

Series: Becoming

Who Are You Becoming?

Matthew 22:37-40

Sermon by Lead Pastor Paul Joslin

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, January 4, 2026

We were visiting family. I am also excited because today is the first Sunday of the year, but it is also our first intergenerational service of the year. So where are our kids? Where are all of our students? Yeah, we are so glad you guys are here at Waterstone. We are all in on the next generation. We want to raise up the next generation to follow after Jesus and live their lives for Him, so very excited about this morning. Hope you had a happy New Year, and I am ready to get started today. So let me pray for us, and then we are going to jump into the message this morning.

Heavenly Father, God, it is so good to be back together as the body of Christ, Lord, just seeing so many faces and people that we did not get to see last week. I loved the noise in this room as we were greeting, just saying hello to one another, catching up. God, you are forming and shaping this church into a community, and we are so, so thankful for that. Lord, I pray today as we dive into your word, as we examine scripture, that you would just speak to us. Holy Spirit, I invite you to come. Not that you are not already present in our worship and in our drive here, but I just pray that we would attune ourselves to your voice at this moment. Lord, I ask that as we come before your word, that you would just hold your beauty, your grace, your kindness, and your love over us this morning. May we be changed in Jesus' name, and it is in Christ's name we pray, amen.

About two-thousand five-hundred years ago, a philosopher by the name of Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living," and you are probably familiar with that, and I think it is fascinating that 2,500 years later, that phrase still rings true, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Now, my guess is that many of you who are here today, over the last week or so, have been doing some examining of your life. This season, this time of year has a way of bringing up questions about how our life is going and what we want out of life and what some things are that we need to fix or tweak or do a little differently this next year. What are things that we hope will repeat from the year before? What are some things that we hope do not repeat the year before, and we come into this space, the new year, and we are asking those sorts of questions.

Now, I am going to ask you to be a little vulnerable, but I will go first, so you can raise your hand, too, but how many of you got to the end of last year, the beginning of this year, and you started to think, "I think I need to make some changes?" I for sure did. There are like three of us in the room. The rest of you are liars, so your New Year's resolution needs to be to tell the truth. No. Yeah, so many of us. I did. I got to the end of last year. I was like, wow. I felt like it was even honestly just the last six weeks of 2025 really got away from me. It just escalated really quickly, and I was like, what just happened? So recentering myself a little bit as we start this new year, and today's purpose of the message I have for us is I want us to take a moment collectively and individually to examine ourselves, to examine our lives and where we are and where we're going as individuals and collectively as a church, and this series that we are going to be looking at, this Becoming series over the next several weeks, is a chance for us to examine our lives.

Now, kids, I need a little help from you, because some of us grown-ups, we forget these fun things, but are any of you familiar with the concept of a lazy river at a water park? Does anybody know what I am talking about, lazy river? Anybody like, all right, I got some kids in the back that they are standing on their chairs. They are so excited about a lazy river. Here is the thing. I love a good lazy river. If I go to the water park, that is the one place I want to go. I think it is the best thing. There is no line when you go there. It takes you all around the park, and you can get off at any place to get to the rides you want to get to, and you do not have to do any work. You just sit on the tube or float along, and it takes you along this river, and it is amazing. You are getting cool. You are enjoying it, and I honestly feel like we could probably enjoy a lazy river this afternoon. It is that warm in Denver right now. It feels crazy, but I love a lazy river. Is anyone with me when I talk about a lazy river? You are just like, "Yep, that is the best part of the theme park"? Okay, we got even some applause for a lazy river. We are alive today.

All right, so I love a lazy river, but here is the thing, because a lazy river, I think, actually works a lot like formation in our lives, and that formation is something that just happens to us. We are constantly caught up in currents and a current that is pushing us and leading us and guiding us to certain places in our life, and when we do not pause to examine where we are going, then that current can just take us anywhere it pleases, and the current I am talking about is stuff you are familiar with. It is the things in life like our habits. It is the things in life like our fears, the things that we are worried about, or the anxieties that we hold. It is things like the direction of where we are wanting to go. It is culture and the influence that culture has on our lives, and many of us are living a life where we have not stopped to examine our lives. We are just floating along with the current, and here is the thing. I think it is really important at different points along the journey to pause and examine where the current is taking me. Who am I becoming? What kind of person am I turning into?

If we go too long without asking those kinds of questions, then we end up someplace that we never really intended to go, and we wake up one day, and we realize that we did not necessarily make bad choices. We did not necessarily do wrong things. We just ended up in a space where we did not really plan on being, because the truth is, formation, who we are becoming, requires intentionality. It requires examination. It requires us to look at where we are going in life, and so the question as we begin this year together is, "Where is the current taking you?" If you want to go somewhere different, you actually have to get out of the tube and start swimming against the current a little bit. Otherwise, the river of your habits, your culture, your loves, they will quietly carry you wherever the current is flowing.

Now, I want to pause here and ask a more pointed question, because I think it is one thing for us to just say, "Yeah, I need to take stock of where I am and what I am doing and where I am going," but I actually want to broaden your perspective a little bit. I want to ask the question, "Where is culture going?" If culture is one of the things that influence the direction of our life, and if we do not examine ourselves, we just get caught up in the current of culture, then where is it taking us? I would argue, humbly, that the direction of our culture is not a place that we often want to go. I mean, if you just look and examine our culture and where the stream is headed, I would argue that the current is pulling us towards lives that are more marked by anxiety instead of peace. It is a culture of outrage, not joy. It is a culture of isolation instead of community. It is a culture of consumption instead of contentment. I mean, we're more connected

than ever, but we are lonelier than ever. We are more informed, and yet we are less wise. We are more expressive in different ways, and yet we are less anchored as individuals and as a society.

The thing is, the current promised us freedom and fulfillment and things that we are longing for, and if we stop to examine where the current is going or where it has led us, then my guess is most of us would say, "I do not know that I love where it is headed. I do not know that I love where it is taking me." The current just decides the destination for us, and so this series, *Becoming*, is an invitation to examine ourselves. It is an opportunity for us to step outside of the current, to get out of the tube, to re-center ourselves on what matters most, and choose as individuals and together to swim towards the life and the mission that God is calling us into. Who are you becoming? My hope today is to elevate the vision you have for your life, because I think most of us, when it really comes down to it, are not living bad lives. We are just living unexamined lives. I think most of us, we are just busy, sincere, well-intentioned people who are carried along by the pace and pressure of everyday life, and without stopping to pause and examine ourselves, then we just end up in that current.

One of the things we want to do is not just on Sunday mornings, but to further the conversation, is we actually have a devotional. It is not here this weekend. It will be here next weekend. It turns out printing presses take breaks from Christmas and New Year's too, but we will have these devotionals available to you next week. We are asking for a suggested donation of \$5.00. That is really just to cover the cost of the devotional, but it is going to be walking through these values that are forming us as a church and that I would encourage you to form your life around as well. Each week only has three entries, and so you can fall behind. You do not have to do one every day. It is a very easy cost of entry, but I would love for you to purchase one in person or online, and then next week they will be delivered. We also have online copies, PDFs available for those of you who like that kind of thing, but it is a way of furthering the conversation and inviting you into the conversation, where throughout the series and throughout each of these weeks, it will encourage you to examine your life and to look to grounding you in the values that we are going to be talking about in this series.

Today, to help us re-center, to help us examine, to help us ask ourselves the question, "Is this the life that I actually want to be living?" I want to turn to the words of Jesus, because there is a place in Jesus' gospels, in the story of Jesus, where He speaks with stunning clarity about what life is really about, what it looks like to step out of the lazy river of culture and live with intentionality and purpose, to not live a more impressive life or a louder life, but one that is filled with joy and deeply rooted in love and centered on the person of God, and so I am going to invite you now to stand with me as we read scripture together, as we do every time we gather, so stand. I am going to read the scripture, and I am going to say, "This is the word of the Lord," and invite you to respond by saying, "Thanks be to God," and then I will invite you to be seated. So, here is the passage we are looking at today. Matthew chapter 22, verses 37 through 40: "and Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment, and the second is like it, "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.'" The word of the Lord. "Thanks be to God." You may be seated.

All right, so as we dive into this passage, I want to actually take us on a quick detour first and have a conversation about what's grounding us. Now, if I were to ask you, and I would actually love responses.

kids, you can participate in this as well. If I were to ask you what the mission of Waterstone Church is, how many of you do you think you could tell me what the mission of Waterstone Church is? Okay, we got a couple of hands. All right, little man in the, I can't say. Is that, who is that right there? Is that Augie? All right, Augie, what's up? Tell us what the mission of Waterstone is. Yes, he nailed it! "Become like Jesus and live for others." If you did not know that, a fifth grader just got the answer right, which I think they used to make a TV show about, something about like, "Are you smarter than a fifth grader?" No, here is the thing, I'll give you all the grace, because we say that almost every Sunday, "Become like Jesus and live for others," we never pull it out and say that is our mission. We just want that to be a part of our DNA and who we are, but this is our mission. We want to become like Jesus and to live for others, and there is a very simple reason why that is our mission as a church. It is very simple, but it is our North Star.

It is the thing that orients everything we do as an organization, as a church, but also it is what we are calling you as an individual to make your life about as well. If you call Waterstone home, and this might be the first time you are visiting Waterstone. Maybe you are doing a New Year's resolution to getting back in church a little bit. You are so welcome. We are so glad you are here. This is a great Sunday, because you are going to hear a lot about what our heartbeat is as a church, but if Waterstone is your home, then this is what we are asking you to orient your life around. Now, it is broad enough and it is high enough that it can encompass everything that God has called you to do, but we believe that the heart of a believer is to become more like Jesus and learn to live for others. That doesn't mean God might not call you to some side quests and some other things that you as an individual are trying to live out, but those come beneath this call to become like Jesus and to live for others.

We believe that Jesus is not just a part of the solution to what has gone wrong with the world, but that He is the solution to the world. We believe, as a church and as individuals, that Jesus is what life was originally intended to look like, that when we look at the face of Jesus, we see the life that every single one of us is longing for. We believe that when we look at Jesus, what we see is love incarnate in flesh and blood, that when we look at Jesus, we understand purpose and meaning and clarity for what God has called us to be as a church and as individuals. Really what this mission helps us to understand is that while the world tells us that the goal of your life is to become the best version of yourself, that the goal of scripture, the goal of following Jesus is not to become the best version of yourself. It is actually to become like someone else, to become like Jesus, and to learn to live for others. We believe that as we become more like Jesus that we will start to live a life that is turned outwards towards the needs of other people, loving, serving, and caring for others. We do not just try to get everything that we can out of life, but we turn to what is going on in the world and see how we can live like Jesus in a self-sacrificial way, loving, caring, giving ourselves for others, and that that is actually the best version of ourselves. So, this mission anchors us in discipleship and sends us into the world with purpose, reminding us what our lives are supposed to be about.

Now, why am I reminding you of this idea? It is because I think the opportunity we have today is to recenter ourselves around a mission that is higher than ourselves. Because I'm guessing you, like me, some of us, we're thinking of the new year, and we're thinking, "Okay, I need a new diet," or "I need a little exercise plan," or "I need a morning routine," or "I need to fix the one thing in my life that will change my life."

Those things are good, and they can help you, but they will not actually solve the deepest ache you have in your life. I think giving yourself to a bigger mission will solve it, and so as we are examining our lives, what I want to do is elevate your vision for what your life can be about. Simply getting a better morning routine, or getting the right diet locked in, or even finding the right job, finding the person that you think will fulfill you, all of those things can be good things, but they are not ultimate things. We have to live for something beyond ourselves, and that is what the words of Jesus do in this passage that I just read. We are told that Jesus has been in this theological debate with these different religious groups, and they are arguing about things that you and I never argue about, like marriage or taxes, and they are coming to Jesus, and they are trying to trap Him with all of these questions about all of these theological things, and He just takes their questions every single time, and He knocks it out of the park, to the point where they tuck tail and run, because they do not know how to respond to Jesus. He's just answering every single one of the questions they have, and so several of the groups leave, and they give up on the debate, but there is one group that stays behind. They gather together, and they think, "Okay, He has hit every other question that we have asked Him. We are going to come up with the one question that we know will stump Him. We are going to trap Him with this question." Do you know what the question was they asked Him? "What is the greatest commandment?"

Now, how many of you have asked that question before in your life? There is not a single hand raised in the room other than mine, and I was just doing this for looks. None of us have wondered what the greatest commandment is. Now, here is the question beneath the question that they were asking, and it is a question that I think many of us ask: "What is the one thing I need to fix my life?" "What is the one habit that I should place in my life to make sure I am doing what I am supposed to do?" They are essentially asking the question, "What is the one thing I need to do to be okay? What is the one spiritual practice? What is the one way to get my life back on track? What is the one thing that matters most in my life?" The ache beneath all of those questions, the question they were asking and many of us are asking is simply this: "How do I build for myself a life that works, where I know that I am not failing, where I know that I am being all that I can be, where I am living into purpose and meaning and intention?" That is the question that they are asking Jesus, and they think it is going to stump Him.

Why this question matters so much at this moment, Jesus' response to this question matters so much is that I believe that in different ways we ask that question in so many different ways. We are asking what the one thing is we need to give ourselves the life that we are looking for, to build a life that works. It is a question every single one of us has. Why it matters so much is the way Jesus answers this question that all of us have is that He answers it in a way none of us would expect, and He says the words that I just read over you a moment ago, "'Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment, and the second is like it, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Instead of giving them a habit that they need to fix, or a rule that they need to better manage, or some sort of edict that they need to follow, Jesus says, "What matters most in your life is what you love the most. What you love the most is what matters most." Jesus does not reduce the purpose of life, the meaning of life to behavior modification. He goes straight to the heart. He says, "You are not going to drift into a good life. You are being formed by the things you love."

We are all being shaped, not primarily by what we believe or by what we think, but what we are devoted to, and if you want to know who you are becoming, do not start with those things. Start by examining your attachments, the things you love. Put another way, what are the things that you daydream about? What are the things that cause anxiety to rise up within you? What are the things that you defend instantly when they become attacked? What are the things that you would sacrifice anything for without even thinking? Those are greatest commandment questions. Those are the things that we are devoting ourselves to. Those are the kinds of questions that are saying, “What is the one thing I need to have a life that works?” and Jesus speaks to all of those questions, and He says, it is not about rules that you can manage or habits that you can shape. It is about forming your life around Him, loving God with all that you are, with your entire heart and mind and soul.

Now, oftentimes, and I have done this before, when we come to this passage, it is not a passage that is unfamiliar to many of you. We come, and we say, “Okay, so what does it mean practically to love God with all that we are?” So, we say, okay, so if you want to love God with all of your mind, you need to read more books about God. You need to read the Bible, or if you want to love God with all of your heart, then you need to cut out of your life things that are detracting from your love of God. Or if you want to love God with all of your soul, then you need to spend more time in prayer. All of those things are good. All of those things are very practical steps you can take, but I want to take us to one step beyond that, because I think what happens so many times is we inadvertently try to give ourselves another list of habits or rules or things that we are supposed to do to help us to love God better, but that is not actually what Jesus has called us to. He is not saying, “Love me better.” He is saying, “Love me with all that you have. Center your life on me.”

As I have been reflecting on this passage, I think it is not so practical in that it is designed to give us a list of things we are supposed to do to love God better with our hearts or with our minds or with our souls. What Jesus is actually after is He is trying to reframe the paradigm of how we live our lives. I think what Jesus is saying in this passage is He is calling us to reshape our life around Him. It is something that is so countercultural. It goes against the grain about which every single one of us lives. The inverse of what Jesus is saying, what He is trying to call us to, what He is saying to us is that you need to realize life is not about you. How is that for a Happy New Year’s message? This is what Jesus is saying, that when Jesus calls us to love God with all that we are and to love others as ourselves, He is reminding us of something that we forget daily, that our life was not meant, it was never meant to be centered on us. Your life is not about your preferences or plans or your self-expression. Your life was meant to be lived for the glory of God, for his kingdom, for his purposes.

Here is the thing. If you want your life to change this year, I mean really change, you do not need a better diet, and you do not need a better exercise plan. You need to let this truth seep into your bones and your soul, that your life is not about you. It is about the glory and the person of God, and that as we become more like Jesus and learn to live for others, we are actually living out who God has originally intended us to be, not self-centered creatures who are solely focused on what we can get out of life or what we need to fix ourselves, but recognizing that we were intended to live for the glory of God. Life is not about you.

When we live our lives where God is not the first love in our lives, something begins to take place. We begin to live self-directed lives that are driven by our desires, by our fears, our need for control or

validation, and what happens when that takes place, what happens when we begin to live for ourselves instead of God's glory is suddenly something happens to our identity where it becomes something that we constantly have to prove to others, and we have all seen people do this. "Look at what I have done. Look at what I have accomplished." I need you to acknowledge and affirm how good I am, because I have to constantly prove my identity is worth something to everyone else in the world. When we live without God at the center of our lives, purpose suddenly becomes elusive, because suddenly purpose becomes about everything we want and we desire, and how often do our wants and desires shift with the wind? So, we set out on a course, and we think, "Okay, this is what I am going to give my life to," and you are like, "No, that did not really work, so I will try this," and purpose suddenly becomes so elusive. When we are living for ourselves, relationships become nothing more than transactional. Work becomes ultimate, but it also becomes meaningless. Life starts to feel heavy and anxious and exhausting, because we were never meant to carry the weight of being the center of our own universe. We were never meant for that, and yet daily we fall into the trap and the lie that my life is all about me.

If you want to examine yourself, look at your life, look at the places where you are discontented. Look at your marriage that is struggling, the frustrations you have with your kids, the places where your job is not fulfilling you, and I would almost guarantee that you have lost sight of the fact that none of those things are about you. When we lose sight of the fact that those things are not about us, and when we make them about us, none of them fulfill us in the way that they were intended to, because we have made good things into ultimate things, and they have left us thirsty and wanting and desperate for something more.

I think what many of us do is to fall into this trap of our culture, and kids, you are going to have to help me out with this idea. How many of you have heard of the terminology, main character energy? Does anybody know what I'm talking about there? All right, I get some smiles from the students, because they are like, "Careful, old man. You don't know what you are talking about. You don't want to start." All right, can one of you guys in the student section help us understand what main character energy is? I'm getting some no's. All right, yeah, let's go for it, Maya. It is so important. That's so amazing. That was a great impression. I wish I could invite you up onto the stage. So, I don't know if you guys caught it, but she had the whole like hair twirl going. It was like, "I am so amazing. I am the center of the story. Like, everything is about me." That was awesome, a very good impression. That's essentially it.

As you are living in it, it is this, and it is well intended, because I think it pushes against things like people-pleasing or some of the traps we can fall into, but it is this identity, a way of looking at things that I am the center of the story. I need to be the center of attention. Everything needs to be about me in order for me to have the life that I am looking for, and if you are unfamiliar with it, again, there is an intent behind it that I think is actually okay. It is people reclaiming agency, confidence, and worth. Those are good things, but when they become ultimate things, one of the things that happens is when main character energy becomes the dominant way we see the world, then suddenly we shift into a place where we were never designed to be, because if you are the main character in your story, everyone else becomes simply a supporting character, and when everyone else becomes a supporting character, people are only valued according to how they fit into your story. How do they affirm me? How do they help me? How do they

stay out of my way if I do not want them? Relationships become transactional, and if people do not play the role that I expect them to or that I need them to in my story, then I just simply cut them out of my life.

Some of us have experienced that. Some of us have lived that story out, and Jesus is offering us something different, not a life where you disappear from your story, but a life where your story is centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ, and paradoxically, when God is the main character in our stories instead of us, we do not lose ourselves. We finally become who we were meant to be. Something happens when God comes first. Our hearts, our souls, our minds, our bodies, they begin to realign themselves, and suddenly, your identity that I talked about earlier, it is not something you have to construct for yourself or defend or prove. It is something you receive from a Heavenly Father who loves you. Suddenly, instead of your meaning and purpose being fragile and tied to success or approval, instead, they are anchored in the character and faithfulness of God. Your career does not become a place of fulfillment. It becomes a place of faithfulness. That family, the spouse that you grow frustrated with, the kids that wear you out, suddenly they are not something, they are not a burden to manage or a source of your worth. They become a gift that God has asked you to steward. It is a very small shift, but it changes everything, even the small things. When life is not about you, the arguments that you have become a lot less meaningful. Your commute in the morning becomes a lot less frustrating. The way that you brush your teeth or cook dinner, all of those things, no matter how mundane, when they are reoriented around the understanding that living for yourself is not the aim that you were intended for, but living for God and his glory, your life begins to fall into place. That's what Jesus is saying, love God with all that you are, and if you feel like you figured that out, then begin loving others as you love yourself, and you will find that one thing that you are looking for.

Here is something that so many of us forget. Everything that exists, the beautiful mountains we have as a backdrop for where we live, the air that we breathe, the animals, the trees, everything that exists, the stars in the sky, they were all created and intended to reflect the glory of God. The beauty of the world, the order of creation, the vastness of the universe, it all points beyond itself to God's glory, and that includes you, because you did not create yourself, and you do not have to recreate yourself. Your life was intended to reflect the glory of God. You were not meant or made to live an independent, self-oriented life chasing your own purposes. You were created to love God and to be loved by Him and to live for Him, and when we do not, that is when things begin to break down. So, here is the invitation from Jesus, and it is not an invitation of condemnation. It is an invitation of clarity. It is an invitation to stop asking ourselves how to manage our lives better, and to start with who we are actually living for. Who are we becoming?

There is a line that I love by one of my favorite authors. His name is A.W. Tozer, and it is a funny line. There is a book he wrote that I read years ago. I love this book, but it is called "Rut, Rot, or Revival, How to Change and Break the Status Quo." He wrote this book back in the 40s and the 50s, and it is a beautiful book, because it names what so many of us feel, that we are stuck in a rut or that we feel like we are just rotting away, and how do you step out of that and into revival, into what God has called you to be? He talks about this idea of examining ourselves, and he quotes Socrates, and he gets a little like antagonistic. He has some spice towards Socrates, and let me read his quote for you. He says, "The unexamined life is not worth living." This is what he says about Socrates. "If a common philosopher," I love that. He is just like a common philosopher, Socrates, one of the greatest, most brilliant minds ever. He is like, "If a common philosopher who did not even know Jesus could come up with that," then he says

this, “how much more should we Christians listen to the Holy Spirit when the Spirit says, ‘Examine yourself?’” There is actually a command in scripture. Frequently, the scriptures say that the Spirit encourages us to examine ourselves. Then he goes on, and he gives a couple of thoughtful illustrations. “An unexamined Christian life is like an untended garden. Let your garden go untended for a few months, and you will not find roses or tomatoes, but weeds. An unexamined Christian life is like an unkempt house. Lock your house up as tight as you will, and leave it long enough, and when you come back, you will not believe the dirt that got in from somewhere. An unexamined Christian life is like an untaught child.” Now kids, listen to this. “A child that is not taught will be a little wild. It takes examination, teaching, instruction, discipline, caring, tending, weeding, and cultivating to keep the life right.” Here is his simple but sobering point. Formation is always happening to you. You are in the current. The question is, is it intentional? This is where the words of Jesus press us gently to examine our lives, to honestly assess what we love and what we are giving ourselves to.

So, what I want to do, and take a moment together collectively, is to invite you into a space to examine your life for a brief moment. I am going to give you a moment for two different questions. They are going to be on the screen, and I’m going to ask you to reflect on those questions. Ask yourself, are you living the life that you want? Are you living a life devoted to something higher than yourself? I want you to listen. Don’t rush to find an answer. I want you to simply let these questions do their quiet work. I want you to notice where you feel resistance, or feel an invitation, or feel a longing or an ache within yourself. That is where the Spirit is trying to speak to you, and so here is the first question I want to give you a moment to contemplate. “What do my time, attention, and emotional energy reveal about what I love most, and where does God actually fit within that picture right now?” Take about forty-five seconds to just reflect, pray, and have a conversation with the Lord.

All right, and then the second question. This is about living for others, loving others as yourself. “Who is tangibly better off because of my faith in Jesus, and in what ways is my life being spent for the good of others rather than my own self-interest?” Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you now.

As you sit with those questions about what you love and where your attention goes and who is actually being blessed through your life, I want to invite us to remember and receive communion together, the first communion of the year. Now if you haven’t done communion with us before, if you’ve forgotten, communion at Waterstone is a little different. It is a little messy. We think of communion more like a family meal than a formal ceremony, and so we get up, and there are different stations that will be around the room. Gluten-free elements will be available in the back for those of you that need them, but we bump into each other. We say hello. We make room for others. We come as we are. It is not a place where you have to be in somber silence as we come to receive the elements. The primary invitation is for those of us who believe in Jesus and have given our lives to Him and follow after Him to come forward to the table as we are and to remember, and as you come to the table, someone is going to look you in the eye and say these words over you: “This is Christ’s body broken for you. This is Christ’s blood shed for you,” and those are not words we made up. They are words that actually come from Jesus himself. When He gave us communion, He said those words, and He told us that as we break the bread and as we drink the cup, that we are to remember what He has done for us.

So, as we have reflected on how we are examining our lives today, I want you to examine one more thing about your story, because the truth is that Jesus, when He invites us to remember what He has done, He is inviting us to remember the whole story, the devastating disaster of sin and how it bends our lives inward on ourselves, the way it breaks our relationship, the way it breaks creation and everything around, the devastating cost of sin in our lives, but it is also an invitation to remember Jesus, who took our place on the cross, who was willing to give Himself sacrificially because of love, so that we could experience healing from that brokenness and that sin in our lives. It is an invitation to remember that forgiveness is not just a grace we receive, but it is a transformation, that when Christ died for us, He gives his life to us, and that we can be transformed to become like Him and learn to live the life that He lived.

All of that is the beautiful story we remember every time we come to the table, and so as you have been reflecting today, there may be a part of you that thinks, "I don't know if I am worthy to come to the table. I have not loved God with all that I am, and I certainly have not loved others the way that He has called me to," and the whole point of the table is that that is all of our story. None of us have, and Jesus invites us anyway, because grace is simply that good, and that our love for God comes first from a love that He shared with us. So let me pray for you, and then I will invite you to come and receive the elements as you are ready.

Heavenly Father, as we come to the table today, as we reflect on our stories and the ways that we have potentially been living for ourselves and not for you or for the sake of others, living for our own glory rather than your glory, Father, I pray that today we would just come forward honestly, that we could come with our questions, with our longings, with our needs, with the understanding that we do not have to prove anything to anyone, that we do not have to clean ourselves up, that this table is not for those who have arrived. This table has always been for those who are being formed, for those who are becoming, who are on the journey to become more like your son Jesus. So, as we receive the bread and receive the cup this morning, may we remember that we are loved, we are forgiven, and that the love of Christ is forming us into who we are becoming. In Christ's name we pray, amen.

As we close today, I just want to pray those words over you that we just sang, so I invite you to open your hands. This is one of the most ancient postures of prayer, to simply receive from the Holy Spirit what we cannot obtain ourselves. Lord God, King of Kings, I ask now that you would help us, the people of Waterstone, to go from here and to become like Jesus and live for others, because Jesus is better. May we believe that, may we live from that place, and it is in Christ's name we pray, amen. Go in peace.

40:56 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

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