

0 (0s):

Well, good morning, everyone. It's so good to see you guys today. My name's Matt Wolf. I'm the lead pastor here. We are all about helping people follow Jesus, which means we want to help you follow Jesus, but also for you in turn to help others. So if, whether you're joining us online or in person, we love you. You are welcome here, and I want to connect with you personally. So fill out that arise, denver.com/connect form. I'm new, do it. We get \$5 to the number of rescue mission as a gift on your behalf to someone

1 (24s):

Who needs it. Okay. So

0 (25s):

I'm hoping you do that. I was gone last week on vacation to Moab. It was great. And my place was Scotland. And my professor of preaching, I thought that was pretty cool that he came. It could be a part of our ministry here. He taught me how to preach, taught Sawyer, how to preach. And I thought that was great. He, his message a guy named Joe. I hope it not only encouraged you, but encourage you to be an encourager, right? It was a great message. If you miss that, or if you've missed any in our series better than you think you can always go to horizon, ba.com/media, the media tab, we have our audio, we have our video and we have a transcript of every single message. What we want is for everyone to worship weekly, because that's how you're going to be continually transformed by the word of God. So even if you're not here in person, you should subscribe to the podcast app on YouTube to make sure that you get that message every single week.

0 (1m 13s):

Even if you're not physically present or can't it got something going on Sunday morning, you can still hear those messages. So make sure you do that. We are in the third week in our series better than you think next week, we're going to wrap that up. And then as you saw in the video, just a couple of minutes ago, we're gonna start a new series called, lost and found as we go back into the gospel. According to Luke, that starts here in two weeks from today. That's gonna be great. I'm excited about that series and hope that you are as well. So today we're going to

1 (1m 38s):

About the rules in Christianity, the rules in Christianity. I remember

0 (1m 44s):

There was a young man, a teenager in our church,

1 (1m 47s):

Nebraska, and he started showing up at youth group on Wednesday nights.

0 (1m 52s):

It was exciting cause he came from a family that wasn't church-going and he started getting interested. And

you could tell he was interested in faith because he started asking questions, like great questions. It was discussing things, really interested. And then he started coming on Sunday mornings too. And he was getting really involved. And I remember we had a baptism Sunday coming up and now baptism is when faith goes public. It's saying, Hey, I believe in Jesus. And I want other people to know about it. It's an important step. It's a step of obedience for everyone who follows Jesus. And we were having one coming up. So I remember asking, I said, Hey, are you interested in

1 (2m 20s):

Baptism? Like we got this coming up and he's like, no, no, no, I'm not

0 (2m 26s):

Got to step forward. Like what? What's going on? You seem so interested in faith. You're going, gee, do you believe in Jesus? He's like, yes, definitely. I believe the Bible. I believe everything in there is true that Jesus died for me and Rose from the dead.

1 (2m 38s):

And I believe it. And I was like, okay, why don't you want to get baptized?

0 (2m 42s):

It took a little while. Some conversations to kind of pry out from, from him, why he wasn't ready to go public with his faith.

1 (2m 51s):

He still wanted to have some fun in his life.

0 (2m 55s):

He said, if I follow Jesus, if I make my faith public, then I can't have fun. And he was just not ready to do that. You know, I think that that idea is more common, more pervasive than we think that the people think, Oh my gosh, Christianity just seems like a bunch of rules that I've got to do this. I can't do that. All the fun I was going to have in life is gone. And it's just going to be a bunch of boring, old rules from now on. That's an idea that a lot of people have about Christianity. They think of it almost like a straight

1 (3m 27s):

Jacket, straight

0 (3m 28s):

Jacket that you put this on and it constricts all your movement that you don't get to move around. That you're just stuck there. And in this like padded cell all around you and you're just stuck at home. I, gosh, I gotta follow these rules, all these rules and you're stuck there. You can't even hurt yourself anymore, right? By

1 (3m 44s):

Falling into sin. And it just

0 (3m 46s):

Takes away a whole, the fun and joy out of life. That's what a lot of people think about Christian.

1 (3m 53s):

And in this message like w

0 (3m 55s):

We have this entire series, we're going to learn that Christianity following Jesus is way better

1 (3m 59s):

Than you think. It's not like

0 (4m 2s):

That at all. It is not a straight jacket. It is not constricting. It is not a prison. It is not bondage. Following Jesus is way better than you think. And we're going to learn today that the happiness and joy, the freedom even that is found in following Jesus

1 (4m 15s):

Is way better than you think.

0 (4m 18s):

So that's what we're going to do. We're going to look at one passage. Really. We're going to focus in on one verse. We're going to be in James chapter one. So if you have a Bible or if you have a smartphone, go ahead and get to the book of James chapter one, if you're online or, or if you just have your smartphone, you can get that out. If you use the YouVersion Bible app, we have in a rice church, Denver event, that you can see the scripture and even take notes there, save them right in to the app. We're going to start this passage in James one, verse 21. And we're going to go all the way to verse 25, which is the verse we're really looking at today. And in case you don't know,

1 (4m 48s):

James was the brother of Jesus. He was one of Jesus,

0 (4m 52s):

His brothers, yes. Jesus had brothers. And what's really fascinating. This is a little bonus point for you guys today. What's really fascinating when we're told about Jesus, his brothers in the gospels, like the one-time, it

mentions them. It's because they're telling everybody that Jesus is crazy. They looked at this guy who was teaching and they're like, you think you're the Messiah, dude. You're, you're crazy. You are nuts. That's what they thought in Jesus's life. But then he died Rose from the dead appear to, you know, 500 people over a span of 40 days. They saw him and they're like, okay,

1 (5m 20s):

Maybe he is real. Maybe he's

0 (5m 22s):

Not crazy. And then James, who thought Jesus was crazy is now one of the leaders in the church, a follower. He calls himself a servant of Jesus. And here he is writing a book

1 (5m 31s):

Bible for us. It's pretty impressive. Right? That's just a bonus point. We got some good stuff for you today. So

0 (5m 39s):

James, his brother here, he writes in verse 21, therefore get rid of all moral filth and the evil. That is so prevalent. Okay. There it is. Right there. Get rid of moral filth, get rid of sin, get rid of evil, but that in the past, okay. That sounds like constricted

1 (5m 55s):

Straight jacket. Doesn't it get rid of all filth and

0 (6m 1s):

Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. So we're going to be straight up. Okay. Jesus's brother James. He's saying, Hey, this is the way of Jesus is following Jesus. You do get rid of evil. You do get rid of Cindy. You do stop doing a lot of things and start doing a lot of good things and

1 (6m 16s):

Following Jesus. Yes. But

0 (6m 18s):

Why I'm starting here is that this is where James is starting because he says, Hey, none of that actually saves you. And it's so important based on what we talked about in our second weekend,

1 (6m 27s):

Two weeks ago about salvation because salvation isn't climbing Everest, it's getting carried the whole way. So in this version

0 (6m 36s):

25, if we can look at it again, it says that you, we need to accept the word that is planted in you. Can we go back to that one? Except the word planted in you. Here's the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. When you believe it, that seed gets planted in your heart. You are saved

1 (6m 51s):

Once for all. You don't have to do anything.

0 (6m 55s):

I'll have to get rid of moral filter. You don't have to start doing more good stuff. You are saved. So that is so important. That is the baseline of our faith salvation isn't climbing ever. So I've got to try so hard. I've got to get up to the top and only a few people can make it up there. No, no, no. It's getting carried by God

1 (7m 10s):

The entire way. That's what we learned

0 (7m 12s):

Two weeks ago. That's so important. So that's the baseline for everything.

1 (7m 15s):

Talk about today, following Jesus, obeying his word is not about salvation, but it comes out of that salvation. See, when you read it,

0 (7m 27s):

It's what Jesus did for you. By dying on the cross to take your sins upon himself,

1 (7m 31s):

It changes your heart. Theologically.

0 (7m 33s):

They call it things like regeneration being born. Again. A ZQ a great prophet in the old Testament said, it's like having a heart transplant. The heart of stone is ripped out and a heart of flesh is put in and its place. Your heart changes. When you believe in Jesus and all of a sudden you're going to want to follow him. You're going to want to do it. Who said not because it's going to save you or earn your way into heaven because wow, look at what Jesus did for me. How could I not then

1 (7m 55s):

And live for him? So, so now

0 (7m 58s):

We've got that baseline in place, okay? We're not going to do anything to be saved, but we're going to do those things because following Jesus is way better than you think. And that's what we're going to learn today. So I want to continue now, as we read

1 (8m 9s):

In verse 22 in verse 22, we do not merely listen to the word, the word of God,

0 (8m 17s):

God, the Bible that we have here, 66 books written over a couple thousand years, but dozens of different authors, all inspired by the

1 (8m 26s):

We spirit do not merely listen to it. And so deceive yourselves do what it says. God speaks. We're supposed to do.

0 (8m 37s):

We're not supposed to hear it when I'm supposed to show up on a Sunday morning. Oh, that was a great message.

1 (8m 40s):

I feel really good about myself. That's a failure on our part and on my part to get one of our

0 (8m 47s):

We're values here at our church is transformational teaching that we teach God's word accurately and relevantly to transform lives. That we

1 (8m 56s):

Believe that we don't

0 (8m 57s):

Stay the same and we should hopefully be changing again. And again, to be more and more like Jesus that we get rid of more and more sin and moral filth from our life and add more of the goodness and serving others, loving God, loving others. As Jesus

1 (9m 10s):

Taught us as his way. That's what it's about. So we've got to do what Jesus says. When you read God's word in the morning, you do what it says. When you hear on Sundays, you do what it says. James continues in verse 23. He says anyone who?

0 (9m 28s):

Since to the word, but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in the mirror and after looking at himself goes away and immediately

1 (9m 36s):

He forgets what he looks like, what a worthless visit to the bathroom. I don't even remember what you look like, like look at your face. Okay. Now I know some of you spend too much time looking in the mirror, but what he's saying, he's like,

0 (9m 48s):

This is an analogy. Okay, here. Right?

1 (9m 51s):

No nudges.

0 (9m 54s):

Okay. But, but the point is like, if you're looking in God's word, like a mirror and you forget immediately

1 (9m 57s):

What it says, you hear a message on

0 (9m 60s):

A Sunday and immediately like go back to your life

1 (10m 2s):

Because you were before, it's worthless, it's worthless.

0 (10m 7s):

And that's why verse 25. And this is going to be our main verse. We're going to focus on it. We're going to get stuck on it. We'll hopefully we get it stuck into our soul and we listen to it and then do what it says. But verse 25 says this,

1 (10m 18s):

But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and

0 (10m 25s):

Can use in it. Not forgetting what they have heard, but

1 (10m 28s):

Doing it. They will be blessed in what they do, but let's read it again.

0 (10m 34s):

Okay. We don't want to miss it. Right. We don't want to be like the people that forget what we look like. Okay.

Verse 25. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it. Not forgetting what they have heard, but

1 (10m 47s):

Doing it. They will be what blessed in what they do. This verse, James. So concisely in one verse, he spells out why Christianity is not a straight jacket. Why it's so much better than you think it's not bondage.

0 (11m 3s):

When he says here is so important. So this is why we're going to dive into this verse. We're going to learn what it says, because it's that important for us. So let's look again, but whoever looks

1 (11m 11s):

Intently,

0 (11m 13s):

We've already talked about, Hey, it's not like looking in the mirror and forgetting

1 (11m 16s):

You look like it's looking intently. It's focusing, it's studying examining. And that's where that mole is. Right? Okay.

0 (11m 25s):

Studying. But it's God's word. So, so how can you focus on God's word? Will it takes mental power? Right? This is a hard thing to do because we have a lot of distractions. Don't we we've got to focus. We've got to read it. We've got to study it. Maybe even memorize it. We've got to talk about it with other people. What, what did you think that means? That's why we do that at

1 (11m 42s):

Any groups here every week. How does this apply to my life? Well, what does it mean for me? It's looking intently deeply. Have

0 (11m 51s):

Any of you guys ever tried to your favorite movie to a friend? Who's never seen

1 (11m 56s):

It before. He's going to be had this experience.

0 (11m 59s):

You love this movie. Like you've seen it a hundred times. It's the best. Like you quote it nonstop. And then you're like, you got to see this movie. You, you get it. And you know, it used to be, you go to blockbuster, not anymore. Right? Okay. You, you pull it up, find out whatever, one of the hundred platforms that, that it's, you know, you subscribe to that. You bite, whatever you show this movie. You're so excited about it. You

1 (12m 17s):

Got to watch this and then

0 (12m 20s):

It like without fail, this is what happens. The friend's like, Oh, I got a phone call. They like step at what? That, what the heck you pause the movie. Okay. They got, they can't miss a moment of this thing. They come back. Oh, I'm hungry, grits. Get some food. And they're talking to you, don't talk to

1 (12m 34s):

Focus. Right? They get out their phone. They're scrolling through Facebook and you're just, it's always upsetting. Isn't it, man. It's

0 (12m 41s):

This movie means something to me. It's important to my life. And you are just distracted talking, leaving the room and then afterwards you talk to them. So what'd you think,

1 (12m 52s):

Hey, that's fine.

0 (12m 54s):

Right? Never goes the way you want it to it. You guys had this experience.

1 (12m 59s):

Is this just me? Yeah. Okay. And

0 (13m 3s):

That's how it is when we're trying to show people. I think

1 (13m 6s):

That's what happens with God's word. It's like, Hey, here it is.

0 (13m 11s):

This is God's word. He's speaking a lot of us. So God would you please tell me what to do? God already told you, like he has this huge book for you. Read it. And then we read it and you're like, yeah,

1 (13m 20s):

It's fine. See, we've got to look into that.

0 (13m 24s):

Lean into it. You've got to study and focus in because it is true.

1 (13m 27s):

It's formative for your life. I love it.

0 (13m 30s):

Jeremiah. The prophet says, he says, when your words came, I ate them. They were my joy. And my heart's

1 (13m 34s):

Delight. Jeremiah was

0 (13m 37s):

Transformed by receiving God's word. And we should be too. It should give us joy and happiness. It should make us be like, Oh my gosh, this is the best meal

1 (13m 44s):

Ever had. And if you're not experiencing that, maybe you're not looking intently enough. You're distracted. Maybe you're on your phone. Got things going on.

0 (13m 55s):

Some of you are on your phone right now, watching online. I'm pointing it. The online people you're distracted. The kids are running around. Thinking about what am I going to get for brunch today? Okay. No, no, no. Okay. We got to focus, right? We've got to look intently at

1 (14m 8s):

The word of God. It takes

0 (14m 10s):

Some effort. But if we do that, we begin to see how

1 (14m 14s):

Good it is.

0 (14m 16s):

And that's in fact what James says next. He says, whoever looks intently into the

1 (14m 22s):

Perfect law. Did you notice that

0 (14m 25s):

The perfect law now the law here is talking about God's word, that that is shown to us in the beauty of Jesus Christ and what he did for us. So, so that's the 66 books in the culmination come in. Jesus Christ because he is the end of the laws that says in Romans 10, four, it's it's all shown through Jesus. And we read God's word here. And this is the law that it's talking about. And James says,

1 (14m 46s):

Perfect. That works.

0 (14m 49s):

Perfect. Tell us that the Greek root word, it's the culmination. It's the end of everything. This is the pinnacle of anything you could ever read. This is God speaking. And it is perfect. Meaning without error, it's flawless. It's what it's all about.

1 (15m 3s):

Now, James, doesn't say read the Bible because it's better than some other books you might read. You can try some other religions, try ours. Cause it's slightly better,

0 (15m 14s):

Easier to put on than, than maybe that Eastern religion over there.

1 (15m 18s):

It doesn't say that. He doesn't say

0 (15m 20s):

Don't get a self-help book. And those are pretty good, but this one's

1 (15m 22s):

Even better. He says, this is perfect. This is the book. This is God's word to us. His law has perfect law. It's without error.

0 (15m 31s):

And I'm saying that because a lot of us think, Oh, it's, it's pretty good.

1 (15m 36s):

It's pretty good. But we, we look at some of the rules, the things that we're,

0 (15m 41s):

We're supposed to, we're not supposed to do that thing. That's moral filth. We are supposed to do something like that. So this thing, and then we look at that and we say, well, that sounds a little boring. That's taking away my fun.

1 (15m 51s):

It's constricting.

0 (15m 52s):

Why would God do that? I don't know. We pick and choose don't we we're like at a buffet line. Ooh. I like love your neighbor as yourself. Love your enemy. Not today. Not after what she did to me. Okay. We, we do that. We pick and choose. Right. But it's all good. And it's all perfect. We can't say yeah, but this one used to apply back then, but it doesn't apply to me anymore. We're we're more mature and advanced in our society than all those people in the past. CS Lewis called that chronological snobbery. That's what we do though.

1 (16m 23s):

That's what we do. We

0 (16m 24s):

Look at these things and we think this is good, but I'm not sure that's good. What James is saying is it's all perfect. Meaning that everything God has said is for you.

1 (16m 33s):

We're good.

0 (16m 38s):

Even says it's in Deuteronomy chapter 10. He says obey the Lord's commands and laws. I am giving them to you today for your own good.

1 (16m 46s):

God is not

0 (16m 47s):

An arbitrary rule maker. Don't we have enough of those in our society. And no, this is not a social political commentary on anything. Okay. We know that there are some rules right now. And you're like, what am I six feet? Right? We were like, where did that come from? We know that there's rules like that, but we have all sorts of arbitrary rules. One person breaks a rule or does something bad. So then, then the next person makes a thousand new rules

1 (17m 11s):

So that nobody does that thing. Again,

0 (17m 14s):

Rule upon rule after. And we look at them like they don't make any sense. They're not for my good. Why does that w with, with, with kids, man, this is where I'm going next with parenting. A lot of the rules that parents make up and I'm a parent I'm admitting we make up rules because we're late.

1 (17m 30s):

Can we be honest? Right? Don't do that. You can't do that after 6:00 PM. No, no, no, no, no, because we're just lazy. We don't want to handle it.

0 (17m 38s):

We don't want to go up and play soccer. No, no, no, no, no, no soccer after 5:00 PM,

1 (17m 45s):

Just get up

0 (17m 45s):

And go play soccer. Right? I'm saying this to myself too. Right? Okay. We make a of arbitrary rules for our own. Good. If you're a parent rule makers make up rules because they don't want to deal with people as much as they don't want to have hard conversations and all sorts of stuff. So there's all sorts of arbitrary rules in our society, but not so with God's word, see, God is perfect. He knows all things. He knows us. He knows our hearts. He knows the repercussions of all our actions. So when he says do this or don't do this it's

1 (18m 14s):

Are good. It's only for our good. He is like the perfect father who cares about us, man. I have a four year old. Now I got the two twins. I do have to say no sometimes. Right? Don't drink that.

0 (18m 31s):

I'm not saying don't drink that because you're thirsty. And I want you to be

1 (18m 33s):

Thirsty. Don't drink it because it's antifreeze, right? That's going to kill you. Right.

0 (18m 40s):

Isn't that what we do. We don't go run out in the parking lot. Not because I don't want you to run. I have a grand old time

1 (18m 46s):

Because I want to protect you from getting hit by a car. Even if you don't see the car right now, I care about you. And I want to protect you. I love you. That's what a good father does. Right? But that's what a good parent does

0 (18m 60s):

Rules. And they set parameters and they say, do this, or don't do this because they care about us for our good. And that's how our father in heaven is every single thing he has said is for our good. Even if you say that's outdated, that does, it doesn't make sense. I don't know why you would do that because you haven't even understood it. You haven't looked intently enough

1 (19m 16s):

To really process. Why is this law in there? Why would God say this? Why would God say don't do that? Seems like it'd be fun. There's a reason. And it's maybe because you haven't looked intently enough.

0 (19m 33s):

I think part of looking intently is letting God's word stick in your craw. I've said that before, if there's ever a verse that you read

1 (19m 39s):

And you're like, what the heck? Why would God say that?

0 (19m 44s):

And it bothers you. Let it bother you, let it keep bothering you, let it stick in your craw again. And again and again until you have figured out why

1 (19m 51s):

In there. And then you're going to say, ah, and then you realize this is actually for my good, this is perfect. I like this makes sense.

0 (19m 60s):

God actually cares about human beings

1 (20m 3s):

Because when we break God's

0 (20m 5s):

Law, when we do something that is wrong, it's called

1 (20m 7s):

Sin and sin leads to death. Sin is always bad for us. Always. It is sin leads to death.

0 (20m 17s):

It was from the very beginning of the garden of Eden. When God, when there was the very first sin and it's at the very end to sin, leads to death, God is saying don't sin because I don't want you to be destroyed. I don't want you to have a slow destruction or, or a very quick one. I want you to have what is good for you? I want you to have the perfect law. And here's the amazing thing. And this is why this verse is so good. Why I picked it for today because we were supposed to look intently into the perfect law. That verse 25 says it gives

1 (20m 45s):

Freedom. The perfect law gives freedom. We're scratching our heads because we're like what? I thought law constricts, freedom.

0 (20m 56s):

That's most of the time where we think there's laws, why there's rules around to stop us from doing the thing?

1 (21m 1s):

So we want to do, but that is

0 (21m 4s):

Actually a pretty weak view of law because without

1 (21m 7s):

Law, there would be no freedom. We live in

0 (21m 10s):

Society with the constitution, with borders, we live with a military and with police officers, with judges to make sure that rules are right. And all of that protects us and gives us freedom. And you know this because if you've ever been to a country that doesn't have the rule of law,

1 (21m 27s):

It's terrifying. And there is no freedom. Seriously. I went,

0 (21m 31s):

When I was in Bolivia and we visited a region of the

1 (21m 33s):

Country that was considered

0 (21m 35s):

Zone. So the police don't have jurisdiction in there. The military doesn't go in there. It's almost

1 (21m 40s):

Like it's anarchy over there. There's,

0 (21m 43s):

There's all sorts of stuff going on there. And how do you think I felt going in there? And some of you

1 (21m 46s):

Just imagine him, I get nervous, right? Would it be careful? I'm not going to bring very much money this day, right? I don't know

0 (21m 55s):

What's going to happen to me. You're worried. You're nervous.

1 (21m 58s):

If you lived in that area, you probably wouldn't let your kids just go run around and play anywhere they want. You wouldn't let your daughter go on a walk late at night. It restricts your freedom when there is no law, do you guys,

0 (22m 13s):

I understand this. But if you know that there are people there to protect you, that there are laws in place that people obey the laws or there's people that enforce the laws where you, you can have more freedom. You're going like, well, it's going to walk. It's 9:00 PM

1 (22m 22s):

Cares. See, we just don't get it. Because we live in a society with laws. Law actually enables us. If it's good to have freedom, it gives us freedom. And that's what Jesus is saying. Following me, Jesus says through his

brother, James rein following Jesus gives us freedom. Obeying Jesus gives us freedom. It enables us

0 (22m 47s):

And empowers us to do the things that we were

1 (22m 49s):

Meant to do. I want you guys to get this. And part of the reason why you don't get this because you haven't tried it.

0 (23m 0s):

And that's why James says next, that, that you look intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and

1 (23m 5s):

It continues in it and continues in it. See, it's not just try it one time and that it wasn't for me. No, it's continues in. It's do it again. And again and again, you know,

0 (23m 19s):

It's like the person who's like, I'm going to go run a marathon. And after

1 (23m 22s):

Week of training is mad because they can't run 26.2 miles. Come on. I've been training all week. What's going on.

0 (23m 31s):

Know that it's going to take longer to get to the point where you can do this.

1 (23m 34s):

Right? It's the same thing with following Jesus. You've got to work at it. Take some practice. You got to stick with it. See, I don't think that following

0 (23m 44s):

Jesus. I don't think that Christianity been tried and found wanting. I think it's been tried once and given up.

1 (23m 52s):

Okay.

0 (23m 52s):

I think people are like, Oh, that was kind of hard. Yes, of course. It's hard.

1 (23m 55s):

Anything good is hard. You gotta stick with it. You continue at it and try it

0 (24m 0s):

And try and try again. And when you fail, then you say, maybe I need to try it from a different angle. I'm not getting why this is good yet. Let me keep trying it continue following Jesus again and again and again,

1 (24m 12s):

Because get this when you do that, not forgetting what you have heard, but doing it. Those people will be blessed in what they do. The word blessed in Greek could be translated as happy.

0 (24m 26s):

It's the happiness that comes with God. It's a reward. It's a blessing. Something God gives.

1 (24m 31s):

Do you know that God wants you to be happy, but he says, the way to this happiness is through obedience. The way to happiness is holiness. We don't realize that because we haven't tried it, but

0 (24m 44s):

God is doing all this for our good. When Jesus said, come follow me. He does not come like the thief to steal, kill, and destroy, but he's come that we might have life and have it to the full, the fullness of life is found in following Jesus. The greatness of life, the joy, the true happiness is found in following Jesus in obedience. God wants us to be blessed and experienced that blessing. And that's why you need to hear this today. Okay? Following Jesus. Isn't

1 (25m 9s):

Bondage. It's blessing. It's

0 (25m 13s):

Bondage. It's not construction. It's not being put in a padded cell, you know, in that straight Jack.

1 (25m 18s):

Okay. It's not that at all. It's blessing. It's walking into the freedom that God has for us. The reason

0 (25m 29s):

Why we don't get this is because we're like the

1 (25m 31s):

Fish that wants to get out of water. Okay? The fish it's like, Oh my gosh, all I have to do is swim in this water

all day long. Let me out of here. I had a fish that did this. Nope.

0 (25m 46s):

I'm not making this up. I, I saved up my money as a kid and bought a 20 gallon fish tank. I was a nerd. I bought this fish tank. I was so excited to put all these tropical fish in there. Things were going great. And then I remember one day that I was like inside of my room and I found this fish,

1 (26m 0s):

The ground had been there a little while. I wasn't the cleanliest kid in the world. Right? Th this fish. And

0 (26m 6s):

Do you know what happened when it went on the ground

1 (26m 9s):

Dried out? You know, have you ever dried fish skin dead? For some

0 (26m 17s):

Reason, this fish was like, let me out of here.

2 (26m 20s):

I need freedom

0 (26m 21s):

Jumped out of the water. And was there dead, dried up

1 (26m 24s):

Crispy on the floor.

0 (26m 28s):

We're like that fish. That's trying to get out of the water. Let me out.

1 (26m 32s):

Not realizing that the water is actually where you find freedom. You can swim. You can go explore. You know, this is really our problem. We're seeing that following Jesus. We're like, Oh, this is what I can't do. This is what I have to do. Oh my gosh. But it's actually in following Jesus and doing what he says in obedience to him, that we find the greatest freedom there is. That's why it's the law that gives freedom because we're doing what we were meant to do. We're the driver. I was on I 70 yesterday coming back from Utah. We're the driver that hits the guardrail instead of falling down the cliff and dying and burning destruction, right?

1 (27m 14s):

It's like, Aw, that guardrail dented my fender. That's when we're like, like, no, no, no. It just saved your life. Who cares? If you've got a dent in the freedoms found it's staying on the road that we have for us, a train finds no freedom. One foot from the tracks. He goes, nowhere. Let me out of this train track. That's what we do. The Eagle. Oh my gosh. I can't get into the water. I have to fly forever. Okay. The freedom that we find it, that, that we think is freedom is like jumping out of an airplane. I can fly.

1 (27m 53s):

Finally, I'm free, but you know what happens? You're now a slave to gravity and without a parachute you're destroyed. Now, I want to be clear with all you guys because the Bible is very clear. There is pleasure in sin. We all know it. Let's just say it out loud. The Bible says it in Hebrews. There's pleasure in sin, but it always leads to destruction and death. It could be very, very slow, but it will lead to your own destruction. You will feel worse about yourself. It will destroy you from the inside out until you go to death.

1 (28m 33s):

If you choose sin, it's like the kid that does drink the antifreeze. Did you know that 9,000 pets and 400, no. 90,000 pets and 4,000 kids a year drink antifreeze. Do you know what happens? Why they do? This is antifreeze is sweet. It's sweet. It tastes good going down, but it's a poison that will slowly kill you. That's what sin is. Taste sweet going down. Oh, this is good. But it leads to destruction. On the other hand, following Jesus. Sometimes it seems hard at front, at the first, right? But it leads to the ultimate happiness in blessing.

1 (29m 15s):

If we continue in it and that's what I want for you. I want your ultimate. Good. I want your happiness. So when I tell you to do stuff, cause sometimes I tell you to do stuff, right? It's for your good, I'm trying to just say what God says to you when we read God's word and it tells us what we do, we do it because it's for our good, get rid of this sin. Get rid of that moral field. Yes. Do these things because it's for your good it's for your blessing. Find that blessing. Find that happiness in following Jesus, following Jesus isn't bondage. It is blessing. Now, as I'm saying this, I know that some of us feel very convicted because we've been choosing sin, we've fallen, we've done things.

1 (30m 1s):

And we will send in the future, just

0 (30m 3s):

I drive yesterday of six hours in the car, you know, your mind starts to wander. And I don't, I haven't even thought of this in years. There was something I said when I was in high school, really awful thing that I said to someone and I felt guilty about it. Has anybody done this? I'm like, I haven't even thought about that since it happened. But yet this moment like, Oh, why did I do that? I wish I could go apologize.

1 (30m 23s):

So that person, right? Even Facebook, I have no idea where they are.

0 (30m 28s):

You have those moments don't mean that we feel guilty because we are sinners. We have chosen the quick pleasure of sin instead of the enormous blessing

1 (30m 37s):

Following Jesus. But the good news that we believe is that Jesus came down and Jesus was perfect. He looked at

0 (30m 46s):

Intently into the law. He studied even as a teenager, he was found in the temple, studying God's word and teaching it to others. And he was perfectly obedient. Everything that God said to do, he did everything. God said, don't do. He didn't do those things. He lived perfectly. And he walked among people and he proclaimed a message of freedom to people. He said, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. I have come to, to provide freedom for those in bondage. That was, Jesus is good news. He proclaimed that. And as he lived that perfect life, he deserved the blessing that comes with obedience.

1 (31m 21s):

Instead, what he experienced was a curse. You see

0 (31m 24s):

Anyone who died on a cross in those days was considered curse. That was scripture and Jesus though. He deserved perfect blessing and reward and happiness. He went to the cross. He was beaten, whipped hung up on the cross and he suffered a criminal's death though. He had done no wrong.

1 (31m 43s):

Well, we believe

0 (31m 45s):

That when Jesus died on the cross, he took the punishment we deserve for all of our sins.

1 (31m 52s):

And we get his reward.

0 (31m 53s):

Martin Luther, the great theologian called this the wonderful exchange because of all of our sin curse punishment that we deserve gets put on Jesus. And the reward that he earned for living a righteous perfect

life is given to us

1 (32m 7s):

Through faith. That's what we believe. And the

0 (32m 11s):

Great thing about following Jesus is that we have been forgiven and we will be forgiven once for all. So that's how we can walk and pick ourselves up again so that when I felt guilty yesterday and I was starting to beat myself,

1 (32m 25s):

I remember that I was like, God,

0 (32m 27s):

Please forgive me for that. And help me to just remember that

1 (32m 29s):

I have grace

0 (32m 31s):

And freedom from that. See the greatest things about following Jesus is that we have freedom from guilt and sin and shame.

1 (32m 39s):

I don't to worry

0 (32m 40s):

About the fact that I was a jerk 15 plus years ago, I'm forgiven. I have freedom in Christ and I want you to experience the freedom. Jesus said, the truth will set you free. This is the truth. And I want you to walk in that freedom. I want you to walk in that blessing. It is a great freedom. It's the one that we can celebrate and rejoice in and live in. And every time we fall into sin, again, say I'm going to pick myself up again because I have forgiveness and freedom in Jesus Christ. Paul said in Galatians five one, it is for freedom. That Christ has set you free. Do not be yoked again to the bondage of slavery is for freedom. Christ has set you free. Can you just say that right now? Freedom. Let's say it like Braveheart freedom.

0 (33m 22s):

Let's do one, two, three freedom. Okay. That's the freedom we have in Christ. As, as we have the band come up right now, I want us to celebrate in that freedom that we walk in. We are no longer held by the guilt and shame of our past sin has no hold on us. We have a freedom and a blessing of following Jesus that we

can have for this moment and for the rest of our lives. And some of you need to walk in it. Some of you need to celebrate it and accept it. So I'm saying this today, because some of you have gotten into that mindset that Christianity, that following Jesus is just that straight jacket. That's just bond. It's just a bunch of rules trying to keep me from doing what I want to do. It's just not any fun, but it is fun.

0 (34m 3s):

It is joy. It is freedom. And I want that for you that teenager, I mentioned at the beginning of messaging Nebraska, he did make the decision to go public with his faith. He got baptized. It was, it was a joy. And, and I think something like, like a switch flipped in his life because he was actually happier and more joyful after that, he started to serve in our choice, your church. And he had such a great smile on his face all the time, because he had found the joy of following Jesus. It wasn't no more fun for me. It was the greatest joy in the world to follow Jesus. It's a blessing, not bondage. And I want that for you to, so some of you need to claim that today, walk in that freedom today and others of you need to make the decision to follow Jesus for the first time today.

0 (34m 47s):

I know that there are some of you that need to recommit to your decision to follow Jesus. Again, say, I'm going to try it again. I'm going to continue it. And others need to make the decision for the very first time. So we give a prayer here. What we do. I want everybody to stand up right now. What we do here every week is that we want to give people an opportunity to follow Jesus for the first time. So what we do that this prayer that's up here. It's not a magical formula or anything, but it's just a simple way to tell God that, yes, I'm a sinner and I need your forgiveness. We believe in Jesus as our Lord and savior. So what we're going to do is if you already are a believer, repeat this prayer after me to give courage to someone who needs to say it for the first time. So let's close our eyes right now and just repeat

3 (35m 21s):

This prayer after me, dear God, thank you for loving me. I'm a sinner. I need a savior. Save me. I receive your grace in faith. I declare Jesus is Lord. Fill me with your spirit. Help me to follow you and serve you till I reach heaven. Now with ice.

0 (35m 58s):

If we can just close our eyes for just a second. If you said that prayer for the first time, I meant it. If you declare Jesus as your Lord and savior, you're going to follow Jesus. Now raise your hand into the air. I just want to just encourage you and celebrate with you. Just slip that hand to the air. Praise God. I'm so glad that you have made that decision. The angels

3 (36m 12s):

Sing in heaven. When one sinner repents, Lord God, I pray for them.

0 (36m 17s):

Those who have made the decision to follow Jesus for the first time today, or recommitting to that following

3 (36m 22s):

You again today, we're going to help us to follow you

0 (36m 26s):

When we don't understand why your word says something, that we would look even more intently to figure out why it is good for

3 (36m 31s):

Us. I pray, Lord God that you give

0 (36m 33s):

Us the strength to follow you, to pick ourselves up. When we fall down and I pray that you would help us feel in the depths of our souls. The freedom that is found in Christ, let us know that we are like the Eagle that can soar in the air. The fish that can swim in the water, the train on the tracks that we are walking in the freedom of life. When we follow you,

3 (36m 55s):

Give us the joy

0 (36m 56s):

And the happiness and experience this life experience right now, the blessing that comes

3 (37m 1s):

With following you in freedom and let us walk in that every day till we die, please help us give us strength in Jesus name. Amen

0 (37m 12s):

Is freedom in Christ. There is freedom in Jesus, and that's why we're going to celebrate this morning. We have a new song for you today, and I just want you guys to get excited. It's a good one. We're going to find freedom and we're going to celebrate that freedom

3 (37m 24s):

Today.