

Behold Your God

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[0 : 00] John chapter 19. John 19, you'll find that on page 905 of our church Bibles.

John 19, and we begin reading at verse 1. Hear the word of the Lord. Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.

And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews, and struck him with their hands.

Pilate went out again and said to them, See, I am bringing him out to you, that you may know that I find no guilt in him.

So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, Behold the man. When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, Crucify him, crucify him.

[1 : 26] Pilate said to them, Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law.

And according to that law, he ought to die because he has made himself the son of God. When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.

He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, Where are you from? But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to him, You will not speak to me?

Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you? Jesus answered him, You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.

Therefore, he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin. From then on, Pilate sought to release him. But the Jews cried out, If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend.

[2 : 36] Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar. So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called the Stone Pavement.

And an Aramaic, Gabbatha. Now it was the day of preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, Behold your king.

They cried out, Away with him. Away with him. Crucify him. Pilate said to them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. Well, amen. And may God bless to us this, his word. Well, let's bow our heads for a moment of prayer.

Lord Jesus, again we ask as we consider your sufferings and the meaning of them, that you will bless us and fill our hearts afresh with gratitude and joy, and that you would humble us and help us to long to serve you more deeply and more truly in every part of our lives.

[4 : 03] And we ask it for your dear name's sake. Amen. Amen. Well, friends, let's turn to John's Gospel, chapter 19, on page 905 in the Big Bible, if you have that one.

And we're continuing with this series in John 18 and 19. This is my last Sunday here just for a few weeks, but I'm due to have one Sunday in mid-August and then a couple in early September.

And I hope we can finish chapter 19 and perhaps even get to chapter 20, which tells the wonderful story of the resurrection of Jesus. Well, now my title for this morning is Behold.

Behold. And we'll come to just what is meant by that a little bit later. But I want to start with the events that are recorded in the first part of chapter 19 of John's Gospel.

This 19th chapter of the Gospel of John, and you'll see this as you glance across the chapter, it records the death of Jesus at verse 30, the moment where he breathed his last.

[5 : 04] And at the end of the chapter, we have the record of his burial, which is very important, because John the evangelist is making the point that he really did die. He couldn't have been really raised unless he'd really died.

But in the earlier part of the chapter, we have this interchange of conversation between Jesus and Pontius Pilate and the Jewish leaders, who have long since determined that they must put Jesus to death.

Now, what actually takes place here is, of course, brutal and horrifying. But John the evangelist, like Matthew, Mark, and Luke before him, states the facts without embellishment.

He doesn't focus on the details of the brutality, because he's not really interested in the violence as such. He's not like a modern filmmaker who wants to show us all the gruesome and gory details so as to make us wince.

And the reason for this is that John's real concern is with the meaning of the death of Jesus, with the ongoing implications of his death. And those implications are good and wonderful.

[6 : 12] They're the best news in the world. And that's why we call this day of Jesus's crucifixion Good Friday. It's a strange term, isn't it? Good Friday, because at one level, it was the most horrible Friday.

But we rightly call it Good Friday, because on that day, through the death of Jesus, God achieved his good and kind purpose of winning the eternal salvation of his people.

Simon Peter described the death of Jesus in his famous Pentecost sermon, recorded in Acts chapter 2, in these words. And these are pointed words.

He doesn't mince his words. He says, this Jesus delivered up. Now notice this phrase, according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

You crucified him, Peter says to the Jews in Jerusalem. But it was all in God's plan. He knew it all beforehand. The point is, nobody steals a march on God.

[7 : 17] It's rather like what Joseph said at the very end of the book of Genesis. When he talks to his brothers and refers back to what they had done to him all those years before. And he says to them, you meant it for evil against me.

But God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive. It's the same kind of thing here. Men meant it evilly, but God had known it all beforehand.

So let's remember this as we look at the details of the story. It is a most horrible story of contempt and hatred and cruelty. But the outcome has been the salvation of everyone who puts their trust in Christ.

This worst of Fridays is ultimately the best of Fridays. We're turning to the chapter itself then. Let's look first at Jesus being misunderstood and rejected.

And he's misunderstood and rejected first in the mockery of the Roman soldiers, their ignorant mockery of him. Verse 1. Pilate takes Jesus and has him flogged.

[8 : 20] Pilate. And in verse 2, the soldiers take hold of him in this weak and battered condition. And they immediately begin to mock him. They twist together a crown of thorns and they push it down on his head.

And then they take a purple robe. And the reason for it being purple was that purple was then, and I think still is to some degree, the color of royal garments. And it was very expensive.

That's why the royalty used it. The dye which was used in making this purple cloth was extracted from a type of mollusk, some kind of a bivalve or a shellfish.

And people used to go out and gather these little mollusks together. And they would then crush them and pulp them. And this purple juice was extracted and it was then used to stain the cloth.

But the whole process was very expensive. And that's why the ordinary people could not wear purple. It was simply too costly. So it was reserved for wealthy people and especially for kings and queens.

[9 : 21] So the purple robe that is put on Jesus is a piece of theatrical mockery. Oh, you're a king, are you? They say. Look at verse 3. They come up to him and they say, Hail, your majesty.

Oh, king of the Jews. Horrible mockery. Lovely crown you have there, sire. Beautiful piece of cloth this. Savile row. And then they strike him with their hands.

It's an adult form of the mentality of the playground bully. And alas, it's what a conquering people tend to do to the people that they've conquered.

It's in the nature of a conquering army to vilify and belittle enemy soldiers when they catch them. But if they can catch their king, what sport they're going to have with him.

Now, these soldiers, of course, had no idea who they were dealing with. This was to them another crucifixion. They'd crucified men before. This man was merely one of three who'd been slated for crucifixion on that particular Friday.

[10 : 23] These were men who'd been brutalized by life in the Roman army. And mocking this young Jew gave vent to their cruelty and to their anti-Semitism. Of course, ignorant mockery of Jesus is not something which died out with the first century.

Sometimes he's openly mocked these days, even in this country, even on the BBC, I'm afraid to say, in a way that the so-called prophet of Islam never is. People who publicly mock Islam tend to get their fingers burnt or even bombed.

And yet Jesus is mocked with impunity. But he foretold this himself. Himself. In Mark chapter 10, he was foretelling his sufferings and death and resurrection, as he often did for his disciples.

And in Mark 10, he says to the 12, they will condemn the Son of Man to death and deliver him to the Gentiles, and they will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him.

So Jesus knew that this was coming, this ignorant mockery from the soldiers. Now, secondly, let's notice Pilate's weak inconsistency.

[11 : 33] The key to understanding Pontius Pilate is to see that he is torn in two directions at once. On the one hand, he wants to stamp hard on anything that might lead to rioting in the streets of Jerusalem.

Security in Jerusalem had to be one of his big priorities. And the Jewish people had a history of being troublesome. The thing that would have kept Pilate awake at night was the fear of insurrection.

So when these Jewish leaders and priests come to Pilate fiercely insisting that Jesus be put to death, he's immediately inclined to bow to their demand, because saying no to them might well be a high-risk policy.

But, on the other hand, Pilate's conscience is not entirely hardened. He was known to be a cruel and unscrupulous man, but not entirely unscrupulous.

And it's striking in this account to see how Pilate three times tells the Jews that he thinks Jesus is innocent. Look back in chapter 18 to verse 38 at the very end of the verse.

[12 : 42] He goes out to the Jews and he says to them, I find no guilt in him. Then look on to chapter 19, verse 4. And verse 6.

In other words, you take responsibility. For I find no guilt in him. So Pilate is not a man whose conscience has been entirely cauterized.

He's a corrupt man, he's a weak man, but he's still trying to administer justice. He doesn't understand Jesus at all. And yet he's clearly impressed by Jesus' shining integrity.

Impressed enough to know that he is innocent. And curiously, this is why Pilate has Jesus flogged. Let's pick it up from the end of chapter 18.

Pilate says to the Jews, verse 38, I find no guilt in him. The implication of that is, therefore, I ought to release him. And at that moment, Pilate plays what he thinks is a trump card.

[13 : 49] He remembers this old Jewish custom, that every Passover the governor magnanimously releases one Jewish prisoner as a token of goodwill, a way of improving relationships between the Romans and the Jews.

Of course, releasing political prisoners to curry favor is something which nations regularly do to this very day. So Pilate thinks to himself, I'll offer to let Jesus go free as my annual Passover act of kindness.

The Jews may be a bit upset at me, but I think they'll be glad that I've remembered to be so kind to them. But the plan badly backfires on Pilate.

He simply hadn't reckoned on how fiercely they hate these Jewish people hate Jesus. So they cry out, not this man, but Barabbas, release him. He was a well-known robber.

So Pilate then thinks, well, if I give Jesus a severe flogging, that will be enough, surely, to satisfy the Jews. I'll then be able to set him free, which is what he deserves.

[14 : 52] But I'll have done enough to appease their anger. So Pilate's decision to have Jesus flogged actually arises out of his conviction that Jesus is innocent.

And Pilate is still trying to release Jesus when he utters his famous words in verse 5. There is Jesus freshly flogged, staggering out of the house in verse 5 into public view.

He looks terrible, cut to pieces, covered with blood and sweat. This crown of thorns jammed onto his head and the mock regal purple draped around him, no doubt with blood coming through it.

And Pilate says to these angry Jews, just look at the fellow. Behold the man. How can you possibly think that a beaten-up wretch like this is a threat to your Jewish way of life?

See sense, fellows, and lay off him. But that ploy doesn't work either. Because as soon as the chief priests see Jesus, they don't say, all right, Mr. Governor, we'll back off.

[15 : 53] He's had enough punishment. Not at all. They press forward and they shout, crucify him, crucify him. There's only one thing that is going to satisfy them. And Pilate is beginning to realize this now.

But even at verse 12, Pilate is still trying to release him. It's not until we get to verse 16 that Pilate finally gives in to the will of the priests and hands Jesus over to them to be crucified.

So while we have to say finally that Pilate was weak and that he should have stood up to the Jews and released this man that he knew was innocent, we should at least credit him with trying to do the right thing, albeit in a very wrong way.

The whole thing is a sorry cocktail of contempt and cruelty and weakness. And perhaps it makes us want to cry out.

But how could this have happened to Jesus? We feel the pity of it. We feel the foul injustice. But let's remember what's going on in the bigger picture.

[16:57] Perhaps you turn back with me to John chapter 10 and verses 17 and 18. This gives us a bit more of a wide view. John 10, 17 and 18.

And Jesus at this point is addressing some of these Jewish leaders again. And he says, verse 17, for this reason, the father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

No one takes it from me. In other words, I'm in charge of the whole business. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again.

This charge, this authority, I have received from my father. So the events were pitiful and horrible and unjust.

But, and here's the comfort of it, it didn't just happen to Jesus. He was never on the back foot. He was making it happen. He laid down his life of his own accord.

[18:00] It was his will to do it. And it was his father's will and purpose. And it was all done out of love so that you and I should not perish. But have eternal life. The death and resurrection of Jesus are the two most important events in the history of the world.

And they were accomplished purposefully by the will of God the father and by the decision of Jesus. We're going back to chapter 19.

Let's move from the contempt of the soldiers and the weakness of Pilate. And we'll look again at the murderous hostility of the Jewish leaders here. It was not enough for them to see Jesus flogged and ridiculed.

Nothing less than his death was going to satisfy them. If Jesus had been exiled to Tasmania or the moon, it wouldn't have satisfied them. Remember back in chapter 11, just after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, the chief priests got together because they could see all these people turning to Jesus.

And they were jealous. And at the end of chapter 11, we read this. From that day on, they made plans to put Jesus to death. That was their settled resolution.

[19:13] Now, why should they have done this? Just try and put yourself in their shoes for a moment. Why were they acting like this? So fierce against Jesus? I think the answer is they felt that they were standing up for Judaism.

The great bone of contention that they had with Jesus was over his claim to be the son of God. There were other things about him which they hated, like his apparent disregard for the Sabbath laws.

But it was his teaching about who he was which finally set them implacably against him. And it comes out in this chapter. If you look at chapter 19, verse 7. The Jews say to Pilate, we have a law.

And according to that law, he ought to die because he has made himself the son of God. That was the heart of it. And just the same thing comes out in Mark's gospel at the same stage in the story.

The high priest in Mark's gospel says to Jesus, are you the Christ? The son of the blessed one? I am, says Jesus. And you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.

[20 : 22] At which words the high priest tore his garments and he said, what further witnesses do we need? You've heard his blasphemy. What is your decision? And all of them together condemn him as deserving death.

They thought they were protecting Judaism from a malignant imposter. But the truth was that they'd hardened their hearts, not only against Jesus, but against God, the father who sent him.

Perhaps again, you'd turn with me back a few pages to chapter 12. John chapter 12 and verse 37. This 12th chapter is a kind of hinge chapter in the middle of the gospel where the evangelist takes up part of the chapter in weighing up what is going on and teaching us what is going on.

And he writes this at 12:37. Though Jesus had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled.

Lord, who has believed what he heard from us and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore, they could not believe. John's point in these quotations from Isaiah is to say what is happening here is exactly what the prophet Isaiah foretold.

[21 : 51] The eyes of the Jews have become blinded so that they cannot perceive the truth about who Jesus is. And the hearts of these Jews are hardened.

They've become like the hide of a rhinoceros. Nothing can penetrate them. They simply cannot believe. Now, turning back to chapter 19. Just look for a moment at the figure of Jesus himself.

How calm he is and how determined. He allows them to have their wicked way with him. He has long since settled it in his mind that he must go through with it.

So he allows them to flog him and to mock him and finally to crucify him. And he doesn't retaliate. As Simon Peter puts it in his first letter, when Jesus was reviled, he did not revile in return.

When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to the one who judges justly. God the Father. And that's just what we see here.

[22 : 55] He endures it all calmly. And he says nothing apart from his words in verse 11 to Pilate, which showed just how deeply he is trusting his Father in heaven.

You'll see Pilate in verse 10 threateningly says to him, Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you? And Jesus answers, you would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.

Why is Jesus so calm? Because he too knows that this Friday is good Friday and that his suffering and death will be the ransom price to rescue many, many people.

He bears the suffering because he knows how much good fruit will come of it. So here is Jesus misunderstood and rejected by the soldiers, by Pontius Pilate and by the chief representatives of the old Judaism.

Now, here's the question. What is John the evangelist's message to us through all this? His message is, behold your God.

[24 : 09] Look at him. Look again at Pilate's words, those famous words in verse 5. Jesus steps outside of the house, a picture of weakness and humiliation, the blood soaking through his purple robe and running down his face from the pressure of the thorns.

And Pilate says mockingly to the Jewish leaders, behold the man. What he meant almost certainly was, look at the wretched fellow. Surely he's no threat to your establishment.

If I let this incapacitated man go, he's going to be surely no further trouble to you. But John means us to understand much more.

He means us to understand that Pilate's mocking words have a profoundly important meaning. That Pilate was saying much more than he understood. Behold, behold the man.

Look at him. And through these outer layers of weakness and humiliation, you will see the glory of humanity. The first Adam reflected the glorious image of God.

[25 : 14] He was under God, the Lord of creation. But he rebelled and the image of God in him was deeply defaced and corrupted. But God then sent his second son in whom the father's image has been perfectly restored.

Here in Jesus is mankind in all his beauty and lordly strength. Pilate totally failed to recognize him. But he spoke the truth when he said, behold the man.

I think one of our problems is that we have never yet met a perfect human being. And as we become deeply acquainted with the Bible's teaching that we're all sinners, we recognize just how true that teaching is.

Let me ask you to pause and look into your heart, deep into your heart right now, just for a moment. What do you see in it? A bundle of contradictions, a mass of seething impulses, isn't that right?

Some of those impulses good, or at least goodish, but plenty of them flaky and some of them diabolical. But, and this is such good news for Christians, this corrupted human life that we know so well from the inside is not where humanity started and it's not where humanity will finish.

[26 : 35] Before his rebellion, Adam was a lordly creature, the lord of creation under God himself. He was made as a perfect being, not incorruptible as we know so well.

But the human race started off unsullied, beautiful, reflecting the perfections of God himself. And when Jesus came to restore what was lost, he came as God's second son, fully expressing the features and character of God the Father.

As Jesus told Philip in John chapter 14, Philip, how can you ask, show us the Father? If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Or as the author of the letter to the Hebrews puts it in his first chapter, he writes about Jesus.

Hebrews 1 verse 3.

And John is going to tell us in his first letter, chapter 3 verse 2, that when Jesus appears, when Jesus returns, we shall be like him. In other words, this humanity of ours, which is so weakened and distorted by our moral corruption, will one day be remade according to the pattern of Jesus, whose own humanity perfectly reflects the glory of God.

[28 : 17] So the pattern is like father, like son, and finally, like all his children. Paul puts the process so beautifully in 2 Corinthians like this.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

So brother or sister, if at this present moment you're struggling with your sinful nature or with some particular aspect of it, don't despair.

Because if you're a Christian, the future finally is glorious. You are being remade. And you will, in the end, be fully remade.

And as we behold the man, Jesus, we behold him, well, yes, here in John 19, in his humiliation. But we look on ahead also to his glory. And as we behold him in his perfect nature, we are beginning to look at our own future.

[29 : 19] But this behold in verse 5 is not the only behold that comes from Pilate's lips. Let's look at the other one, verse 14, where Pilate then says to the Jews, Behold your king.

Now this again in Pilate's mouth is ironical and cynical. What he means here is look at this battered shell of a man that some of you are calling your king.

A man as weak as this is a fit king for a people like you. Pilate is spiteful to the Jews here. He knows that they've got him nailed.

He knows he's going to have to give into them. But he's sticking a spiteful little dagger into them before he's finished. He wants to show his contempt for them. That's possible that Pilate, in his mind, was comparing Jesus with the Roman emperor, whom no doubt he'd met.

The great man arrayed in serious purple, surrounded by all the marks of earthly power and glory. And he's saying to these downtrodden, subjugated Jews, a people like you get the kind of king you deserve.

[30 : 29] Look at your king. But just as Jesus is truly the man, so he is also truly the king. And John is saying to his readers, through the cynical mouth of Pilate, Yes, indeed behold the man, and indeed behold your king.

What Pilate speaks cynically, John speaks truly. He says to us, look, this is your king. And if he is truly our king, then we are happy and blessed people, because his kingdom is eternal, and we belong to it if we belong to him.

Now, if we ask, but why do we need a king? The answer is, because we need to be ruled. And if we ask, but why do we need to be ruled? The answer is, because we are unruly.

If you have three names, perhaps two first names and a surname, your middle name on your birth certificate might be Rodney, or it might be Patricia. But really, it's Anarchy.

Anarchy is your middle name. Yes, even yours. My name is Edward Anarchy Lobb. I need a king to rule the anarchist, which is me. The shepherd king of Psalm 23 has a rod and a staff, doesn't he?

[31 : 51] David says, your rod and your staff comfort me. It's a comfort to a straying sheep to have a whack on the rear end from time to time to bring it into line.

We need to have his loving correction and discipline, and that means that we're then safe. We need the protective barrier of the Ten Commandments to show us how to live a happy and purposeful life.

Because to lead a life of cheating and stealing and lying and marital infidelity is to end up in a very dark place. But this king, the true king of our souls, is also gentle as well as firm.

He says in Matthew's gospel, Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I'm gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Learn from me, he says. This king is our teacher, and he's the only teacher who can show us how to live life as it was always intended to be lived. So here is Pilate, all unwittingly, saying to the world, Behold your true humanity, and behold your true ruler.

[33 : 03] But there's one more behold for us to notice. It's not exactly stated in this passage as such, but it's implied. Look with me at the beginning of verse 14.

Strange little sentence. Now, it was the day of preparation of the Passover. Doesn't that seem a little bit odd? Why on earth should John feel it necessary to insist on that detail?

Here we are in the middle of this very tense confrontation between Pilate and the Jewish leaders, and John suddenly reminds us of the date. It's Passover Eve, he says.

But of course, John never wastes a word. That innocent-looking little sentence is actually all about Jesus. You'll see references to the Passover again in this chapter in verse 31 and verse 36.

And John is reminding us that Jesus is the Passover lamb. More than that, he's the fulfillment of the whole idea of the Passover lamb. He brings the Passover lamb story to its glorious conclusion.

- [34 : 08] And you may remember right back in the first chapter of John's gospel, John the Baptist sees Jesus approaching, and he says, Behold the Lamb of God. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Now, John's readers, of course, knew the Passover story well from the book of Exodus. They knew that by God's merciful commandment, every Jewish householder on that dreadful day of Passover was to choose a perfect, unblemished lamb to be slaughtered.

Then its blood was to be taken and daubed over the lintels and the doorposts of the house. And when the destroying angel came that night to kill every firstborn son in Egypt, as a judgment on the Egyptians, he passed over the houses where the blood was displayed.

And every firstborn person in that Israelite house was spared. So the lamb died in place of the Israelite. So John is saying to his readers, Jesus is the Passover lamb.

The cross of Golgotha is the real Passover sacrifice. And Jesus was not put to death at any old random time of year. God arranged it that he should die at Passover so as to teach us what his death means.

- [35 : 27] This is the Passover lamb of God by whose death the sin of the world is taken away. So the evangelist's message is look at him, behold him, behold the lamb of God, behold the man, behold your king.

And this command to behold him, to look at him, and to keep looking at him, it echoes words from different parts of the Old Testament. Let me just give you a couple of quotations.

Isaiah 42, verse 1. God says, Behold my servant, my chosen, in whom my soul delights. Look at my servant.

Job says in the midst of his great pain and frustration, In my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold.

Jesus himself brings the same idea to us. Matthew 5, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Or in John 17, where Jesus is praying for his people, He says to God the Father, Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory.

- [36 : 45] To see me in my glory as I really am. So the final goal of our salvation is to be able to rest our eyes on God himself and on Jesus in his glory.

We shall be satisfied then. Now this teaches us a very important practical lesson. And that is that one of the secrets of the happy and joyful Christian life is to keep looking at our Savior, to keep beholding him.

We can't yet, of course, see him with our physical eyes, not while we're still in this old body. But we see him with the eyes of faith, as we read of him in the Gospels and throughout the Bible.

We read his portrait. We get to know its contours. We learn his character. We learn to love what he loves and to hate what he hates. Behold him. That's what John the Evangelist is saying to us.

Look at him. And this message is so contrary. This is why we need to hear it so much. It's so contrary to what is so often said in human secular culture today.

- [37 : 51] Our culture is constantly pressing us to look not at him, but within, to look at ourselves as though we are going to find deep within our hearts the answers to the problems of human life.

A lot of non-Christian religious talk is like that these days, isn't it? So the teacher says to the pupils, now settle yourselves down. Calm yourselves.

Become a little more centered in your thinking. Switch off all those electronic gadgets for a moment. And look down there into the deep pool of your own soul.

Listen to your heart. Listen to the beating of your heart. Your heart knows what to do. Your heart will show you the way. Well, Jesus tells us just what our hearts are made of.

He says this. Out of the heart of man come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander, coveting, deceit, envy, pride, and foolishness.

[38 : 57] All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person. I can tell you, friends, that diagnosis is bang on target for my heart. And if your heart produces sugar and spice and all things nice, then you are a phenomenon.

So it raises the question, where are we looking? What do we behold in our hearts and minds? We become like whatever we worship. If our eyes are fixed on some idol, our whole life will shrink down to the size of the thing we're worshipping.

But if looking at Jesus becomes the deeply ingrained habit of a lifetime, we shall become more and more like him. Behold the man, says John to us.

Behold humanity in its beauty and glory. Behold humanity in its final form. Behold your king, says John. Submit to his wonderful rule and allow him to reshape you and to go on reshaping you.

And behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Your sin and my sin carried away, dealt with, forgiven.

[40 : 19] Let us pray. Let's thank the Lord in our hearts. For his glory and his wonderful saving work. Our dear Lord Jesus, we ask you of your mercy to train the inner eyes of our hearts, the eyes of faith, to behold you more and more deeply and truly, day by day, looking at you, knowing that in you we see the perfection of humanity, the very future for which we are destined.

Knowing that in you we have a perfect ruler who gives us all that we need to live a happy and fruitful life. And knowing that in you all that sin has been taken in your person on the cross and dealt with.

How we thank you. And we pray that you'll fill our hearts with joy and gratitude more and more as we seek to honor your name. And we ask it for your name's sake.

Amen.