



Potomac Hills

Presbyterian Church, PCA



By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

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Matthew 22:23–40
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“The Reversal of the King”

The 76th Sermon in a series on the Gospel of Matthew entitled
“The King and His Kingdom!”

Matthew 22:23-40

“The same day Sadducees came to Him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked Him a question, ²⁴ saying, ‘Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.’ ²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ So too the second and third, down to the seventh. ²⁷ After them all, the woman died. ²⁸ In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her.”

²⁹ *But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ³¹ And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” ³³ And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at His teaching.*

³⁴ *But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first*

commandment.³⁹ *And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*⁴⁰ *On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.*”

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. You have brought us to this amazing Gospel to learn more about your Son, Jesus. We ask You this morning to give us the grace to understand Your hard teaching here. It's hard because we're too much like the Pharisees and the Sadducees and not enough like Jesus. We want to listen to our own hearts, and follow our own rule, instead of learning to love Yours. So help us to consider what it means to follow You and not ourselves. So by Your Spirit open this Gospel to us and help us to see Jesus, and, as always, for this we need Your grace. Give us the desire to learn from You this morning, in the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

INTRODUCTION: “You Must Be _____’s Dad?”

When my kids were younger, like many of your children, they were involved in a whole host of activities. And perhaps because they're younger, I remember this happening more with Dan and Sam. They played a lot of sports — baseball, basketball, soccer, lacrosse, wrestling and so on — and as much as possible I tried to go to their games, and I coached baseball for quite a few years.

And then I'd be off somewhere, Costco or Wal-Mart or someplace like that, and someone would approach me, and say, “You must be Sam's Dad?” or “You're Daniel's father.” But after a while, something begins to irritate you. You realize that nobody even knows your name. All they say is, “Hey, there goes Sam's Dad. Oh, look over there. There's Daniel's father.” You hear people referring to you like that. After a while, you just get so irritated. You want to say, “I'm **not just** Daniel's father. I have a name. David, my name is David.” Whereupon they introduce you to someone else by saying, “Have you met Sam's Dad?”

Okay? Well, the good news is that God doesn't have a problem with that. God is absolutely content to be known as Abraham's God, Isaac's God, Jacob's God. Over and over again in the Scriptures we read, **Exodus 3:6**, “*I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*”

And, of course, that verse is quoted again in our passage for today, **Matthew 22:23–40**, where Jesus is facing three verbal traps set for Him by His enemies. So let's turn to our text and see how He handles these traps. And the first trap He faces is the ...

v. 23–30: TRAP OF THE SKEPTIC¹

“The same day Sadducees came to Him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked Him a question,²⁴ saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.’²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother.²⁶ So too the second and third, down to the seventh.²⁷ After them all, the woman died.²⁸ In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her.”²⁹ But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

1 The Exposition of the text is adapted from the sermons, “Arguing about the Afterlife” 7/1/01 and “Arguing about Morality” 7/8/01, both by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, sermons.redeemer.com; Logos Bible Software 4: *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*; “Christ Confounds with the Word of the Kingdom” Parts 2 + 3, 5/9/99 and 5/16/99, both by Dr. J. Ligon Duncan, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS, www.fpcjackson.org.

³⁰ *For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.*

First of all, let's look at the rebuke. That's in verse 29. In order to learn from it, we have to figure out who these Sadducees are and what's the point and what's the question about. The whole thing starts off by saying, verse 23, "*The same day Sadducees came to Him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked Him a question.*" The first thing you need to know is that the Sadducees were almost the exact opposites of the Pharisees. You say, "Oh no! I can't keep them straight." They Sadducees are the opposite of the Pharisees.

The Sadducees were aristocratic, educated, priestly families who inherited the priesthood and, as a result, had this place in society of great status and honor and wealth. And though they believed in God, they believed in a very stripped down, non-supernatural version of the faith. They only believed in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. They didn't believe in the prophetic writings like Isaiah or Daniel or anything like that. They didn't accept them as Scripture. They believed in a kind of stripped down, ethical version of the faith. They said, "We believe in God, and we believe the purpose of life is to be **a good person.**" They didn't believe, for example, that there was a coming kingdom of the Messiah who would liberate everything. They didn't believe in a resurrection. They didn't believe in a future judgment day. In Acts 23, for example, this is what Luke says about them, **Acts 23:8**, "*For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.*"

So the Pharisees are exactly the opposite, they were very moral and very much the opposition of the Sadducees. In fact, now this is a slight over-simplification, the Pharisees were moralistic conservatives and the Sadducees were relativistic liberals. The Pharisees' constituency was amongst the lower and middle class, and they tended to be conservative moralists. The Sadducees' constituency was amongst the wealthy and the educated classes. They tended to be liberal relativists. And they really disliked each other. Sound familiar?

The Sadducees, because they didn't believe in the afterlife, judgment day, resurrection, or anything like that, come to Jesus, and they ask a question. The question is a little difficult when you first read it, because the question is about an institution we don't know much about, verse 24, "***Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.'***" Now this is called Levirate Marriage.

Actually, it was a very merciful provision in the Mosaic Law. It's found in **Deuteronomy 25**. In ancient traditional agrarian patriarchal cultures, if a woman got married and then her husband died before they could have children, she was in a terrible situation. She couldn't just go out and get a job. She had no children to care for her. And because she'd been married, she was unlikely to get someone else to marry her. Therefore, Moses provided a law that said if a man died and they were childless, his brother (or someone else in the family) would marry her and keep her in the family. It was actually a very merciful way of dealing with widows, which was a great problem in the ancient world. I'm not going to spend any more time on that, because that whole institution has nothing to do with the main point of our passage today, they only rolled out the institution of levirate marriage because only in that situation that could something like this happen.

They say to Jesus, verse 25, "***Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother.***" Therefore, the first brother-in-law marries her, but then he dies. Then another brother-in-law marries her, and then he dies. We don't know where these people are eating. Maybe they're just having a terrible

string of bad luck. The whole point is, it's a hypothetical situation. It's designed to make the concept of heaven and the afterlife look stupid, and ridiculous, and absurd.

They say, "Now here's a woman. She dies. She has had seven husbands. Whose spouse is she? Who's her husband in the resurrection?" Now it's a **wedge question**, and it's a wedge question because it's designed, not just to make the afterlife look stupid, but primarily to **make Jesus look stupid**. Because if Jesus sort of laughs with them and says, "Yes, how dumb is that," then all the conservatives who believe in the afterlife will reject Him. If, on the other hand, He tries to give some kind of convoluted argument ... "Well, the first guy is the real husband" or "The seventh guy is the real husband" or something like that, then of course, the sophisticated liberal people are going to laugh at Him. Either way, He'll be discredited. That's the trap of the skeptic.

Now we can see how Jesus responds. He goes on to show their argument is flawed, but first, before He does anything else, He just smacks them. I love Jesus. This is a verbal backhand. He says, verse 29, "***You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.***" Before He tells them anything about the argument, before He refutes the argument, He says, "**You're just wrong. You're completely wrong.**" He **rebukes** them. You don't know the power of God! Verse 30, "***For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.***" Let's think about this

See, He seems to be saying to the Sadducees, "Hey, your premise is in the resurrection, there's going to be marriage. But we're not going to have marriage. There's not going to be any marrying." Is that exciting to you? It doesn't **sound** very exciting, does it? What it sounds like is in heaven, we'll just all be **friends**. See? Just think how much less complicated heaven is going to be. We'll just all be **friends**, and we'll just have all these platonic relationships. We're not going to have marriage, all that sex, all that rapture, all that oneness, all that closure. Oh no! We're going to heaven where everybody is just going to be **friends**.

How utterly ... boring. Deep down, **you know** that's not right. You know, that can't be what He's saying, because verse 29 says ***you don't know the power of God***. "Sadducees, your problem is you have no idea of the magnitude of the transformation God is going to bring." That means in verse 30 when Jesus says there's going to be no marriage in the resurrection, He can't mean the future state will have **less** intense love than we have now. He can't be saying that, because He says, "***You don't know the power of God.***"

Let me tell you about the power of God. In the resurrection, the love we have with one another and with the Lord (or better put, the love we are going to have with the Lord and all the other lovers of God around His throne) is going to make the greatest marriage look like nothing in comparison. The greatest sense of oneness will seem like the morning dew compared to the Atlantic Ocean.

Jesus Christ says that heaven is a world of love, so incredibly powerful that it's going to overwhelm marriage, not make it obsolete in a sense that our love lives are going to be less than marriage. How could that be? No, it's going to go vastly beyond. Vastly better. Somebody says, "Well, does that mean we're not going to know one another? Your spouse doesn't mean anything anymore?"

Not at all. Look at who He's talking about when He talks about the great relationship He has **right now** with Abraham. Abraham is still Abraham. Isaac is still Isaac. Jacob is still Jacob. We will still be ourselves, and yet there's going to be a depth of love and delight that

makes the best moment in the best marriage look like nothing in comparison. That's the promise of the future.

Love beyond marriage, not beneath marriage, not below marriage but infinitely above and beyond it. Do you know what? I may be wrong on this, but when Jesus Christ says, ***“For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage.”*** He's saying, “At the resurrection there will be no more weddings.” No more weddings. Why? Not because there's no more marriage. Because, at the resurrection, every believer will have already have a spouse. No more single people. No more widowed people. No more divorced people. He is our Bridegroom, and He is the way in to the love we're going to have with the Father and with everybody else, as the Apostle Paul said, **Ephesians 5:25**, ***“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”***

That's why God can put His love on us and make us real. Because Jesus Christ paid the penalty. Jesus Christ was our ultimate Bridegroom and, therefore, brings us into this world of amazing love.

So that's how He answers the first trap – the trap of the skeptic. But then He moves right into handling the next trap, and that's the ...

v. 29, 31–33: TRAP OF THE FAITHLESS

Now, Jesus shows how they misread the Scripture, and he makes an incredible case, an incredible argument, for the reality of a heavenly future. Now He does it by going to the Bible. He says, starting at verse 29, *“But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. ...³¹ And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God:³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”³³ And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at His teaching.*

What's He doing? First of all, notice that He doesn't go to Isaiah or Daniel, which would be parts of the Scripture the Sadducees wouldn't accept. He says, “I'm going to argue this on your own terms,” because where He goes is to the book of Exodus. It's a quote from **Exodus 3:6** and it's the place where God appears to Moses at the burning bush.

The Sadducees brought up Moses in the first part of the text, so Jesus says, “Okay, let's talk about Moses.” That's the place where God reveals Himself in the burning bush and says, ***“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”*** Did you notice something? He doesn't say, “I **WAS** the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” He says, “I **AM** the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” He speaks of them **in the present tense**. He speaks of His covenant relationship with them in the present tense even though they've been dead for centuries when He says these words.

Do you see the force of that? Probably not. I'll tell you why you probably don't see the force of that, because we need to spend just a little bit of time understanding the significance of the terminology, ***“I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”*** When God used that terminology, it has a lot of weight to it. Here's why. As I already said at the beginning, the good news is that God doesn't have a problem with being known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When God appears to Moses in the book of Exodus, he says, “I want an intimate, personal, covenant relationship with you and the people.” Of course, He has already had a relationship with them. I mean, He's the Creator; they're the creatures. “I send the rain and the sun. You pray to Me.” It's not like there's not already a relationship, but He says, “I want a

personal relationship. I want an **intimate** relationship, I want it a **covenant** relationship, so personal, that we can use possessive prepositions and pronouns with each other.”

You say “What?” Okay, now think. We’re very fortunate in here that the English language has a parallel. Who do you dare talk about as belonging to you? Whom do you dare use possessive pronouns and prepositions with? You may not know me at all, but if you hear me refer to someone as “*my Joanne*,” you’re going to assume that’s a wife, something like that, right? I mean, how dare we talk about another human being as if they belong to us?

The answer is, in the English language, you’re only allowed to use possessive pronouns and prepositions when there has been a deep, voluntary self-giving, when the relationship is very intimate and personal. It’s why when I give Joanne a card for our 32nd Anniversary next month, I’ll sign it, as I’ve signed the previous 31 cards, “*Always and Forever, Your David.*”

God comes and says, “When we’re in a covenant relationship, we talk about each other like this: ‘*You are My people; I am your God.*’” Jesus says when God enters into that kind of covenant relationship with someone, that kind of love relationship with someone, it means that relationship can never go into **the past tense**. When you love someone ... **really** love someone, whether it’s a baby or a child or a friend or a spouse ... the greatest horror you can have is for the relationship to go into the past tense ... because when you love someone, you don’t want that relationship to ever go in the past tense. You don’t want anything to come between you. You don’t want anything to end it, but you can’t help it. Why? Because we’re human and we’re limited.

But what if **God** loves you? What if **God** is committed to you? What if **God** is in a possessive relationship of voluntary self-giving? He has given Himself to you, and in response, you have given yourself to Him. What that means is something simple. God can never be the God of the dead. Do you see the force of this? God can’t be the God of the dead, because He is the covenant God. God can never say, “I **was** the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

When God is speaking to Moses, He talks about his relationship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in **the present tense** because when God puts His love on you, when you enter into a relationship with God, that relationship can never go into the past tense. He will never lose that which is precious to Him. You and I might, but He won’t. He can’t. Why? Would God’s love somehow be less than ours? Would God’s love be less intense, God’s love be thinner somehow? If **you** can’t bear to have your relationships go into the past tense, how could God? So Jesus Christ is saying something very basic but **absolutely amazing**. The love of Jesus Christ makes you real ... eternally real, absolutely permanent.

Yes, we know we’re passing away, and yet we know there is someone who is eternal. If He puts his love on us, we become permanent. We become real. We last forever, because our relationship with Him lasts forever, and we will never pass away. **John 11:25-26**, “*Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”* If God loves me at least as much as I love other human beings, then He doesn’t want this to ever stop. He does not want this to ever get in the past tense. God will never let this go. God cannot be the God of the dead. Slam dunk. That’s it. Goodbye, Sadducees.”

But He’s not done. There’s one more trap to spring. And that’s the ...

v. 34–40: TRAP OF THE LEGALIST

³⁴ *But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great*

commandment in the Law?”³⁷ And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Now, I’m not going to spend a lot of time on this one, mainly because it could be a whole sermon by itself, and also because I’ve preached on it several times already, in the parallel passages in Mark, Luke, and John.

So very quickly, what’s happening here? What Jesus does is start off by looking like He’s going to answer the question, but what He actually does is subvert the very premise of the religious people who are asking the question. He just blows through all the categories the conservative Pharisees have for morality and the moral law. What He does is completely redefine the **content** of the law, and completely redefine the **motive** for keeping the law. He completely redefines the **content** of the law (what it’s really after), and He completely redefines the **motive** for keeping the law (why you should do it). What you should do and why you should do it.

It’s saying, first of all, **love defines what it means to live lawfully**, but this is just as incredible, it also means **the law defines what it means to live lovingly**. See, if He says all the law boils down to love, He’s not just saying that love is what every law is about. It also means the law defines what it means to be loving.

In other words when a person says, “Don’t obey God’s law; just do the loving thing ...” In fact, every single time you ever disobey God’s law, every time you lie, every time you steal, every time you commit adultery, every time you break any of God’s law, what you’re really saying is, “I actually know what the loving thing to do is ... better than God does.”

But God created us! What Jesus is saying is incredibly radical. He says, “When I say all of the law basically boils down to love God and love others, I’m telling you **WHY** God wrote the law.” God didn’t just write the law so we’d have something to do; the law isn’t just busy work. God wrote the law to show you what **the loving thing** is to do. God wrote the law to show you **how to love!** Therefore, love defines what it means to act lawfully, and law defines what it means to act lovingly. Only when you see that do you even begin to understand the content of the law and the motive for keeping it.

The only real motivation for keeping the law, for doing all the things God commands, the only possible source for keeping the law would be a heart that is just head over heels in love with Jesus. Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your might, and with all your strength. We just talked about this amazing love that we’re going to have in heaven, this hard to fathom love that dwarfs even the love of a marriage, well, Jesus is saying, let’s start practicing that kind of love right now.

Do you see this completely destroys both the liberal and the conservative approach to the law? You see, the liberal version is that what you do doesn’t matter, God loves everybody. That’s too easy. The conservative version is God only takes people into heaven who are good. That’s also too easy. People who say you can get into heaven only if you obey God aren’t really obeying God. They’re using God. We’ve seen, for example, the liberal view that, “Hey, you make your own rules, and God loves everybody” is just too simple. The conservative view that, “Hey, you have to just live a really good life and if you’re good enough, He’ll let you in,” is also too simple. Here’s what we learn. Jesus is attacked by the Sadducees, who are the enemies of the Pharisees, and Jesus rebukes the Sadducees. Jesus is attacked by the Pharisees, who are the

enemies of the Sadducees, and Jesus rebukes the Pharisees. Why is this principle that operates in most political situations not holding? What is the principle? Well, the principle is ...

CONCLUSION: *The Enemy of My Enemy is My _____*

That's right, the enemy of my enemy is my friend, or at least the enemy of my enemy is my ally, or at least the enemy of my enemy is my cobelligerent, or something like that. When I see someone attacking my enemy, I feel good. I cheer for them, but that's **not** what happens here. What's so intriguing is we all know the Pharisees attacked Jesus. The Pharisees couldn't stand Jesus. Jesus attacked the Pharisees. He hated the legalism of the Pharisees terribly, but now you have to see Jesus also was attacked by the Sadducees, and He rebukes the Sadducees.

What does this mean? This is extremely important. If you want to understand the gospel, you have to understand this. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not derived from any particular human party or philosophy. It's not a form of liberalism. It's not a form of conservatism. It's also nothing halfway in the middle. Yes, it's true that the Pharisees attacked Jesus because they smelled a Sadducee. And the Sadducees attacked Jesus because they smelled a Pharisee.

But it wasn't because He wasn't halfway in the middle. The Sadducees and the Pharisees both hated Jesus. And this is so important to understanding the gospel. What's the gospel? At least this. God is a God of justice. Sin and evil have inflicted a great misery in the world, and God is a God of justice. He can't just overlook that. He hates oppression. He hates wickedness. He hates evil. But Jesus Christ has come and satisfied God's justice. Jesus Christ has come and lived a perfect life, and died the death we deserved, paying the penalty for sin in our place. There is a divine bar of justice before whom we all stand, and yet Jesus Christ has so utterly satisfied it that when I believe in Jesus and I receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered in the Gospel, then I am completely accepted on the spot by sheer grace.

Now the Sadducees and Pharisees, both then and now, **can't stand** the gospel. The gospel is **not** a form of conservatism, **nor** is it a form of liberalism, because both can't stand it. Why? The Sadducees didn't believe there was a God of justice, didn't believe in a judgment day, didn't believe in a God who punishes. They didn't believe in any of that. The Pharisees didn't believe this God could be satisfied, but rather through our good works, and our moral virtue, we have to do it ourselves. We had to satisfy God. Therefore, when the Pharisees listened to Jesus, they thought they smelled a liberal Sadducee. And when the Sadducees listened to Jesus, they thought they smelled a conservative Pharisee. The conservatives thought they smelled a liberal, and the liberals thought they smelled a conservative.

The God of the conservatives, of the Pharisees, was demanding, right? But the God of the gospel is **far more** demanding than the God of the conservatives, because the God of the gospel has a justice that can't be satisfied by anybody but Jesus. You can't live up. The Son of God was more conservative than the conservative God. On the other hand, the Sadducees (you know, the liberal theologians) say, "We believe in a loving God. We believe in a God who accepts everyone. We don't believe in a God of wrath and of judgment." The Son of God is more loving than the God of the Sadducees because the biblical God offered up His Son. The biblical God suffered. The biblical God went to the cross. The Son of God was more conservative than the conservative God and more liberal than the liberal God ... at the same time.

Now until you see Jesus **rebuking** both the Pharisees and the Sadducees, until you see Jesus being **attacked** by both the Pharisees and the Sadducees, you might misunderstand the gospel. You might think the gospel is really a particular kind of human philosophy, but it's not.

If you're a Christian, get used to nobody liking you. That's a little bit of an exaggeration but not much. Look, when you first become a Christian, there's a tendency to accept the gospel because you think it confirms the things you've always believed. If you're kind of a liberal person, you like the gospel because it talks about the poor and the outsider and all that kind of thing. On the other hand, if you're a conservative type, you like all that talk about morality and justice and wrath and guilt. You like that. So when you start to get into Christianity you have to the tendency to say, "Hey, I believe the gospel because it's just like the things I've always believed."

I want you to know **the more you** become like Jesus, **the more you** actually come to grasp the gospel, **the more you** come to understand the uniqueness of Christianity, **the more you** come to realize ... **It's Not Like Anything Else**. Therefore, if you really start to understand the gospel and if you begin to articulate it and live it out, you're going to find (and this is what I want you to get used to) **everybody thinks you're an idiot**. Everybody thinks **there's something wrong with you**. Conservatives don't like how the gospel talks about justice for the poor. Liberals don't like how the gospel talks about everybody has to get converted.

If you understand that both the Sadducees and the Pharisees hate Jesus, and it's not because He's something in the middle, but it's because He's something totally off the chart, you need to get ready for the fact that you're going to go all of your life with people continually misunderstanding you, constantly thinking you're something you're not. You need to get used to it. You need to get ready for it.

If you aren't a Christian, or you're not sure you're a Christian, or you're sort of inquiring right now and you're exploring and you're checking it out, that's okay. There are always people on a spiritual journey in every one of our services. Here's what I say to you about this. Make sure you take time and really listen and when you hear some sermon or some Bible study or read some book, don't jump too quickly to the conclusion and think, "Oh, Christianity is just like that."

If when you hear the gospel you immediately **like it**, you're probably wrong. You probably like it because you think it's like something else you already like. If, on the other hand, you hear the gospel and you immediately **hate it**, you're probably wrong. You hate it because you think it's like something else you already hate. **The gospel is not like anything else**. It takes time to get it.

If you're a member here and you have a friend you're trying to help come to Christ, be patient. You're asking a lot. So get ready for it and be gentle about it. Jesus Christ can look right through a person's heart and talk to people in ways, I think, that I'm not sure we can. You see, grace is complicated, because grace says this. First of all, **you have to see that you're a sinner**. Then secondly, **you have to see there's an ultimate sacrifice** all these other inadequate sacrifices point to. And finally, **you have to see there was only One, the Lord Jesus Christ, who really offered the ultimate sacrifice for you**. In that ultimate sacrifice, which makes all the other sacrifices obsolete, we see that the cross is the one place where you can actually see this love life completely and utterly and brilliantly fulfilled. So at that very moment, on the cross, you have the ultimate example of someone who loved God with all his heart, all his soul, all his mind, all his strength, and He loved his neighbor, including you, more than Himself.

Think about that ... You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have given us a King. In this passage, we see Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. Lord, forgive us for trying to categorize You, forgive us for seeing You as a liberal, forgive us for seeing You as a conservative, or as someone who thinks like we do. Help us to see that love and the law are so totally connected, and that keeping the law is an act of love. Help us to understand that Jesus transcends all our categories and forces us to receive and rest upon Him alone for our salvation. Thank You that He went to the cross, as an act of love, and laid down His life for His friends, for us, on the first and true Memorial Day.

And so, O Lord, if there is anyone among us this day, who comes here not trusting in Christ, we would ask that by Your Spirit that You would draw that person to Yourself — by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone — that they might embrace the beloved Son. Help us to know and believe that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Amen.

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Ephesians 5:25-27

“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 splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”