CITYLIGHT
CHURCH

SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

Honoring All People

A Self-Examination for the Church

Jesus broke down the dividing wall of hostility. Undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance and immovable expression build it back up, so before we talk about the world, we deal with the log in our own eye and learn to human well with the humans around us.

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SERIES
We're Honoring to All People, Week 1 of 5

MAIN TEXT
Ephesians 2:11-16

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01

Sermon Transcript

Amen. Well, if you will do me a favor, go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2. We're going to get there here shortly. I think I'm going to go through quite a few things before we even get there. Let's see, Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians 2. All right, today we're starting an interesting message series. Today's going to be an interesting message. The series is going to be interesting. I'm going to be honest with you, there's a measure of discomfort that I'm going to have to embrace over the next several weeks, but I believe this is good and timely.

It's for our church. It's for our community. It's for our county. It's — you know, and if God will breathe on it, we'll just say it's for the country. Amen. Come on, somebody. But we're going to be getting into a series today that I'm calling "For All People." This is the last of our eight values that I've been preaching on since I've gotten here, our eight core ministry values. And so today I'm jumping into a series called "For All People." The value itself is, we're honoring of all people. We're honoring of all people. Look at the person next to you and say, "You're safe. You're safe.

You'll be honored here." Amen. So I can feel the quietness in the room, and I know where it's coming from. It's from my background, and I know this because this is actually already on the internet, so I can tell I've stunned some of y'all with it. I got some questions about this because we have a graphic that's up. It's not this exactly, but someone asked, they said, "Why are you preaching with a gay flag? Why are you doing a thing with a gay flag?" And they asked me that question, and I just — first, here's what I need to let y'all know. Okay? Because some of y'all are trust until you don't, and then you get borderline ready to lose your mind all the time. Right?

So this ain't a gay flag. First of all, okay, they're hanging them everywhere, so y'all know what they look like. This is not a gay flag. This is just the background for the series. We want to do some color because we wanted to — you know, identify there's different people. In the online it has people in the things, but I didn't want people staring at me all the time. I was preaching — y'all do that enough. Amen. And so let me just show you, this is what our background is. Just a background. This is it. Now I want you to look, just so you can tell the difference. Here's a gay flag. These don't look anything alike. So everybody calm down. Amen. Okay.

Listen, most of the series is going to be serious. That was maybe the one I'm giving myself. Okay, so I'm just joking. If you're a Tennessee fan, we love you. We're praying for you — and unless you're playing Alabama or Auburn, and we're praying against you. Amen. And so, just good fun jokes here. But over the next several weeks — did you see it coming? Stay on your toes here in this church. Amen. Over the next several weeks, we do have some moments that are going to be dreadfully uncomfortable. What I'm going to ask you to do is bear with me and hang with me and be gracious through this message series. My goal first and foremost — and this is not an abnormal goal for me, this is typically how I land in the pulpit —

my first goal is to preach the Word of God. It's my first goal. But secondly, I want to just clearly state where we are on certain issues. Over the next several weeks, less than preaching, I'm actually trying to just create a standard of the operation that we have here at the church on some issues. And I figured this is the most efficient way for me to get those things documented, is by talking with you about them. But we believe God's going to give us a great harvest, and when that happens, we're going to have people show up in the church, and I don't want them thinking we stand in a

certain place theologically that would blindside them after six months of being here. Author, counselor, psychologist, psychiatrist — I don't know exactly what she is, but her name's Brené Brown. Brené Brown says that clear is kind.

So my goal today is not to be ugly. It's not to be rude. I'm not trying to be mean to anybody through this series. I just want to be clear, because clear is kind. And I think you're going to find that this is going to be a clear message series. I'm going to be very clear on some things, top to bottom, from what the Bible says to just how we implement and deal with that here in our church as a local body. Now, for full transparency — I think this is fair, because the question will float around, you know, where I kind of stand on some things in terms of spectrums and scopes. And I want to be clear: I'm not saying that I am this because my demand is for you to be this. I'm saying this because I believe clear is kind.

I want you to know who I am, what I am. You know, I don't talk about this stuff ever, but I feel like right now, going into the series, that's important. So if you want to know kind of where I'm at in terms of things that would be raised in this series that we're getting into: I generally embrace a conservative philosophy of government. Every president — I'm just saying this. Don't cheer, don't — this is the only time I should be quiet. Okay. I just want to tell you where I'm at. Every president I've ever voted for was at the top of the Republican ticket. I voted for Donald Trump three times.

I don't own a red hat. I don't know where that's at on the spectrometer, but you know, that's where I'm at. If you're politically liberal, I think this is fair for you just to know what I'm going to say and kind of where I stand. And the reason for that is simply because clear is kind. Clear is kind. And most of this won't be political in nature, but most of what we're going to talk about over the next several weeks does touch the political third rail here. I mean, it's just going to be grabbing it. What we're going to talk about over the next several weeks you will hear on TV — on Daystar, Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, your local affiliates.

You're going to hear this everywhere. So I just kind of want everybody to know where I'm at. And I'm going to do my best to be measured in some of the things that I say throughout this, because my job is to do this. It's not to come up here and tell you my opinions and how I want things to shake out. Okay? But if y'all are down for that, I could change my preaching ministry at any given moment, just come up here and do an hour of my opinions every week. They'd be entertaining if nothing else. And so, borrowing from an early turn-of-the-century political commentator, newspaper columnist, Pastor Tim Keller kind of reinterpreted a philosophy of news delivery and applied it to preachers. And he just said the job of a preacher and the job of Bible teaching should comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. If you're hurting, I hope you find something. But if you just think you've got it all figured out, I hope I really get under your skin today. But my goal today is to make you think. Look at somebody and say, "Turn your brain on. Turn your brain on." And over the next several weeks, if you are a liberal politically, you're going to think I'm a blazing conservative. You're going to think I'm just the most conservative guy.

"He's a far-right preacher." But I want you to know, the more conservative you are, you're going to have moments where you go, "He sounds a lot like a liberal." And you know why? Because anybody who uses their brain doesn't sound like either one of them. If you blanket agree with everything that every conservative politician says and everything every liberal politician says, you are what is called by definition an idiot. You ought to disagree with all of these people on something, unless you're the politician. I worry that they disagree with themselves more than we do sometimes.

Amen. And so I'm just going to ask you, for the next few weeks, if you come in and you go, "My God, I don't know how I feel about that" — I'm just trying to preach the Word. If you'll be gracious with me, open your heart, open your mind, open your ears, I believe the Word of God will get in here and work on us. My goal is not to get you, by the way, to think the way I think. My goal is to get you to think. To think, period. Now the silence, the cone of silence, is lifted. I want y'all

to have fun with me this morning. So before we get — so everybody just give the Lord a good praise real quick. Well, Jesus said that before you remove the speck from your brother's eye, you've got to remove the log from your own eye. That was Matthew chapter 7, where he says that.

> **MATTHEW 7:3-5** ESV
>
> 3 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

And so this morning what I'm going to do is, I'm pretty much going to go after the log today. The good thing is, it's easy to aim at because it's so large. Amen. And so much of what we're going to talk about over the next few weeks is dealing with other people. It's dealing with people who probably wouldn't come through our church all the time, or people who would at least think differently than those who attend an evangelical church every week.

And so most of this series is kind of talking about those people. But I think it's good form, before we talk about them, we talk about these. Amen. And so this morning I want us to talk about some things going on inside the church, some things that we've got to come to terms with before we start demanding change from the world. The seat from which some people demand that the world change amazes me sometimes. Sometimes the church is atypical — if you point a finger at somebody, three more point back at you, brother. We're atypical of that. And so I think it's good form, I think it's fair. But what I don't want to do is necessarily focus and hone in on sin this morning. What I really want to talk to you about today is the kingdom. And if we're mindful of the kingdom, the positions we take on these issues are going to work best for us, because you can be right and be wrong at the same time. That wasn't a political statement. I could feel like 75% of you were a fit. We're going to use the phrase "right" sometimes and it mean "correct." I heard recently — this guy came back to me that when I was — here, we did a town hall before the church voted on me to be the pastor, and in the town hall I made some comment about us being a progressive church. That's the only place we can figure this came from. This just came back to me this week, that there was someone in the meeting who had gone out and started telling people in our city that I am for — I'm about gay TV and radio ministry. That is wildly specific, and I have no idea where they got that from. But if you happen to hear that I'm for gay TV and broadcast ministry, I just want you to know, until this week

I've never considered gay TV and radio ministry before. Amen. I've never thought about it. Honestly, it's a very niche thing to be concerned about. Amen. But I want to talk about the kingdom now. If I didn't want to talk about the kingdom and I did want to address it all, all I'd really have to do is get up here and hit a quick list of divorce, pornography, withholding the tithe, deceit, gossip, coveting, boasting, foolishness, greed, selfishness, disobedience to your parents, and insolence. Did I leave anyone out? No, I got the whole room. Something grabbed everybody in the room. And so if I want to do that, I can do that, but I don't know how helpful that's going to be. You've heard preaching against it before, and you're still doing it.

So I'm not going to add to the — I don't know that I'd add to the list today. No, that's not where I want to go. I want to talk about some kingdom stuff with you. Let me just read you a few things about the kingdom.

> **LUKE 4:43** ESV
>
> 43 but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."

Luke chapter 4, verse 43 — we'll be at Ephesians 2 soon — but it says, "But he said to them" — this is Jesus talking — "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose." When Jesus talked about preaching the kingdom — while we know that the purpose of Jesus was much greater than just his preaching ministry, Jesus self-identified his purpose as to preach the kingdom. That's what Jesus put his attention on, was the kingdom. The kingdom matters. The kingdom is important.

> **HEBREWS 12:28** ESV
>
> 28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,

Hebrews chapter 12, verse 28 says, "Therefore

let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe." I'm thankful that we're receiving a kingdom, and we're receiving a kingdom in such a way that we have received the kingdom, we are receiving the kingdom, and we will receive the kingdom. The kingdom has come, is here, and is coming. I'm grateful that the kingdom of God is advancing in the earth today. Can somebody say amen in this church? The kingdom matters. Romans chapter 11 talks about how people who are unlike us — now we're there — how people who are unlike us are drafted into the kingdom, into the family of God.

> **ROMANS 11:17-24** ESV
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> 17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, 18 do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. 19 Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. 22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. 23 And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

And one of our kingdom mandates is to bring people in who aren't like us.

So here's what I want to deal with today. Here's the log in the eye of the church — if we're really talking about the log in the eye of the evangelical church. I can't say the church as a whole; I think churches that are different than ours have got different issues. But churches like ours, here's the log that is in our eye: it's undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance, and

immovable expression. Undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance, and immovable expression. These are things that keep churches and church people from expanding the kingdom. Do you hear me this morning?

> **EPHESIANS 2:11-16** ESV
>
> 11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called
> the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—12 remember that you were at that time separated from
> Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope
> and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by
> the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh
> the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might
> create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in
> one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Ephesians chapter 2, go with me to verse 11. We're going to read this together. The quieter you are, the harder I'm going to preach. I just want to warn you. "Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called 'the uncircumcision' by what is called the circumcision" — okay, so we've got two people groups here. Ephesians chapter 2, we got one that's called one thing, another that's called the other thing, and they probably call each other those things. And if my Southern experience tells me, they probably call each other things they shouldn't call each other.

I know, because I've got a church full of crackers. Amen. Go ahead and post that on the internet. So, "they're called the circumcision by what is the" — or, "they're called the uncircumcision by what is the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands." That's another thing to keep in mind. This stuff's less deep than you think it is. "Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off" — hallelujah — "have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both" — listen here — "one, and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the Christ" — or, through the cross — "thereby killing the hostility."

Let me just tell you this morning, one of the most important things that we do as a church is to honor that Jesus Christ has broken down the dividing wall of hostility. It matters. We're going to talk about these things — undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance, and immovable expression — because they rebuild the dividing wall. They rebuild hostility. This is the problem. This is why we can't get along. This is why we can't grow churches. This is why we can't see the gospel take root. This is why people embrace lifestyles and dismiss it, because they're certain that Jesus Christ hates them, because the church has been the representation of Jesus Christ in the earth. And I'm telling you, I think the church is better than a lot of these people let on, but it's because we haven't been open about it. You know, they used to, when you bounced checks at places, they used to put you face up: "Don't take checks from this guy no more." They put you face up.

They put you face up. I'm telling you, when you're the reason that people will not embrace the gospel, we ought to be putting you face up. And I know where to print signs, y'all better watch out. Amen. I know people. Hallelujah. So we don't want to rebuild the dividing wall of hostility. You may say, "Well, how do we rebuild what the Bible just said that

Jesus has broken down?" I don't know, but Galatians chapter 2 says you can do it. Galatians chapter 2 says you rebuild what Christ has brought down.

> **GALATIANS 2:18** ESV
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> 18 For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

We can do it, and we have to be careful. Our job in the kingdom: we can't build walls.

We have to remove obstacles. That's not a political commentary. I really don't care how they solve immigration. I'm worried about the wall we build outside the church. I feel like I could preach today. I really don't care. I really don't. You know, I want things to get better. However we get there is above my pay grade. I want to make sure we're not building walls that keep people out. We have to remove obstacles.

> **1 CORINTHIANS 9:22** ESV
>
> 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

First Corinthians chapter 9, verse 22 says, "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some." As a teenager I read this in the NLT, and it just marked me for my life. In the NLT it says this: "I'll try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some." I'm just trying to find some common ground with people. And when we have this undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance, immovable expression,

it keeps us from finding common ground. At some point we've got to put people above everything else. At some point — not in everything. We don't let people vote on what this says. That's not how we — this says what it says. The Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it. But my God, this is not — that philosophy of life is not: checking out at the grocery store, somebody comes up with a t-shirt you don't like on it, and you're screaming at him. All of a sudden it just doesn't make sense. At some point you have to just say, "I'm in a moment where I've got to honor the person in front of me."

We're honoring of all people. I know y'all don't know what to do with this message yet. I know some of y'all — it's funny, because some of y'all think I'm going to say something that, you know, any common sense would tell you where I stand on all this stuff. By the way, visit an evangelical church's website, you're going to find out what I think about everything. My God. It ain't — I'm not about to drop the other shoe on you. Amen. Here we go. Number one. Let's start here: undiagnosed pride. Now, you might not call this pride — that's why it's undiagnosed. Right? Some of this stuff's just common sense. Amen. So you might not call it pride, but it's the sense that you have within yourself that says things like, "I've done enough." "You've got enough." It's funny how you need stuff to solve your problem, but people who've got problems, they already have enough, they could solve their problems. "I know the answers, and you just make excuses." Things like that. Oftentimes it's kind of, "I've solved the problem, and you just need to get with my program." And even more often than that, it's, "I've solved the problem, and if you'll watch this video from my favorite news commentator and get with the program, it'll solve your problem." It's amazing how much we think that somebody on TV solved the problem of the guy on Facebook.

I don't understand that math. I'm going to say some things that are going to be very real to you today. It's a feeling that we have the truest handle on a situation and other people are wrong. That is pride. That's what that is. That is pride. This isn't going to show on the screen, but Galatians chapter 6, verse 3 says, "For if anyone thinks he's something when he's nothing, he deceives himself."

> **GALATIANS 6:3** ESV
>
> 3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

He deceives himself. We walk around thinking we've got it all figured out in situations we have no experience in. Oftentimes the opinion you hold doesn't go any further than your opinion.

There's nobody around you walking through it. And for anybody who is going through it, that is their life. That is their life. That is their whole world. But you've come up with seven words, it'll fix the whole thing. Just stop. If "just stop" worked, man, we'd have church once a year. "Just stop." "Just start." That doesn't — I've told this story before about — I'll never forget, and I hope this isn't offensive, I just got to talk the way I talk in order to communicate. I told this story before, but my grandmother — and the only reason I tell these stories now, she's passed away, so the embargo's lifted. So at her funeral I just looked at the casket and said, "Thank you for the content," and I walked away.

I mean, I love my grandmother. That sounded colder than I meant to. She was a sweet woman, misguided a little bit. But I was with her a few years ago, and this was after 2020 and everything had gone down. We were at her house sitting around the kitchen table. How many of you just — you sit at the kitchen table at grandma's house? Is that right? That's where you go. Amen. And so we're sitting around the kitchen table, Meemaw let me know that all these black people talk about — everybody calm down first of all — but she said, she said all these black people talk about is Black Lives Matter. I let her go on for a minute or two, and then I said to her, I said, "Meemaw, I got a question for you. How many black people you talk to?

You're 85 years old, you live in Hueytown, Alabama. How many black folks you see in Hueytown, Alabama, y'all? How many black folks you talk to?" She says, "Well, not any, hardly." All right. I said, "Well, I got quite a few black friends, and ain't one of them told me 'Black lives matter.' Could it be possible that they keep bringing commentators on to your favorite news station that harp on this stuff, and in reality it's not as exploded in the culture as you think it is?" That is undiagnosed pride. "I think I have a handle on a situation" that I actually don't know a stinking thing about. And listen, I don't care where you land on it. If you can't — listen, I was going to go ahead and help — if you can't hear something like "Black lives matter" without saying "All lives matter," at some point, folks, that's just argument. It's just us trying to be argumentative. "Black lives matter." "White lives matter." "Mexican lives matter." Come on, "Tennessee Volunteer lives matter," in Jesus' name. You know, I mean, like, yeah, all lives matter, but there are times that some lives need more attention on them than others. Let me just say this: unborn lives matter. Lives matter. Lives matter. Number two: willful ignorance. Willful ignorance certainly plays into undiagnosed pride.

This is the worst — or this is one of the worst ways that we reinforce undiagnosed pride, is with willful ignorance. It's the inability to be willing to listen to another human being about why they see things differently than you. It keeps you in the dark and it builds the dividing wall of hostility. And I want to be clear, there is truth. There is absolute truth. There are some undeniable truths, and truth is truth. But some of the stuff that we have disagreements about really isn't about truth. It's about some element that, if we understood it better, would cause us to be empathetic, and we'd walk with people in a way that actually helps them to experience the kingdom. I just want to say something about some of

y'all's favorite political people. And I can say this because — listen, I am not a perfect man, and I'm not a perfect pastor, but I'm consistent.

I am consistent. Consistently not perfect. It's funny how I said that. I'm a consistent person. I believe in being consistent. I think you ought to be consistent. I think if you go back — we just did this, we just ran two of the earliest messages here at the church, the one before I was voted on and the one my first Sunday. We ran it through AI and judged it against what all we've done here at the church, and it basically said — maybe I need to have the AI read this off, y'all, so I'll say it like him — it basically said I've done everything I told you I was going to do. I came in here, told you straight up, I said this is what I'm going to do, and then I did it.

Have I surprised anybody? We don't do surprises here. We're very forthright about stuff. I believe in consistency. Because I believe in consistency, this irritates me maybe more than it does you. Y'all need to be careful who you listen to. Y'all need to be careful. Some of these political people y'all listen to — some of y'all are so on to these commentators, and it's opinion people. You know, none of y'all looking at data. It's just opinion stuff. You've got all these opinion people, these different personalities. And here's what I need to say to y'all: y'all get so on to them guys.

They flip-flop all the time. You think politicians flip-flop? Listen to these news commentators. I'm going to tell you — I'm not going to say the name, because I'll lose some of y'all, because y'all can't handle it — but there's a political commentator, I'm going to tell you, she will just beat people down, until she sits down with them, and then all of a sudden she thinks that guy is just fantastic. "They have a little bit of a difference of philosophy, but all in all, he's a good American." Amen. And they change their tune as soon as they sit down with somebody. Well, my God, if you'll let them get away with it, don't you think it'd be fair if you did it in a reasonable way, that you got a little bit of insight on what's going on with other people? One of the things I'd encourage you to do is pick your phone up once in a while and ask questions. If I'm engaged with somebody just enough — I'm not talking about best buddies, just enough — and we're different, and I think I can breach that: "Hey, let's talk. Talk to me about this a little bit." That's what I'm going to do. I'd encourage you to do that. Ask questions. Talk to people. Proverbs 25, verse 2 says this: "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings to search them out." Proverbs chapter 20, verse 5 says, "The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out."

> **PROVERBS 25:2** ESV
>
> 2 It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.

> **PROVERBS 20:5** ESV
>
> 5 The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

He'll draw that thing out.

You look at what's going on in somebody. "I want to understand. I'm going to bring to the surface a little bit of what you think and what you're going through and what's happening in you." But if you constantly are just willing to not be educated at all about anything or about anything anybody goes through, well, you're going to constantly be in a place where you're rebuilding a wall of hostility. You can't do that. We can't be that kind of people. We've got to at least have the wherewithal to figure out that maybe we don't know everything about everybody who goes through everything.

And I know this is going to shock some of y'all, but I really don't know what it's like to live in China and have Chinese parents and eat Chinese food all day. Especially different Chinese food than what they sell here.

I don't know what that's like. Is it possible that you don't know what it's like — what your granddaughter is going through, or what your neighbor's going through, to some degree? To some degree. Willful ignorance. Undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance. The third is this: immovable expression. Immovable expression. That's a fancy way to say some of y'all struggle to keep your mouth shut. Nobody's looking at anybody in this room right now. Everybody's got their eyes down. So I know y'all are all thinking there's somebody sitting within five people of you that you want to go — you struggle to keep your mouth shut. You just can't keep your opinion to yourself.

Some of y'all share your opinions too much. I want you to know this. I've had an eye-opening experience recently. Changed my life. Changed the way I'm going to pastor. Changed the way I'm operating as a human. And that experience is, I have joined local Facebook groups for Mobile and Saraland. And any day that I think, "Why, Pastor? Does the world need what you do?" I just go to one of them groups. No, they need me to preach. Amen. They need me today. And I go here and I see how these people are talking and arguing with each other and going back and forth in the comments section, to people who are — I mean,

you could look at their Facebook profiles and go, "You're diametrically opposed." But they're, you know, a liberal and a conservative arguing with each other, and an old person and a young person arguing with each other, just going back and forth, different races going at each other, different people going at it all in these Facebook comments. And the thing is, I'll ask you this for real: would you do that in the grocery store checkout line? Like, would you? I mean, maybe you would. If you would, don't say anything, because most of the room, I don't think would. We'd all be looking at you like you're crazy. But I mean, if someone walked up behind you in a checkout line and they had a — you know, if you're liberal, they had a MAGA thing on, or if you're conservative and they had a whoever's going to run next, a Kamala Harris or Joe Biden thing on, and they're wearing it — would you turn around in the checkout line and just start giving them the one-two right there in front of everybody, right in front of the magazines, going,

"You're so stupid! She's going to run the country and I can't believe you're going to do that!" And they're looking — or you're looking at somebody who's wearing the other hat: "You're a racist. I can't believe you want to make America great again." And you know, and you're yelling at each other. Would you ever do that in the checkout line at the store? No. That is what Facebook is. You're fighting and screaming at people who are strangers who live in your area, and you're just going to town on them. And here's what's crazy: nobody walks away from this stuff and thinks, "That was a really insightful counterpoint." You're just arguing. It's immovable expression. You can't see something without saying something. And my God, if you're going to do it, please stop sharing stuff

that is so obviously fake. Some of y'all, if you see it on Facebook and it bashes the person you don't like or affirms the person you do like, you would post it on the internet. Some of y'all today, if you saw it, if it said Joe Biden was in the process of building a Buddhist temple inside the Abraham — the Lincoln Bedroom, you'd go, "I can't believe that." Share. But if you read a post today that said Donald Trump is currently in talks to build a local Pentecostal church outside the White House, next to the new ballroom he's trying to fix, because he prays in tongues for four hours every morning before he feeds the poor, you'd go, "That's my president." Share. And it'd help if y'all stopped sharing dumb stuff. If you're going to share your opinion, don't be dumb when you do it. Amen. I don't know what else to say.

Some of this is just to get it off my chest. Amen. Lord. I worked with a pastor one time who — he had some things going on in the background that were inappropriate, and those had not come out yet. He was sharing some stuff on Facebook

that people were finding offensive, and it was questionable, the stuff he was sharing. And his big argument, he just said this — this is what everybody says about this stuff. He came in, this happened, he goes, "Listen, guys, I know some people have some problems with stuff

I'm sharing on Facebook. I need you to understand something: it's my Facebook." "It's my Facebook." This is something y'all would say. He said, "It's my Facebook." Here's the thing, though. Honey, I need you to understand, you don't have a Facebook, because you are not your own. First Corinthians chapter 6 says this: "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own. You have been bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

> **1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20** ESV
>
> 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You
> are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

I don't own anything. I don't have anything. I'm a steward and a manager of everything that the Lord has given me. Amen. And so I'm not going to just get out here and act any old way that I want to. And some of you might go,

"Well, hey, listen, it's not a sin for me to share my opinion." No, it's not. It's also not a sin for me to come up here in the pulpit and fill my messages up with fart jokes, but I don't do it, because it'd be bad form and it'd be bad etiquette. Some of this ain't about sin or not sin. Some of this is about representing the love of Jesus Christ in the earth in a way that the gospel takes. But I do have a good one I'd like to share right now. I'm just kidding. I mean, I've got a good one, but I'm not going to share it. Let me close. I want to talk about what we ought to do, what we ought to do in the household of faith. I might use a little bit of semantics here, and I hope it communicates, but it is essential that we learn to human well with other humans.

We've got to learn to human well. Like, just be a person. Some of you can be a person around people who act like you, talk like you, look like you, but when you get around other people who have different opinions or this or that idea, you all of a sudden just can't behave in a way that is normal. And you just got to learn to human well with the humans. And I want to talk about something just for a moment, because we're talking about finding common ground, building common ground, keeping the wall of hostility down, keeping the doors of the church open so that people who don't look like you, sound like you, smell like you can come in and receive the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ and a touch of the power of the Holy Spirit. Because we've got a church for all people, so anybody can come in. And if you think I just like everybody — I don't. This message is for me too. There's people I get uncomfortable around.

I don't feel it. I can't feel it. I'm just not about it, you know. And I get that. There's some stuff I can't do. Y'all hear what I'm saying? But there's a mandate that I step up to the plate for, for the kingdom. Because at the end of the day — and I will get to this — but I'm not a conservative. I'm not a Republican. I'm not an Alabamian. I'm not an American. I'm a kingdom ambassador. Now, everything else there is true, but it is all subset to the fact that I am blood-bought, born again, and called according to a purpose.

> **ROMANS 8:28** ESV
>
> 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called
> according to his purpose.

> **2 CORINTHIANS 5:20** ESV
>
> 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

I'm a kingdom ambassador.

You're a kingdom ambassador. You're more than what you think you are. You know, if you really wanted to see your life effortlessly change, just think about who you are. Who you are. You're so much more than you think you are. If you're born again — if you're born again, you're not just people. You're an ambassador. You're someone — we used to use that word, ambassadors of Christ. We're ambassadors of Christ. I want to talk about this for just a moment. Recently, Pastor Travis Johnson at Pathway Church in Mobile caught some attention because he took a very public stance against the Pride Month banners in downtown Mobile. And just to be clear, we land in the same place on this. I don't know what Mobile's history is.

Let me just tell you this though, from where I'm standing: we've seen a great reversal over the last several years. We have taken major steps back from this all-in-your-face Pride Month. And I'm going to talk to you about some stuff here in a second. But if you want to see the most change — I wasn't going to preach this, but I said it this morning in an off-the-cuff conversation — if you want to see the most change in the nation and the culture, go to the market. If you'll see something change in Mobile, don't go shopping in Mobile for a month. Things will change. And I'm not big on boycotting, but I'm going to tell you something: a few years ago Target did some stuff that ticked everybody off, and everybody stopped going to Target, and guess what, they changed it all. They didn't do that again. You know, so when the market responds, you don't have to be ugly about it. Just don't go shop there. Go to Walmart. Slum it. Go to Walmart, you know. And when you see this stuff, just stop doing it. We just went to Disney, by the way. Went to Disney, you know, and weren't thinking about it being June. And so we went to Disney and we got there, and I saw the first thing and I thought, "Oh God," because I know this is going to be in my face. Oh, man.

Hardly anything. Why? People stopped buying stuff from them. They stopped going there. They stopped seeing their movies in the theater, and they left their toys on the shelf. So if you really want to see change, go to the market. Pray, but go to the market. Just change the way you do business and it'll change. Trust me. Let me tell you something about every corporation: they don't like straight people or gay people, they only like dead presidents. At the end of the day, that's what's going to make things happen. Amen. So, Travis Johnson — Pastor Travis Johnson at Pathway — he had made those statements. And I just want you to know that there are going to be times that leaders and public personalities have to take certain stands on certain issues.

Let me just segue to say this. I believe that God is doing something great in our church. Probably the end game on that is a lot of influence for our church, and that means that there are going to be times over the years where I'm going to have to say some things, and I'm going to have to take some stances and some positions that I do not have to take today. I don't have to do it right now, because nobody really cares outside of y'all, and that's only like 50% of y'all. Amen. But I'm serious, that stuff I have to do. There's going to be a day where there's going to be a demand. And when I say those things and take those stances and make certain comments, there is a potential that I, in my own ministry in the pulpit, can unintentionally, but by default and out of necessity, rebuild that wall of hostility. And there could be things that I say in taking a stance and just being very clear — even over the next few weeks I'm really going to be careful — but I could rebuild a wall of hostility that keeps all people out. And God knows I'm not trying to build a Jesus-centered,

Spirit-filled church for some people. So that could happen. Here's the dance. Because I'm afraid that church people by and large have only been shown — because I have learned that y'all catch more than you're taught.

It's caught more than it's taught. I feel like church people at large have only learned how to take a stand. And I can take a big stand. I can, you know — not today, but at some point, maybe. Amen. I can get behind the pulpit and I can get on the camera and I can, just like Pastor Travis just did, take a very noted, large stand where that is a strike to the water. It hits a community, everybody's talking about it right now. It has people trying to get him removed from stuff. That's how effective it was. Like, it hit the — and it just — I can do that. But here's the problem: if the church only knows how to take stands, but you can't take a big stand, what you'll do is you'll just go around in your life taking little stands everywhere you go. Little stand at McDonald's, and a little stand at Burger King, a little stand at Walmart, a little stick, and then you'll take stand, stand, stand, stand, stand on Facebook. And so now every time people encounter either the church as a figure, as an organization, as a corporation, or they encounter the church people, all they're getting is stands all the time. And all they're hearing is bad.

"No, change. Don't be like that. We can't stand it when you do the blah, blah, blah, blah." And that's all they're getting. They're just feeling that all the time. And the reality is — I'll just say it like this — you don't have to take a stand on everything all the time. You don't. You don't have to participate in everything, but you don't have to take a stand. I just told you the best way to make change doesn't require any communication. You just don't shop there anymore. "We missed you." "We'll see — you'll see me in July." You know, July 1st ought to be the biggest day that some of these places have in business. Just saying. "Oh, they won't show up in June." And so you don't have to take a stand on everything. And I need everybody in this church to do me a favor: for us to do what we've been called to do as a church,

I need you to learn to human very well. That this is the dance. See, it's in order for us to stay on mission and for us to do what God's called us to do, you have to human with the other humans, building common ground in such a way that people outside the kingdom say things like this: "I know where that church stands, but every time I deal with those people, they are kind, they are considerate, they are caring, they're complimentary." People should struggle — and I don't have this in my notes, but I got in a little thing in the production booth this morning, they said they're going to start talking to me before I preach every week to get better stuff out — people should struggle to figure out why we would hold one position but act another way. "They say they're not for this, and yet they act kind and loving and caring. What's that?"

That is a dance of the tension. That's the tension we have to hold, where we hold the truth of God's Word in one hand and we hold the love of the cross in the other. And when you're standing in front of me, I don't have to say all kinds of stuff. I don't have — listen, I know there's some stuff that stands in front of you that you just don't know what to do with. And I struggle a little bit with the they/them stuff too, folks. I can't do it. I just can't go there. But I will tell you something: "friend" is a non-binary word. You can use "my friend." "It's good to see you, my friend." "Could you help me find this in the store that you work in, my friend?"

"I'll have a double quarter pounder with cheese and hot mustard." Amen. That is a phrase that you can use. You don't have to be in people's face and go, "And sir — sir, sir, ma'am, ma'am." You don't have to do that. You just say, "My friend, could you help me? Have a good day. God's good. His mercy endures forever. I woke up this morning, he started me on my way, and now I get to come in here and be with you." I'll never forget, we went to a glasses store one time, you know, and there's somebody in there and it's right in front of me. I'm going, "What do I —" you know, I don't know. But I'll tell you what I'm not going to do: I'm not going to scream at him.

I'm not going to make my position known, though. You know, I'm trying to figure out what to do and how to navigate. "My friend, can you help me find some glasses?" And I wish I'd have been more friendly, in hindsight. We have opportunity after opportunity after opportunity to human well. That's going to help us be on mission as a church. And I'm going to wrap up, because I know I've been going a long time, but I haven't preached in two weeks. I mean, y'all knew what was going to happen. When I talk about being human and learning to human as a verb, like you just be kind and function with people, I find it interesting —

this is really where I want to close, it's my second closer — I find it interesting, this is actually how God approaches redemption.

> **JOHN 1:14** ESV
>
> 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John chapter 1, verse 14 says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

> **1 TIMOTHY 3:16** ESV
>
> 16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

First Timothy chapter 3, verse 16 says, "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: he was manifested in the flesh."

> **ROMANS 8:3** ESV
>
> 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

Romans chapter 8, verse 3 says, "For God has done what the law, weakened by flesh, could not do, by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." So you don't have to do everything everybody does. Everybody does. But you can — I mean, y'all now see, that's — we're accepting of all people, even the ones who can't talk.

> **HEBREWS 4:15** ESV
>
> 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews chapter 4, verse 15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." You know, when God the Father, who held a holy and righteous standard that no person could meet or can meet — when God the Father said it is time for full redemption to take place in the earth, the way that he did it is through God the Son manifesting in the flesh. God putting on human flesh. God the Son becoming one of us, in the likeness of us, and he brought about redemption

through the cross. If God would walk through the whole process of redemption by saying, essentially, “I’ve got to human with the humans,” how much more

will we see the gospel take root and the kingdom move forward when we say as a church — and when other church people in our area stand up and say this as well — that we’re going to human with the humans in our area, and we’re not going to be them people who operate in pride and ignorance and always spouting off an opinion, but rather we’re going to be loving and considerate, we’re going to be kind, and we’re going to step up and say we’ll represent the love of God and the gospel? Because if God loved me, it seems fitting that I would love people as well. And if we do that, I think we might see some people grafted in to the kingdom.

We might see some kingdom advancement. Jesus prayed this, and he told us this is how we ought to pray: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.”

> **MATTHEW 6:10** ESV
>
> 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

I want to see the kingdom come, because he is willing that none should perish.

> **2 PETER 3:9** ESV
>
> 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

If you receive the word today, give the Lord a hand clap of praise.

02

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This message opens a series on the last of the church's eight core ministry values: **we're honoring of all people.** The weeks that follow touch the political third rail, so this first message does two jobs. It sets the tone for the whole series (clear is kind), and it turns the examination on the church before the series ever turns to the culture.

Two cautions. First, this is a message to church people, not about outsiders. Keep the finger pointed inward. Second, be clear without being harsh. The goal is not to make anyone think the way you think. The goal is to get them to think.

Expect some quiet in the room. Name it, smile, and keep going.

Introduction

Turn to Ephesians 2. We will get there shortly.

Today we start a new series, **For All People.** The value behind it: we're honoring of all people. Have the congregation look at the person next to them and say, "You're safe. You'll be honored here."

Illustration: "Is that a gay flag?" The series graphic uses a band of colors, and someone asked whether it was a gay flag. Put the series background next to a Pride flag and let the room see they look nothing alike. Then: "Everybody calm down." Use the laugh to lower the temperature, then get serious.

The next several weeks will have moments that are dreadfully uncomfortable. Ask the congregation to bear with you and be gracious.

The goal is twofold:

- First, to preach the Word of God.
- Second, to state clearly where this church stands on certain issues, so that when God sends a harvest, no one who joins us is blindsided six months in.

Author and researcher Brené Brown says that **clear is kind.** The aim is not to be ugly or rude to anyone. It is to be clear, because clear is kind.

FULL TRANSPARENCY

For the sake of transparency, own where you land on the political spectrum, because this series will raise those questions. Pastor Jason said it this way: "I generally embrace a conservative philosophy of government. Every

president I've ever voted for was at the top of the Republican ticket. I voted for Donald Trump three times. I don't own a red hat." If you are politically liberal, it is fair for you to know that. Why? Clear is kind.

Most of this series will not be political in nature, but most of what it covers you will hear about on every news channel.

There is an old line, first written about newspapers in the early 1900s and later applied to preaching, that the Word should **comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.** If you are hurting, find comfort today. If you think you have it all figured out, expect the Word to get under your skin.

Over the next few weeks, the liberals in the room will think the preacher is a blazing conservative, and the conservatives will have moments where they think he sounds like a liberal. That is because anybody who uses their brain does not sound exactly like either side. If you agree with everything one side's politicians say, you are not thinking. You ought to disagree with all of them on something.

So be gracious. Open your heart, open your mind, open your ears, and let the Word of God do a work in us. **My goal is not to get you to think the way I think. My goal is to get you to think.**

The Log in Our Own Eye

Jesus said to take the log out of your own eye before you take the speck out of your brother's: "first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5). Today we go after the log. The good news is that it is easy to aim at, because it is so large.

Much of this series deals with people who would probably not come through our doors, or who think differently from those who attend an evangelical church every week. It is good form, before we talk about *those* people, to talk about *these* people. Before the church demands that the world change, it has to come to terms with some things inside the church.

This is not mainly a message about sin. If it were, all it would take is a quick list: divorce, pornography, withholding the tithe, deceit, gossip, coveting, boasting, foolishness, greed, selfishness, disobedience to your parents and insolence. Did I leave anyone out? Everyone has heard that list preached before and is still doing it. Today is about **the kingdom.**

THE KINGDOM MATTERS

> LUKE 4:43 ESV
>
> 43 but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."

The purpose of Jesus was greater than His preaching ministry, but Jesus Himself named preaching the kingdom as the reason He was sent. The kingdom is what He put His attention on.

> **HEBREWS 12:28** ESV
>
> 28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,

We have received the kingdom, we are receiving the kingdom, and we will receive the kingdom. The kingdom has come, is here, and is coming, and it is advancing in the earth today.

Romans 11 describes people who are unlike us being grafted into the family of God (Romans 11:17-24). One of our kingdom mandates is to bring in people who are not like us.

THE LOG

Here is the log in the eye of the church, at least of evangelical churches like ours:

Undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance and immovable expression.

These three things keep churches and church people from expanding the kingdom.

The Dividing Wall

> **EPHESIANS 2:11-16** ESV
>
> 11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Paul describes two people groups, "the uncircumcision" and "the circumcision." They had names for each other, and they probably called each other things they should not have.

But now, in Christ Jesus, those who were far off have been brought near. Jesus "has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14). One of the most important things a church does is honor that Jesus has broken down the dividing wall.

Undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance and immovable expression **rebuild the dividing wall.** They rebuild the hostility. This is why we cannot get along, why churches cannot grow, and why the gospel does not take root. It is why many people are certain that Jesus hates them: the church is how they have met Jesus.

“How can I rebuild something Jesus tore down?” Paul says it can be done: “For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor” (Galatians 2:18). We have to be careful.

Our job in the kingdom is not to build walls but to remove obstacles. That is not a comment on immigration policy. The concern here is the wall we build outside the church.

> 1 CORINTHIANS 9:22 ESV
>
> 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

In the New Living Translation, Paul says, “Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some” (NLT, 1 Corinthians 9:22). Pastor Jason read that as a teenager and it marked his life.

Hear this clearly: we do not let people vote on what the Bible says. The Bible says what it says. But that conviction is not a license to scream at a stranger in the grocery store over a T-shirt. At some point you have to say, “I’m in a moment where I’ve got to honor the person in front of me.”

1. Undiagnosed Pride

You might not call it pride, which is why it is undiagnosed. It sounds like:

- “I’ve done enough.”
- “You’ve got enough.”
- “I know the answers, and you just make excuses.”
- “I’ve solved the problem, and you just need to get with my program.” Or, more often, “Watch this video from my favorite commentator and get with the program.”

It is the feeling that **I have the truest handle on the situation, and other people are wrong.** That is pride.

“For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (Galatians 6:3). *(Not on the screen.)*

We walk around thinking we have it all figured out in situations we have no experience in. For the person going through it, that situation is their whole life, and we think we have seven words that will fix it. “Just stop.” If “just stop” worked, we would only need church once a year.

Illustration: Meemaw at the kitchen table. A few years after 2020, Pastor Jason sat at his late grandmother’s kitchen table in Hueytown, Alabama. She said that all black people talk about is Black Lives Matter. He let her go on for a minute, then asked, “Meemaw, how many black people do you talk to?” “Well, not any, hardly.” He told her he had quite a few black friends, and not one of them had ever said it to him. Could it be that the commentators on her favorite news channel kept harping on it, and it was not as big in the culture as she thought? That is undiagnosed pride: thinking I have a handle on something I actually know nothing about.

If you cannot hear "Black lives matter" without answering "All lives matter," at some point it is just argument. Yes, all lives matter, but there are times some lives need more attention than others. Unborn lives matter. Lives matter.

2. Willful Ignorance

Willful ignorance is one of the worst ways we reinforce undiagnosed pride. It is **the unwillingness to listen to another human being about why they see things differently than you.** It keeps you in the dark, and it builds the dividing wall of hostility.

Be clear: there is truth. There is absolute truth, and truth is truth. But some of what we disagree about is not about truth. It is about something that, if we understood it better, would make us empathetic, so that we walk with people in a way that helps them experience the kingdom through us.

Be careful who you listen to. Many of the voices people follow are opinion personalities, not data. They will tear someone down on air, then sit down with that same person and decide he is a good American after all. If they get to change their minds once they hear someone out, so do you.

Pick up the phone and ask questions. You do not have to be best friends. "Hey, let's talk. Help me understand this."

"It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out" (Proverbs 25:2).

"The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out" (Proverbs 20:5).

If you are never willing to learn about what anyone else is going through, you will constantly be rebuilding a wall of hostility. Most of us do not know what it is like to grow up in another country, and we may not fully know what a granddaughter or a neighbor is going through. Have the humility to admit you do not know everything about everybody.

3. Immovable Expression

Immovable expression is a fancy way to say **some of us struggle to keep our mouths shut.** Some of us share our opinions too much.

Illustration: the local Facebook groups. Join a local community Facebook group and watch strangers go after each other in the comments: liberal and conservative, old and young, different races. Would you do that in the checkout line at the grocery store? Would you turn around to the person behind you in a campaign hat and start yelling, right in front of the magazines? No. But that is what Facebook is. And nobody walks away from a comment thread thinking, "That was a really insightful counterpoint."

If you are going to share your opinion, at least stop sharing things that are obviously fake. If a post bashes the person you dislike or flatters the person you like, check it before you share it.

Illustration: "It's my Facebook." Pastor Jason once worked for a pastor who was posting things on Facebook that people in the church found offensive. His defense: "It's my Facebook." But you do not have a Facebook, because you are not your own.

> 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20 ESV
>
> 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

We do not own anything. We are stewards and managers of everything the Lord has given us.

A good question to ask: **Am I finding common ground, or rebuilding the dividing wall?**

"Well, it's not a sin to share my opinion." No, it is not. It is also not a sin for a preacher to fill his sermons with fart jokes, but he does not do it, because it is bad form and bad etiquette. Some of this is not about sin or not sin. It is about representing the love of Jesus in a way that lets the gospel take root.

Conclusion: Learn to Human Well

What should the household of faith do? **We have to learn to human well with other humans.**

Some of us can be a normal person around people who look, talk and think like us, but put us around people with different opinions and we cannot behave normally. Find common ground. Build common ground. Keep the wall of hostility down and the doors of the church open, so that people who do not look, sound or smell like us can come in and receive the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

This message is for the preacher too. There are people every one of us is uncomfortable around. But there is a kingdom mandate to step up to.

I'm not a conservative. I'm not a Republican. I'm not an Alabamian. I'm not an American. I'm a kingdom ambassador. All of those other things are true, but they are subset to the fact that I am blood-bought, born again and "called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). "We are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20). So are you.

STANDS AND THE DANCE

Pastor Travis Johnson of Pathway Church in Mobile recently drew attention for taking a very public stance against the Pride Month banners in downtown Mobile. Pastor Jason said plainly that he lands in the same place on that issue. There are times when leaders and public personalities have to take strong public stances.

Pastor Jason also suggested that the most effective way to see change in the culture is often quiet: go to the market. Pray, but change where you spend your money. You do not have to be ugly about it, and it does not require a word of argument.

God is doing something great in this church, and at some point the office of the pastor will have to be outspoken on some things. Those stances, even when necessary, can unintentionally rebuild the wall of hostility.

Here is the danger. It is caught more than it is taught, and church people have largely only been shown how to take stands. If you cannot take a big stand, you end up taking little stands everywhere: at McDonald's, at Walmart, and stand after stand on Facebook. Then every time people encounter the church, all they get is a stand. All they hear is bad.

You do not have to take a stand on everything all the time.

To stay on mission, we have to human with the humans, building common ground so that people outside the kingdom say, "I know where that church stands, but every time I deal with those people, they are kind, considerate and caring."

People should struggle to figure out why we would hold one position and still act with such kindness. That is the tension we hold: the truth of God's Word in one hand and the love of the cross in the other.

Illustration: "my friend." Pastor Jason admitted he struggles with they/them pronouns and does not use them. But "friend" is a word anyone can use: "It's good to see you, my friend." "Could you help me find this, my friend?" At a glasses store once, he was not sure how to address the person helping him. He did not scream and he did not make his position known. He said, "My friend, can you help me find some glasses?" Looking back, he wished he had been even friendlier. We have opportunity after opportunity to human well.

GOD HUMANED WITH THE HUMANS

This is exactly how God approached redemption.

> **JOHN 1:14** ESV
>
> 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

> **1 TIMOTHY 3:16** ESV
>
> 16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

> **ROMANS 8:3** ESV
>
> 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

> **HEBREWS 4:15** ESV
>
> 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

God the Father held a holy and righteous standard that no person could meet. When it was time for redemption, He did it through God the Son taking on human flesh, becoming one of us, and bringing redemption through the cross. If God accomplished redemption by humaning with the humans, how much more should we hold to the standard of Scripture and still human well, so that we see the gospel take root in those who are far off?

If God loved me, it is fitting that I love people as well. And if we do, we might see people grafted into the kingdom.

Jesus taught us to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done” (Matthew 6:10). We want to see the kingdom come, because the Lord is “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Close in praise: if you receive the Word today, give the Lord a hand clap of praise.

03

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

EPHESIANS 2:11-16	11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

MATTHEW 7:3-5	3 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.
LUKE 4:43	43 but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."
HEBREWS 12:28	28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,

ROMANS 11:17-24	17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, 18 do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. 19 Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. 22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. 23 And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.
GALATIANS 2:18	18 For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.
1 CORINTHIANS 9:22	22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.
GALATIANS 6:3	3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
PROVERBS 25:2	2 It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.
PROVERBS 20:5	5 The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.
1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20	19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.
JOHN 1:14	14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
1 TIMOTHY 3:16	16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

ROMANS 8:3	3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,
HEBREWS 4:15	15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

ROMANS 8:28	28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.
2 CORINTHIANS 5:20	20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.
MATTHEW 6:10	10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
2 PETER 3:9	9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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