

Well, good morning, everyone. First of all, we had a great night tonight. Do we get to turn these lights on, the fancy lights that we had last night? Do we? Don't.

We don't. Carly's giving me his hand signals that say no. I ask way too much. Obviously, those lights cannot happen. But we do have a lovely little balloon photo op.

So, gentlemen, before you leave today, I'm thinking of you two. Make sure you get your picture taken in front of the heart and balloon and the roses. It's. That was. It looked amazing.

We had a great time last night. Thank you to all those who put good effort into that. We had plenty of food, of course, wonderful crafts, the little girls dance. We did a limbo, which I'm hoping to give you a little taste of before the service has ended today. I've been assured that the person who can do it is willing to do it.

So we have a full morning here, a little bit of a variety show. But we're going to start with the idea of repentance. Now, when I say repent, what image do you guys come up with in your heads? What thought, what concept? What emotion happens when you hear the word repent?

Guilt, change, sorrow.

I love this. This is. This is. We're not always as responsive as we are today, so this is really good. Good job, guys.

Let me tell you, when I hear the word repent, I'm taken back to about the age of 11, 12 at my little Pentecostal church. Sunday evenings. Sunday evenings. Sunday mornings were for the. For the crowd.

They were appropriate for most people. Sunday nights, however, that's where it got real. That's where it got real. And the preacher, I mean, he was tired, but it didn't stop him. He landed hard.

And it was always a message of, the altar is right here. What's stopping you from coming down? I remember Ken Ransom was our preacher. Ken has gone on to be with the Lord. But I remember doing, like 28 verses of just as I Am because, by golly, we weren't shutting the lights off until someone came to the altar and repented.

But our ideas of repentance are oftentimes that remorse and regret and maybe some guilt even. We get this idea perhaps because of an. Of an old, old, old poem. And the poem was called the Old Bachelor. You can look it up if you want to, but one of the lines in there, they talk about.

There it is. Married in haste, we may repent at leisure. I'm going to

use the British pronunciation of that. We may repent at leisure. And what that basically means is we often regret decisions we make too quickly.

Is anyone in the room experienced with making quick decisions and then going, what was I thinking? Yeah. So repentance is something we all feel, whether we, whether we call it that or not. But it in the Bible, repentance is much more than just this feeling of remorse. It entails a lot more than just regret.

Those feelings are legit and they are important in the process of repentance. But feelings themselves don't change anything. Do you know what I mean? I've spent many times at that Sunday night altar feeling like, man, I really put the effort in here wailing and crying and sore knees. And then Monday I find myself right back in the same spot.

Feelings don't change a situation, but true repentance does. So we're going to look at that this morning as we go through the steps of hope and healing. We've gone through the step of admitting that we are powerless to change our own lives, but we recognize that God can. God is powerful enough to change our lives. We've walked through the step of getting very, very honest about our struggles with ourselves and then with others, someone we trust.

And none of that has come easy. But each of those steps sort of builds on the other. And today's step is repentance, where we become entirely ready to, to turn away from our patterns of sin and turn to God. So it's a powerful step. It's a necessary step in order to move on to the next thing, the next promise that God has for our lives.

So I'm going to pray and then we're going to dig in. Heavenly Father, as we open your word today, we pray that our lives would be moved in the right direction as we one take, take confidence from your word as we gain wisdom from it, and assurance in knowing that we are loved by you. So thank you for all of that. And now lead me as we talk about repentance. In Jesus name, Amen.

Today I'm going to talk about three Bible accounts and one Bible story. So get ready. Here's the first Bible account. It's found in Exodus in the Old Testament. We land very early in the book of Exodus on the story of how the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt and they were freed by God and directed to journey.

Take a big journey to the place where God had had set aside for them. A place described as flowing with milk and honey, which is just a way of saying it's not going to be sticky, it's going to be amazing. So this is a place of hope, healing anyone, y'? All. Anyone.

If you don't know this story, look it up in Exodus. Now Moses, their leader, did his very, very best, but that journey was like the worst

family road trip that you can imagine. The kids fought, they complained, they whined the entire way. And then when they were within sight of the promised land, they were right there at Wally World. They decided to refuse to trust God and go in.

And God said, okay, if you insist on going your own way and doing it your own way, then here's what's going to happen. You're going to wander. And that's exactly what they did. For 40 years they wandered, just sort of doing it as they seemed fit to do it, as it made sense to them that that's what happens when we don't trust God with our lives. We end up wandering.

Anyone wanders a little bit in their lives, trying to figure out where they're supposed to go and what they're supposed to be doing. When we don't obey God, when we don't do what God asks us to do, this is what happens. We end up wandering. Finally, though, after that 40 years, they're ready to go in and make an attempt to enter this land of hope and healing. And Joshua, the new leader, Moses, has gone to his reward and he deserved it.

He deserved what God had prepared for him. Who he was exhausted. And now Joshua's in charge. And Joshua preaches a very short sermon to his people in Joshua, chapter three, verse five. This is the King James version.

If you grew up with the King James, these words are going to sound very familiar. And Joshua said unto the people, when you hear unto, you know it's King James Version. He says, sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. Now sanctify in this translation simply means to set apart for a specific reason. We would use the word consecrate or commit, but Joshua uses the word sanctify.

And here's what it means. In other words, do what you need to do to prepare your heart and mind to align with God's purposes. And he says, amazing. His mind blowing plans. Now that wilderness story reminds me of another wilderness story.

And this is in the New Testament and this is found in the in the Gospel of Matthew. And it happens right before Jesus begins his earthly ministry, where the Holy Spirit takes him out of the wilderness. And what happens there, not because he's done anything wrong, but because God is preparing him to do everything right. And so the Holy Spirit takes him into the wilderness and there in that wilderness he encounters some testing and temptation. And of course Jesus passes those tests straight.

A student, he walks out of there ready to begin the work that God has called him to. And his first message, his first sermon series is this right here. He says in Matthew chapter 4:17 he says from that time on Jesus began to preach. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come

near. Repent, there's our word.

And repent. Put another way simply means this. Do what needs to be done to prepare your heart and mind to align with God's purposes and his mind blowing plans for your life. Repent. And there's one last story that I'm going to use to unpack all of this.

And this is found in John 6. This is another Gospel. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, they're all accounts of the life of Jesus. John is the last gospel. And in chapter six he tells the account of a hillside gathering where people have been there all day long listening to Jesus teach.

And they get hungry and Jesus fills them and provides miraculously food. Now these people have shown up to hear Jesus because they've seen him do some miracles. They've seen him cast out demons, they've seen him do all sorts of wild and amazing stuff and he's something of a celebrity and celebrities always draw a crowd. And so Jesus, Jesus does another miracle. He feeds these 5,000 people where their physical hunger is met.

But like all meals, it's temporary. Yesterday I was home by myself all day long and I remember eating breakfast around. Well, I had, we had a little Bible study and then after that I made myself a little sandwich and I thought, okay, this is going to last me, me really till dinner time. That was about 10:30. I'm not even going to tell you how the day went, but suffice it to say that when dinnertime came around, I really wasn't that hungry.

Not because it satisfied me, but because I grazed all day long. Am I the only one that does that? Oh my word. You eat a big lunch, you go, you know what this is going to do me for the rest of the day. I don't need anything else.

And then by 6:00, you're scrounging in the fridge looking for stuff, some Doritos or something to eat. Oh, it's horrible. But Jesus feeds them. Their physical hunger is met, but it's a temporary satisfaction. They're satisfied there on the hill.

But then Jesus leaves. And of course, Jesus always does really cool stuff. So they follow Jesus and they track him down on the other side of The Sea of Galilee, where. Where he lays into them. Now, he's Jesus, so he's gentle, but he does rebuke them.

He says, you all are looking for things that satisfy in the short term. You're looking for an easy route. You're looking for the cool stuff. You're looking for, really temporary satisfaction, when instead you should be asking me for bread. But not regular bread, bread that brings eternal life, bread that only I, he says, can give.

So the people say, okay, yeah, we're always down for some cool stuff. You do give us this bread. And Jesus says, I am this bread.

He says, I am this bread, and I have come directly from heaven. And they're scratching their heads, going, why?

John 6:41 says it this way. At this time, at this, the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. They're like, what's he saying here? And amongst themselves, they said, is this not Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we all know? How can he now say, I come down from heaven?

Who do you think you are, Mr. Big Stuff?

And then Jesus goes on, he says, listen, I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness. Now, this was when they were moving from slavery to the promised land. And they got hungry, and they were complaining about only human eating chicken nuggets. And Moses said, God will provide.

And so God provided manna in the wilderness. It was amazing. Amazing blessing from God. Yet even eating the bread that God provided, that miraculous little toasty stuff, they still died. But here is bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and never die.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. And whoever eats this bread will live for forever. This bread is my flesh. Now imagine you're hearing this for the first time. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

And then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, how can this man give us his flesh to eat? And this is offending all of their religious sensibilities and what they think they know about, what it means to follow God and what they've been, how they've been living so far, following God, their way. First of all, he claims direct descendancy from God. Then secondly, he claims to be greater than Moses and the manna that Moses provided in the wilderness. And now he's asking them to eat his flesh.

Now remember, you're hearing this for the first time. He doubles down on this. Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Now, from our standpoint, now we can see this as a metaphor, an amazing metaphor really. But in the moment all those religious Jews heard was that he's asking us to violate very strict religious laws that God himself gave us regarding the consumption of blood.

Well, Jesus is not asking them to resort to cannibalism. He's simply stating that hope and healing, the promise that God gave to Joshua,

about the amazing things God wanted to do among them, and the kingdom of heaven that Jesus announced very often in his ministry, where you repent and then you experience this amazing kingdom of heaven, all of that, the blessings of eternal life, all of that are only possible through him.

And all this was so difficult to accept that many of his followers deserted him. They wanted the promised land, they wanted the blessings of the kingdom, they wanted the bread, but they didn't really want to do what it took to commit and truly experience that. In the end, just a few remained. His 12, which we know pretty much well. We know about his 12 disciples.

They didn't fully understand either. But in the process of walking with Jesus, in the process of living with Jesus, they've learned to love Jesus and they've learned to trust Jesus even when they didn't understand Jesus. They learned to trust Jesus even when they didn't understand Jesus. Have you learned that? So Jesus turns to them and asked, will you guys go too?

Are you going to desert me? And Peter, bless his heart, says words that will define what it means to have a religious hunger or a righteous hunger. He says, lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life. Peter certainly doesn't understand everything Jesus is saying, but he knows that there's life there. He says, we're not going to go anywhere. We're sticking with you. We have consecrated ourselves for you.

Now, why do I use this last account? Because it's not about. There's no really remorse or regret there, but it's still about repentance. It's about getting our head and our heart on the same page. And as Jesus, and seeing our life and our decisions and our actions as he sees them, and deciding it's time to follow wherever he will take us.

And it begins when we realize that the path we've been following doesn't lead to the promised land, when what we've been feeding on doesn't ever truly satisfy. And the energy and the effort that we've been expending to chase down the celebrity life doesn't bring us what we really need. Instead, we need to submit our hearts and our minds and our life to God. So Joshua says, sanctify yourself, consecrate yourself, Take a deep look inside and place your life and your future in God's hands and say, I am yours. Whatever that means.

This is the. This is not a feeling. This is a decision. Do you know the difference? It's not a feeling of guilt, remorse, shame, sorrow.

It's a decision to do something different. It's easy to want Jesus as Savior with his forgiveness and rescue. And we say, jesus, take my sin, take it all away. Wash me clean. Yes, that's the easy part.

The harder part is to accept him not just as Savior, but as Lord. And the lordship of Jesus is all about surrendering your whole life to his leadership. When you say, lord, take my life, it means everything about my life reorientates towards what you want from me and for me. So Joshua called the Israelites to consecrate themselves, to commit themselves in preparation for the promised land. Jesus calls us to repent in order to experience the kingdom of heaven.

And if you're here this morning, the question is, are you ready to do that now? Some questions to ask ourselves. When it's the call comes to repent, when the call comes to sanctify, when the call comes to consecrate. Here's some questions. What desires, expectations or ways of thinking do I need to release so that God can reshape my heart?

Let's just leave that up there for a little bit. What desires for my life? What expectations for my life or ways of thinking, patterns of thinking that have been embedded in my head for a long time do I need to release so that God can re shape my heart?

The second question is this. What area of my life am I resistant to change even though I know Jesus is offering something better? Areas of our life where we know God's got something better than this for me, and yet releasing that feels like a loss appeals hard.

The third thing to consider is what would it look like for me to move from wanting Jesus on my terms to trusting him on his terms? And only you can answer that.

And then the third or the fourth question is, am I willing to let God change the direction of my life? And I'm telling you, at 60 years old, it can be hard to let God change the direction of your life, to say yes to new things that God has for you without going. But what about my plans? What about what I've worked for? What about what my intentions were?

What about my goals. And God says, I've got something better for you. And you're like, I want to believe that.

In Matthew 5, verse 6, Jesus is teaching to all these crowds of people. And he says this. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. And righteousness is living in this place of rightness before God, where everything just aligns with God's purpose and plan. He says, those kind of people will find themselves satisfied with life, deeply satisfied with life.

Now here's my final Bible account. It's a parable Jesus tells about a young man who decided to abandon his family and strike out on his own, arrogantly intending to do life his way. He consecrated his heart. He sanctified his life for the purpose of doing it his way.

He pursued himself. And we know how this story ends. It ended very badly. Instead of living the dream, he found himself in a nightmare, living with pigs. Not just messy roommates, but literally with pigs in a.

In a pig pen. And this is what happens when we pursue and insist on pursuing our life. It. It gets. It gets nasty sometimes.

And he looks around and he comes to his senses. The scripture says he realizes something. It's not just about how bad he feels.

Those feelings of remorse are there. It's not just about how guilty he may feel because he treated his dad pretty badly when he left home. All of those things are valuable experiences. But what changed his life was not the feelings. What changed his life was.

The decision was his repentance. And his repentance looked like this. He said, I am going to realign my thinking, my choices, my goals, my aspirations. I'm going to switch them from me, and I'm going to turn them in the direction of my Father. He comes to his senses.

He realigns his desires and is thinking back towards God. He remembers his good, good Father and the blessings of being in the right relationship with him. And he decides to get up and get out and go home where he belongs. And he gets home and he says, father, I've sinned. Please forgive me.

And of course, the Father says, you are forgiven.

Repentance is coming to your senses and saying, I want something different than what I. Than what I've been experiencing. Now, for a Christian, repentance isn't just a one and done. And as we come to this time of communion, this is something that we do on a consistent basis because it is a moment where we can. We can repent.

And again, if your idea of repentance is coming to the altar and wailing and moaning and gnashing your teeth, well, get that out of your head. There may be opportunity for that. There may be a reason for that. But in this moment, repentance is really saying, hold on, let me get my thinking straight. I need to come to my senses and look at my life and go, wait, this is not working.

I need to align it with God. It's something. Repentance in this instance, is something we embrace as a daily discipline, if we're wise. And if it's not daily, at least it's weekly here in this moment. I love what Rochelle Goodrich says about this.

She goes, repentance is an opportunity. How many have ever thought about repentance as an opportunity? Repentance is an opportunity, not

a punishment. This is a shift in thinking. Repentance is an opportunity, not a punishment.

It's meant to correct and cleanse, not penalize. No one gets in trouble for repenting. In fact, exactly the opposite. Here's what David wrote in Psalm 139. He says, Search me, God.

Know my heart. I'm exposing myself to you. Test me. Ask me some questions. Know my thoughts, my anxious thoughts.

See if there's anything offensive in me. And what. And punish me according to your righteousness. Give me what justice demands. No.

David said, I'm bringing this to you. I've come to my senses, and I'm asking you to do some soul searching with me. Why? So that you can lead me the way everlasting. You can lead me on the path of righteousness.

You can get me back home where I belong, in right relationship with my Father. That is the reward. That's the blessing. That's not the punishment. Repentance never brings punishment.

Repentance always brings blessing. So no matter where you find yourself today, maybe wandering in a wilderness, maybe living very comfortably, but attempting to do life on your own, satisfying yourself with earthly bread, regardless, Jesus calls you to this moment of reflection and contemplation. He calls you to this moment of sanctification where we get to say, lord, look at my life. Help me come to my senses where I'm acting senselessly. Help me repent and realign my heart and my mind with the heart and mind of Jesus.

Let's pray.

Jesus, I thank you for the cross. Because through the cross, through your sacrifice on the cross, we have the promise of forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life if we trust you, if we turn to you. And so this moment is for those who have trusted you, have turned to you. And so may this moment be a sanctifying moment where we bring you our heart, we bring you our mind, we bring you our concerns, we bring you our life's decisions and as David did, we invite you to search us and know us and lead us in the way everlasting. We give thanks for the cup and the bread which is your body and blood.

This is the symbols and the emblems of eternal life, life everlasting. And so in this moment, we receive it from you. In Jesus name, Amen.

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