reveals our sins before it conceals our sins. And in the gospel after Jesus would die, the disciples would get it. They would begin to get the gravity. In Acts Chapter 2 the Spirit will be poured out. Peter will get up and give a message and boldly say, “This Jesus whom you crucified.” They will have this aha moment. They will get that Jesus, as the lamb of God, the sacrificial lamb of God, had to die in their place.

Look at verse 20 again. “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.” What a contrast. The world rejoices in getting rid of Jesus. Why? They just want to silence the message. But unlike those in the world who reject Jesus, the person being drawn to the gospel, the person being drawn to Jesus will feel a sense of sorrow over their sins. They will recognize the gravity and realize that Jesus had to die to accomplish the payment for their sins. And if He didn’t die, then their sins wouldn’t have been truly atoned for. So He had to die.

When God begins to work in our hearts, He will show us the horror of sin. That is what the cross shows us – the horror of sin. And it shows us every reason why we should be remorseful. The cross shows us that Jesus died in our stead. Have you ever seen someone experiencing remorse over their sins? Maybe you have experienced that in your own life. Maybe even as a believer, you find yourself knowing exactly what God wants you to do, knowing that He wants you to live purely, knowing that He wants you to be honorable, knowing that He wants you to trust Him. Yet you compromise over and over and over again, crucifying the Christ over again, until His Spirit gracefully works in you and brings remorse into your heart.

I remember being in South Africa in Cape Town this past summer. We were there doing a mission trip in Cape Town. Those of you who heard my report when I came back will remember me telling you the story about the gentleman who walked into the church during the conference. I think he just kind of walked into the building; he wasn’t there to attend the conference. But he took a seat and started listening. And then he started weeping. His heart was broken. And I felt I needed to go to him and ask him if everything was okay. And we talked and he began to tell me how he wanted to die. He had been thinking about jumping in front of a train. He had been homeless until just recently.

I laid out the gospel to him and you could sense his desperate need for hope, meaning, purpose - a Savior. He asked me, ‘How can that message become part of my life? How can I have that?’ And there in that little church that he had accidently walked into, I led him to Jesus. After he accepted Christ I think I gave him twenty bucks and told him to get some food. I told him he needed to get involved in a church and I encouraged him to come to this church.
tomorrow. He said he didn’t have the right clothes to wear. His body was wracked with lice. I
took off my shirt and gave it to him, so he could come to church, and we got him a Bible.

There is a beauty of seeing someone broken at the foot of the cross. And I have a
problem with much of today’s gospel presentations because we are leaving out the sin. We need
to feel sorrow. We need to recognize why Jesus had to die. If we just tell everyone that God
loves them, He forgives them, and we don’t tell people that He will forgive us of our sins, of our
depravity, then we miss the first step of the gospel. We need them to recognize that they are
alienated from God, and that they are in a state of guilt. And if you are here today and you don’t
know Jesus, you are separated from God. You are stuck in your sins. You are still guilty before
God. And the glory and the gravity of the gospel is this – Jesus died in our place. And you can
trade and have a great exchange of His righteousness for your sins. You can experience
forgiveness and your guilt can be taken away. You can experience the profound effects of His
grace working in your life.

So the gravity of the gospel causes this remorse. You will weep. You will feel sorrow.
But the gravity of the gospel also causes rejoicing in our lives. Look at verse 20 again. “Truly,
truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful,
but your sorrow will turn into joy.” Sorrow will turn into joy when they see Him. Jesus will
give them something to shout about. He is going to give them something to cheer about. He is
going to give them joy in their lives.

And it is bigger than the fact that He is going to rise from the dead. They are going to be
elated because they will comprehend the gravity of the gospel. They will understand that He
went to a cross to die for their sins, and He rose from the grave. And the promise means that their
sins are forgiven and they too can defeat death and go and live for an eternity with God. It will
bring a great sense of elation and joy. And I want to tell you that I have experienced that joy.
There is nothing greater, nothing more joyful than knowing Jesus. Had He just died, we would
still be stuck in our sins. But Jesus Christ came out of the grave victoriously. He is alive. He
rose from the dead, and we can worship Him, we can praise Him.

Many people have this idea that being a Christian is boring, that it is empty, that it is like
sitting around watching Little House on the Prairie all day. But it is glorious. There is nothing
greater than knowing Jesus. I highly endorse Him. I recommend Him to you. I want you to
know that Jesus Christ is where the happiness is. Jesus Christ is where the joy is. Jesus Christ is
where the meaning is. Jesus Christ takes frowns and turns them into smiles. Jesus Christ gets rid
of the emptiness and gives you fulfillment. Jesus Christ will rock your world.

Do you know Him today, my friend? Do you have a personal relationship with King
Jesus? Have you experienced the joy of Christ? If you think you have fun in this world; wait
until you meet Jesus. Wait until you see what Christ can do in and through your life. Wait until
you see how wonderful it can be. Maybe you are thinking, ‘Wait a second, Bobby, I am a
Christian and I don’t know what you are talking about.’ I know because I see some of your faces
right now. Listen, I am not talking about fake, inauthentic ‘Happy Land Christianity.’ I am
talking about a deep joy, a sense of no more living with your guilt. Some of you know what I am
talking about. You might be in this room right now and you have been haunted by things in your
past, and the guilt lays over you. You want it to go away and when that guilt is lifted, joy comes upon you in an amazing way.

I know for myself what it was like year after year after year to live in the horror of my guilt, knowing that I have offended a God that I didn’t even know who He was. And to feel my sins cancelled out, to feel forgiveness, to feel grace, to have that guilt lifted and taken away is wonderful. Now I am no longer bogged down. I am no longer a prisoner of my past. I have been set free. Jesus said, “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Many people struggle with joy because they struggle grasping the gravity of the gospel. They don’t realize that they have truly been forgiven. Some of you have been forgiven and you are still beating yourselves up. The reason some people struggle with joy in their lives is because they don’t understand grace. Have you ever grasped grace? Do you realize that God looks at you with the righteousness of Jesus Christ? That doesn’t mean we keep on wanting to sin? No. The Bible says, “God’s kindness leads us to repentance.” It is our gratitude that makes us want to live for Him, that makes us want to walk with Him. That is what grace does.

What is grace? It is God’s riches at Christ’s expense. Maybe some of you are thinking, ‘Bobby, you don’t know what I have done. You don’t know how much I have blown it. I am a Christian and I just don’t feel joy.’ And God looks down on you and says, ‘You have no idea what it meant. My Son died so that you would not be bogged down with guilt. My Son died so that you could know grace. My Son died so that you could be joyful.’ And when we get rid of the guilt in our lives that is what puts our shine on as a church. Then people can see we are no longer beat down, buried in our sin. And we have a smile on our face because we know the joy of Jesus and the grace of God is working in our life.

So Jesus articulates this idea of joy for us, and helps us to see what it looks like by giving an illustration. Verses 21 and 22 says this: “When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come.” ‘Uh oh, I am in pain and this is pre-epidural days.’ “She has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”

I will tell you something, epidural or no epidural, have you ever seen a live birth? Everything about it shouts ‘Ouch.’ I have seen two births, when Haley and Dawson were born. And Heather went the epidural route and I was glad for that. I don’t understand the whole idea behind not wanting to have an epidural. It makes zero sense to me. But for some reason some women want to do it naturally. Why? If my arm needs to be amputated, I am not going to say, ‘I just want to do it like in the olden days, Doc, go ahead and cut it off.’ No, I am going to want an anesthesiologist in there with me.

But there are ladies in here that want to do it naturally – and you are nuts, right? I don’t understand you. When I saw the first live birth I was thinking, ‘Thank you, God, that I am part of the male species. Thank you that I am not a male seahorse.’ For those of you who don’t know this, male seahorses are the ones who give birth. And I don’t remember everything that they
taught me at the Lamaze class when I went with Heather. I just remember I was supposed to say things like, ‘You are doing great, Babe. You look good. Just keep taking deep breaths.’

And I am doing all that, but then the anesthesiologist comes in. And he puts on iodine, and a numbing substance, and then he brings out this huge long needle. I am one of those guys that if they say they are going to prick my finger for a blood test, I am immediately in pain. So here I am and I see this long needle starting to be inserted and I am having a hard time too. And I needed Heather to be saying to me, ‘You are doing great, Bobby. Just keep taking deep breaths. You look good.’ And then after the epidural is in place she starts feeling better. And pretty soon when the baby comes you just start just weeping together. After all the drama, after all the pain and sorrow a woman feels in labor, and the husband feels having to watch the process, it turns into an amazing amount of joy. And the sorrow and the pain is forgotten.

Jesus uses this illustration and compares it to when the disciples see Him after his resurrection, when they see King Jesus alive. They will realize that He has defeated death and they will grasp the gravity of the gospel. And their remorse is going to turn into rejoicing. And then Jesus says in the second part of verse 22, “And no one will take your joy from you.” Isn’t that great? “No one will take your joy from you.” Nothing can take it away. You may lose your job, you may lose a spouse, you may lose your health or you may struggle in life. It doesn’t mean that those circumstances will make you happy, but nothing can take away the internal joy that you are right with God.

Do you know that nothing can take away your ability to glorify God in your life? God allows tests to come into our lives, and I am telling you that there are places that we can go in life that are so painful that the only way to find joy is internally. There can be times of no joy in the job sometimes. There can be times of no joy in the house sometimes. There can be times of no joy in your health situation. And when you respond to those external trials in a way that is pleasing to God, you will know that you are glorifying Him, and the fact that you know that you are glorifying Him will bring you joy. And that is another reason Christians struggle feeling joy. Not only because they haven’t appropriated the gospel, but because they know in their heart of hearts that they are not glorifying God with their lives. When we glorify God, we will be joyful. You show me a person that is joyful in Jesus and I will show you a person who is glorifying God. And it brings joy in their life.

Third, the gravity of the gospel cultivates a prayer connected relationship. Verses 23 and 24 says, “In that day you will ask nothing of me; Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” Using Jesus’ name in our prayers makes our prayers ‘Father approved.’ And we want to pray Father approved prayers. We are to pray in His name. What does it mean to pray in His name? I am not talking about being mechanical, like every time you end a prayer, you have to say ‘In Jesus’ name.’ It means that when you go into the presence of God you realize that because of what Christ accomplished on the cross, under the new order of the New Covenant, you can boldly go into the presence of God, presenting your requests to God, praying to God. And Jesus, wonderfully, lets the disciples know to pray in His name.
A little boy was going out for a walk one day and he noticed a young man crying on a bench. He went up to the man and asked him what was wrong. And the young man said, ‘I am in agony. My brother is incarcerated and he is going to die. He is going to die on death row soon. And I must figure out a way to get that death sentence written off. I must see the president and try to get it removed.’ The little boy told the young man to follow him. And he took his hand and he walked him straight into the president’s office, past security guards, past the secretary, past everyone. And that is when President Abraham Lincoln stood up and said, ‘How can I help you, son?’ The reason that the young man was able to walk into the President’s office was because he was brought into the father’s presence by his son.

And when we pray, we can boldly have our prayers lifted up before the Father because we are praying in Jesus’ name, which means to pray according to His will, to pray Scripturally aligned prayers, to pray for yourself what you know He would pray for you. The Bible says when we pray that way, when our heart’s prayer is His heart’s prayer, we can ask and it will be given to us. Now this is not a way that we can use God. We don’t use God in our prayers. We need to modify our lives; we need to die to ourselves so that we can live for God, so that we can follow His word. It is important that we understand when we are praying that we are praying Scripturally accurate prayers. And that is why we need to read our Bibles.

We need to avoid praying a yuppie prayer. What is a yuppie prayer? The yuppie prayer goes like this: ‘Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray my bank account to keep. I pray my stocks are on the rise and that my analyst is wise. That all my wines I sip is white, and that my hot tub is water tight. That racket ball won’t get too tough, and that all my sushi is fresh enough. I pray my cordless phone still works, and that my career won’t interrupt my perks. I pray my microwave won’t radiate, and that my career won’t depreciate. I pray my health club doesn’t close, and that my money market grows. And if I go broke before I wake, I pray my Mercedes they won’t take.’

So that is the yuppie prayer and it sounds like it was probably written about twenty years ago. But we have to know how to pray, and the way we learn to pray is we have to become informed on who the person of Jesus is. And that is why we must read our Bibles. There is a dearth of Bible reading today. And I am so grateful to you who are reading through your Bible this year. But it needs to be bigger than that. If you think, ‘Well, I am just going to go read my daily Bible reading today,’ and you walk in the room and you sit down and say, ‘Okay, it is Genesis 1 and 2 today. That’s good. I’m done.’ It is not that. It is getting to know the Scriptures, getting to know what God’s word says, and taking time to pray over it.

I had my quiet time yesterday, and as I was going through Proverbs and Psalms I was looking for phrases that my heart resonates with. And I pray those prayers. If it is a verse in Proverbs about disciplining your children I may pray, ‘Oh God, give me the strength to discipline my children the way it would please you.’ Maybe it is a proverb about not being lazy and I may pray, ‘Oh God, help me not to be lazy with my life.’ If I am reading about Job and how he responded when he lost everything, I may pray, ‘Oh God, help me when I suffer to glorify you.’

When I see how Job goes out and offers sacrifices on behalf of his children, I may pray, ‘Oh God, if my children have done anything against you, please forgive them.’ When you are
reading about Bible characters and you realize their lives are different from your life, pray, ‘Oh God, I love the joy I see in that person. Help me to have more joy like that.’ When you read about someone’s sin in being a deceiver, pray, ‘Oh God, help me not to be deceived in my own heart.’ And then you will be reading your Bible in a very practical way, in a way that creates a prayer connected relationship. And the gravity of the gospel can cultivate that. Because of the gospel we can go into a deep abiding relationship with God. So I would encourage you to pray the word when you pray. Prayer is simply doing relationship with God. That is what prayer is. It is doing relationship with God.

And there is a promise in verse 24. “Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” There is another reason why Christians lack joy in their lives. If is because they don’t pray. He says that we can’t even know fullness of joy without prayer. We need to be really praying, like getting in the presence of God. Maybe you feel like you don’t know how to pray, and you don’t know what to do. You need to just honestly share your heart in the moment. Like sometimes when praying we think God doesn’t know our heart so we tell Him one thing while our heart is thinking another. No, learn to have an honest ‘bare all’ heart in the presence of God. ‘Oh God, I don’t love you right now. I feel like you have abandoned me, God. Where are you?’ ‘God, I am struggling with doubts about your word. Is it real?’ ‘God, do you really love me?’

We need to bare our hearts. We need to tell Him if we need a job. We need to just be in conversation with the greatest person in the world. Pray the word. I am convinced the reason that many Christians do not have joy is they don’t understand the gravity of the gospel. They have never been remorseful over their sins. They have never appropriated grace and found that rejoicing. They are not praying. And it strips them of their joy. And we must pray. If you find yourself getting mechanical, saying the same things over and over and over again, then I recommend you get the book ‘Valley of Vision.’

Sometimes that happens to me in my prayers. When I find myself being redundant, ‘Oh God, please watch over the kids. Watch over Heather. Thank you for my home.’ Just praying the same things over and over. You may need a breakthrough as you chase the heart of God. You need to feel as though you are coming in contact with Him. So get the book, ‘Valley of Vision.’ There are old Puritan prayers in there and you can read one of them a day. And where the words on the page depict the expression of your heart, then tell God that is the case. It is okay to read prayers and then just start from there. If you read a statement that makes you think of something else, just start from there. But pray!

Fourth, the gravity of the gospel tests the depth of our belief. In verses 25 through 28 Jesus says, “I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf, for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”
I love verse 28 because it is the gospel. Listen to it again. “I came from the Father and have come into the world, (how – through the virgin birth) and now I am leaving the world, (how – because He is going to die on a cross) and going to the Father, (how – because He is going to rise up from the dead.) There is the gospel right there in verse 28.

Verse 29, “His disciples said, Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech!” He had used figurative speech just a few minutes before with the illustration of the pregnant woman. In John Chapter 15 he used figurative speech about the vine and the branches. John Chapter 15 started a new section. You will remember at the end of John Chapter 14 He tells His disciples to go from the Upper Room after the Last Supper. Verse 30 the disciples say, “Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.” So the disciples believe that Jesus came from God, but what you are going to find is that they have a surface belief, and their belief needs to be deepened.

In verse 31 Jesus answered them, “Behold the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.” So what happens here? Jesus is letting them know that yes, they believe in Him, but they have a surface belief. And Jesus will bring them from having a surface belief to a suffering belief. A surface belief might belief in Jesus, but a suffering belief is one that is willing to die for Him. A surface belief might be willing to live for Jesus, but a suffering belief would be willing to die for Him. And so He tells them they are going to scatter. And in just a few hours Jesus will be betrayed as He prophesied. He prophesied that He was going to die. He prophesied that the disciples would see Him again. He prophesied that they were going to scatter from Him in a little bit. He knows the future because He is more than a man.

And now He lets them know that their faith must be deepened. So what made their faith deepen? It was by understanding the gravity of the gospel. They needed to grasp the gravity of the gospel to be able to go beyond their shallow surface belief. Remember after Jesus rises from the dead, the Spirit of God is poured out and they would then all be willing to die for Jesus. And all of them except one did a martyr’s death. What happened? They grasped the gravity of the gospel.

Maybe some of you in this room know that you have only a surface belief. And anytime you start suffering in your life, you start scattering from God. Anytime your life starts being tested you start shaking your fist in God’s face. Anytime you start to struggle in your life you start blaming God. Instead of realizing that God is sovereign over your circumstances and that you should trust Him in spite of the circumstances, you have a tendency to run from Him. Maybe you need to learn to trust in His sovereignty and His grace. God knows exactly what you need.

Maybe you don’t have a job today. If you are walking faithfully with Him, here is what you can count on. You must not need a job today. Now you won’t be able to believe I just said that; it is just so insensitive. But what I am trying to say is if God is really God, if He is really sovereign, He must want to lay it on other people’s hearts to help you, to minister to you. He must want to use it as a moment to bring you into His presence to depend on Him and to show...
you the gospel. God’s word says He takes care of the lilies of the field. Do we believe Him? Do we trust Him to take care of us?

We don’t have a church building today. Why? God must not want us to have a church building today. If He wants us to have a church building, He will make a way for us to have a church building. Some people thought we should have started a church building a few years ago. Well we could have also divided the church doing that too. What is more important – construction or unity? We want unity. God wants to bring us to a place of absolute understanding of the gravity of the gospel.

Maybe you are wondering why your house hasn’t sold. You fear it is losing value. And we wonder about that too, watching our house lose value while we are still tied to a loan. But it is a trust issue for us. We have to just step back and trust Him that He will take care of us. He is bigger than our house; He is bigger than our job. We just need to trust in Him.

And finally, the gravity of the gospel creates an inward peace. Verse 33, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.” And yes, when you grasp the gravity of the gospel, it will give you peace. When we walk outside the gospel, it will strip our peace. Some of you struggle and go in and out. If we walk with Jesus we will get the benefit of that peace. But when we start walking away and losing sight of the gospel, and losing sight of the fact that we are supposed to depend on Him, and die to ourselves, our peace will go away. And sometimes we lose our peace because we are trying to force something that is not His will. We are trying to make something happen that is not His will. And He will bring us to the question of, ‘Do you really love me? Do you really trust me?’ It is only when we do, that we will experience His peace.

We know that this peace is evident even in tribulation. Look at the last part of verse 33. “In the world you will have tribulation.” This is why I struggle with a lot of these TV preachers telling people they are not going to struggle. Or if you have a disease it is caused by a lack of faith. No, if we get a disease it is because we live in a sinful world. And if we have a disease we can still glorify God even in that. The disease is evil, but nothing can stop us from glorifying God. People say, ‘By His wounds we are healed.’ And that is correct, but it is our sins that are healed. Ultimately our bodies will be healed also. But right now we live in a fallen world.

“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world.”
So why should we have peace? Our peace comes from Jesus Christ. He has overcome sin for us. Romans Chapter 5 and verse 8 says, “But God demonstrated His love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Why should we have peace? It is because Jesus overcame death for us. “Oh death, where is your sting.” Why should we have peace? It is because of Jesus’ death that we are now a new man in Christ. The Bible says, “If anyone is in Christ Jesus he is a new creation, the old is gone. Behold all things are become new.”

Why should we have peace? It is because of Christ we have overcome our guilt. Romans Chapter 8 and verse 1 says, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Why should we have peace? It is because Jesus has given us life. “I have come that you might have life, and life abundantly.” Why should we have peace? It is because
the Son has set us free. John Chapter 8 and verse 32, “Then you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.” Why should we have peace? It is because Jesus has overcome Satan, stepping on the serpent’s head and crushing it, as found in Genesis Chapter 3 and verse 15.

Church, we have a reason to shout. We have a reason to be excited. When you leave here today, you can put your happy face on because Jesus Christ died in your place. I conclude by asking you this. Do you know Jesus Christ? Have you grasped the gravity of the gospel? Maybe you know that you haven’t, and you want to know what you should be looking for. Right now you should be looking for remorse. Do you feel remorse over your sins? Do you believe that Jesus bled and died on a cross for your sins? If you are at that place, then you can literally give your heart and life to Christ right now. And literally, like an outpouring of rain, let His grace fall down. If you trust Christ, you can literally walk out of here saved. You might feel guilty but you will have been declared innocent.

Would you like to be declared innocent? Would you like to enter into a relationship with Jesus? Where you can pray to Him and He will be with you. How would you like to know that your sins are forgiven? How would you like to live without guilt? Let’s pray.

Father, thank you so much for your Scriptures. I thank you for the privilege of allowing me to be a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Lord, I pray for anyone here today who doesn’t know you. Maybe they hurt on their inside because they know in their heart they don’t belong to you. They know that they have sinned against you. And the only way into this thing called Christianity is through recognizing our sins. But the beauty is you have died for us. You died on a cross for our sins. So many people will hate their enemies, but Jesus loves us even though many treat Him as an enemy. Maybe you feel like you have done too many sins and you can’t be forgiven. I understand that and I felt the same way. I had been an alcoholic. I had abused drugs. I had been promiscuous. And I wondered how He could forgive a sinner such as I was. But the beauty of the gospel is no matter how much we have sinned, He can forgive us. There is nothing too big for Jesus to forgive.

If you will, just sit there in your seat and let the love of God surround you, and feel His grace. Then just turn this over to Jesus right now. In the quietness of your heart just say this: Jesus, I don’t understand how you can forgive me, but I know that you are more than a man. I ask you now to forgive me for all my sins. I believe you died on a cross for my sins and rose from the dead. From this day forward I want to turn from my sins and give you my life. I pray this in Jesus’ name.

Maybe you are a Christian here today and you are thinking you need to get back to the gospel. You have lost sight of it. You are treating God in a way that He is far more worthy of. He deserves your purity, the holiness that He has given to me. Just pray and ask Him for His grace and help you grasp the gravity of the gospel. In Jesus’ name. Amen.