

# The Grace of Substitution

*A Savior of Grace*

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You know, one of the interesting aspects of the culture in which we live is the way certain bedrock psychological principles continue to reemerge. Do you notice that? As appropriate and helpful explanations for the problems of daily living, even for some of the greatest challenges that we face in our world. And I'm not suggesting that there isn't anything new to these theories. If psychology offers anything, it's proliferation: more and more ideas and more and more claims. But if you peel back the layers of the onion, it's amazing how often you find at least vestiges of some of these very original schools of psychological thought.

Now, there's all sorts of ways of telling the story, I suppose, but we like to organize the early days around 4 dominant psychological theories and theorists. First came in-depth psychology founded, of course, by Sigmund Freud. It was called in-depth theory because of his emphasis on digging back into a person's past, learning who emphasized, who influenced, who strengthened that person's moral code, their superego. It was in-depth psychology. Then came behaviorism founded by BF Skinner who was a scientist and therefore strongly disagreed with Freud on the grounds that his theories could not be proven scientifically which, by the way, I think most secular psychologists would agree with that premise today as well so Skinner developed an approach to counseling that focused exclusively on what could be observed, on what could be measured, tested which is why he founded the school of behaviorism. Then came the third form of psychology, people like Carl Rogers and Rollo May whose contribution to the field was uniquely their view of human nature, believing that human beings were morally positive and therefore possessed all the wisdom, all the strength necessary to live well within himself. They believe that if you would just leave a child alone giving him unconditional positive regard, teaching him to love himself properly, he would just naturally blossom like a flower. Is that what has happened in your house? Then fourthly there were those who believed in God's analysis of the nature of man. We weren't morally neutral. We weren't morally positive. We were born in sin and therefore having a fundamental need of a Savior and a Lord who could transform us at the level of the heart and then provide answers and direction from the truth of his sufficient word.

Now, we could flesh all that out for hours but the point is it's amazing how frequently theories like those raise their heads again, perhaps dressed up in slightly different outfits

but from a very common root. I told you all that to suggest this: there have been several examples recently on both the local and the national and even the international scene of the resurgence of behaviorism. As I said, BF Skinner reacted strongly against Freud. He even called Freud a spook and what he meant by that is you're spooky because of your focus on dreams and unconscious drives and motivations. So Skinner as a scientist rejected all of that and he posited that human beings were conditioned animals who were born morally neutral which, by the way, coincided with the teachings of Charles Darwin. You realize we would not have had secular psychology had we not had macro evolution. What we might label today macro evolution was man's best explanation for his existence while psychology was his best explanation for his behavior.

So BF Skinner saw human beings as being morally neutral and the reason they behaved the way they behaved was because of the contingencies in his environment meaning if there was a lack of reward for positive choices or a greater incentive for negative choices, that human beings would do wrong things. If you don't offer a rat a piece of cheese, don't be surprised if he won't go through your maze. But it's an environmental problem and I'm going to use that phrase several times this morning. When they say that, they're not talking about air pollution. They are saying the contingencies in that person's environment were not conducive to positive choices and so the solution is: change the person's environment which would in turn change the person's behavior.

Now, I realize you might say, "What are you talking about?" Let me illustrate what I'm talking about. There was recently a conversation here in some of our local public schools, very competent people for sure but they were talking about the problem where a significant percentage of students who had been suspended or expelled finding themselves in that position because of some act of rebellion toward authority, either against the administrators or the teachers or the school. So what was the recently proposed solution? Well, the answer was: give better training for the teachers and the administrators on the belief that if you created an environment where the young person felt like his voice was being heard then the rebellion would subside. In other words, the reason people do bad things has nothing to do with their nature, it's the failure of the environment around. I'm not trying to be critical of these folks, I mean, I suppose we're all for training in how adults could communicate more effectively with young people but I would suggest and here's really the point at this place in the discussion: at some point that approach is actually demeaning to the young person because it treats him like a dog. It treats him like a rat as opposed to a human being who is made in the image of God, who is morally responsible for his choices whether he believes his authorities are listening properly to him or not. That's the problem with behaviorism.

Well, once you establish that line of thinking, then you can see examples of behaviorism reemerging all over the place. For example, this delightful person: Jihadi John, the British citizen who started showing up as a spokesman on ISIS videos depicting them beheading people for various reasons. And what was fascinating about his story in part was the question that started bubbling up from the media and various cultural leaders asking: who or what radicalized Jihadi John? Think about that: who or what radicalized Jihadi John? In other words, something in his environment caused him to make these choices and if

you followed this story, you know one of the dominant theories is that he was a fine young man living in Britain who received a trip to Tanzania from his parents as a graduation gift from college but the British government detained him because they believed he might be trying to travel to Somalia to meet with terrorists and their treatment of him caused him to radicalize and become a murderer who beheads innocent people. Again, if you followed that story you know for some the real villains were the law enforcement personnel and their treatment of this man during the custom's process on his pleasure trip. That's behaviorism which treats people as CS Lewis famously said in his book "The Abolition of Man," it just treats people as trousered apes, Lewis argued. Or soulless men. Or he said, "Men without chests." That's what behaviorism does.

Then there is this unbelievable video that surfaced this week from the sigma alpha upsilon fraternity at the University of Oklahoma showing their members singing such a racially discriminating song including references to lynching that if that does not make your blood boil, I would encourage you to check your pulse. So the president of the university immediately closed the frat house which, on the one hand, I think we would all say is exactly what should have been done but that certainly does not change the hearts of the boys singing the song. So we had these predictable statements that, "Well, they're good boys. They just got caught up in the moment." Really? "It was simply an environmental failure. They were not morally responsible for the choices they were making at the time." In case the point's not clear, I realize sometimes I'm not clear, here's what I'm saying: behaviorism lacks the ability to diagnose the problem at the level of the heart and invariably leads to solutions that are shallow and ultimately ineffective.

Add to that the ongoing civil unrest in Ferguson, Missouri which I recognize is a very complicated and emotion-charged story. I understand that, okay? But this week it was announced after the Federal Justice Department's report of their review of the case was released and I'm sure there's a lot of different views of that piece of the puzzle, it was then reported that the parents of Michael Brown, the black, unarmed teenager who was shot and killed by the white police officer, Darren Wilson, that his parents intended to file a civil suit against Darren Wilson and the city of Ferguson, Missouri. Now, I understand it's like walking into a minefield. I'm kind of used to that and I think we need to think about contemporary events through the lens of Scripture, that's my job is to equip you to do the work of the ministry in the culture in which God has placed us. I also understand that there are a lot of different perspectives on this issue even among our congregation, I'm sure. But at least follow this: I think there's a couple of threads of this narrative that go along with the premise I'm trying to lay out, evidences of behaviorism that end up treating people like dogs instead of men. For example, one is the notion that if a few people in the administration or the police department either resign or are fired then a pattern of wrongful discrimination that at least exists because of some of the emails that were being sent on their government computers, that somehow that pattern will automatically and systematically change. In other words, we're just going to change the environment. We're going to fire a few people and that will result in change. Or on the other hand, on the other hand, if the police department learns how to relate better to citizens, the crime rate and the demographics will automatically change. I'm suggesting that all of that on both sides of the equation is just, again, behaviorism. It's treating the

people involved as if they're just dogs or rats who are morally neutral and have no responsibility for or control over their behavior. Before the week, 2 police officers were shot in the line of duty in that place.

Now, here's the question for this morning: does the word of God offer anything better than that? If so, how and why do the events commemorated at Easter fit prominently in our answer? Now, would you please open your Bible to the Gospel of John, chapter 19. That's on page 88 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you, the New Testament.

Our theme this year is "Finding Grace" taken from this passage in Hebrews 4 which I hope is becoming very, very precious to you and to your family at this point in the year. And during the weeks that are leading up to Easter, we're working through a portion of the Gospel of John together and we're focusing on our Savior of grace. That's what's needed in the discussion, friends, a Savior of grace. Well, this morning's verses emphasize the grace of substitution. The grace of substitution. Let's begin in John 19:16.

"So he then," the "he" in that case is Pilate. We left off here last Sunday. "So he then handed Him," of course, Jesus, "over to them to be crucified." Please think about what that means. "They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, 'Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.' Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, 'Do not write, "The King of the Jews"; but that He said, "I am King of the Jews."' Pilate answered, 'What I have written I have written.' Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be'; this was to fulfill the Scripture: 'They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.' Therefore the soldiers did these things. But," now, note the contrast and the logic. In contrast to the religious leaders arguing about the wording on the sign; in contrast to the soldiers having a competition for the future of the clothes, "But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby," that, of course, was John, "He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then He said to John, 'Behold, your mother!'" In other words, "John, take care of my mother." That was the point of that. "From that hour the disciple took her into his own household. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit."

We're talking this morning about the grace of substitution and from the logic of this passage, I would like us to think about 3 truths about Christ's atoning work on the cross, the grace of substitution. First of all, he was a gracious substitute despite those who were distracted. It's really interesting, I think, how succinct and matter of fact John is in verse 16, "So he," Pilate, "then handed Him," Jesus, "over to them to be crucified." Crucifixion was a punishment designed to inflict the worst pain imaginable on the person who was being punished. Jesus had already been beaten; he had already been mocked; he had already been whipped. Of course, cowardly Pilate could have humanly speaking stopped that charade. He had repeatedly said that he found no fault in this man but because of fear, he was unwilling to stand up to the crowd and though he tried to find a way to distance himself from what was occurring, nobody can do that then or now. Jesus said in Matthew 12:30, "He who is not with Me is against Me," so there is no middle ground in this discussion, friends. Pilate can wash his hands all he wants but the text could not be clearer: Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.

Now, when we look at the parallel passages in the other Gospels, we learn that Jesus' wrists and feet are nailed to the cross. Imagine the pain. And then the cross is hoisted up and placed into a hole that was prepared for that purpose alongside that of 2 thieves. Then the slow process of dying by suffocation begins. Of course, what was occurring spiritually was far worse. The perfect Lamb of God bearing the filth, the shame, the guilt of mankind's sin. The Apostle Paul would later explain it like this, "He," God the Father, "made Him," Jesus, "who knew no sin," to what? This is the most succinct description of the substitutionary atonement that I know of, "to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." So on the cross, Christ was our substitute offering an atoning sacrifice not for our environment, not for our past, not for our bodily malfunctions but for our sin.

Now, the contrast of what Christ was doing and what many others were doing simultaneously in this passage could not be starker. In fact, you could write over this part of the discussion "Distracted. Distracted." Just like suggesting that if we adjust the contingencies in a person's environment, that will somehow result in lasting change. It's a distraction from the core issue of the heart. We have people in the very presence of the cross missing the significance of what is occurring. Some are distracted by an argument about the wording of a sign so the chief priests, so the Jews, were saying to Pilate, "Don't write the King of the Jews but that he said I am the King of the Jews." They had rejected Christ. Remember what we were singing about earlier? They had rejected Christ repeatedly as their Savior and their high King of heaven. Now at the hour that he is dying on the cross for the sins of man in fulfillment to literally dozens and dozens of prophecies from the Old Testament that they should have known about, they argue and affirm to the very end that Jesus will not be their King. At the level of the heart. Forget the environment, the level of their heart, they are rejecting Christ as the King.

Think about this from a positive perspective: what happens when a person is willing to think biblically about themselves even when what's going on around them is hard? My friend, Bob Kelleman, has written a book entitled "Beyond the Suffering," embracing the

legacy of African American soul care and spiritual direction. Bob and I grew up together in Gary and so racial tension, disharmony, that was in front of our eyes in living technicolor in Gary just like what you see in Ferguson, at least from the perspective of the kinds of problems. That's what we grew up around as kids and as teenagers in the 60s and 70s in Gary, Indiana. Bob went on to earn a doctorate in counseling. He became very intrigued about the depth of the soul care that developed in many African American communities even before the abolition of slavery in this country. Now, this is a nuanced argument so please listen to this carefully. Obviously, he wasn't saying there was anything positive humanly speaking about slavery and nor was he criticizing anyone for trying to bring about justice in any lawful way possible and he does not in any way, shape or form sugarcoat the story. But here's what his research of their original writings reveal: there was a sweet and a strong faith in God on the part of many persons who were being horribly mistreated in ways that we can't even possibly imagine. In other words, there was something more important about them than their environment. It was the way they were choosing to cultivate their hearts and letting the power of the cross transform their life. For example, here's a quote from Maria Stuart in 1831. She was a widowed African American woman speaking to persons she referred to as her sisters in the Spirit; fellow African-American women that she was trying to help in the middle of their difficulties. She said, "Many think because your skins are tinged with the sable hue that you are an inferior race of beings but God does not consider you as such. He has formed and fashioned you in his own glorious image and has bestowed upon you reason and strong powers of intellect. He has made you to have dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air and the fish of the sea. He has crowned you with glory and honor. He has made you but a little lower than the angels."

What I'm suggesting is that they were submitting to Christ as the Lord who made them as incredibly hard as that must of been in their environment. They were still focusing on the cross even more so than all the injustice that was raging around them and the soul care that emerged for themselves and others was robust and powerful. And what their story proves is that the most important thing about you is not what happened in your past, it's not what's occurring in your environment right now, it's how you're cultivating your soul and the bitter irony of that part of our nation's history is: while they were being treated like animals, in Christ many responded like dignified human beings made in the image of God. While there's nothing wrong with us thinking about and trying to address some of these other areas that I've mentioned, we can't ever be distracted from the power of the cross and its ability to change us at the level of the heart.

So some were distracted by the wording of a sign, others were distracted by a contest for his clothes. Right at the foot of the cross they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be. This too was to fulfill the Scripture, 'They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.'" Our former pastor, Bill Goode, used to refer to this portion of the story as gambling at the foot of the cross, completely oblivious to the significance of the problem or of the beauty and the grace and the sufficiency of the solution that was hanging right before them.

Can I just pause and ask you this question this morning? Is it possible that you have become distracted? Have you placed so much emphasis on the mistreatment of other people in your past or the pain and the disappointment of what you might be facing in your environment today, or something that may or may not be occurring in your body because that's the dominant emphasis in secular thinking today so many times, have you placed so much emphasis on one of those other things that you failed to acknowledge your place in the equation? That you are an active worshiper who has fallen short of the glory of God and desperately in need of a Savior and Lord? And friend, if you're in that position this morning, I would suggest to you: don't be like the religious leaders who missed the message of the cross. Don't be like the soldiers who missed the message of the cross. Don't be so distracted by everything else that's going on that you fail to acknowledge the core problem, the nature of your own sinful heart and then run to the cross for forgiveness and change at the level of the heart.

Christian friend, have you allowed this reemergence of behaviorism in our world, you see, the world has a way of squeezing us into its mould, doesn't it? Have you allowed this reemergence of behaviorism in our world to cause you to view yourself like you're morally neutral? Like you're just being driven along by the contingencies of your environment? Or are you learning to man up? That's really what it comes down to. Act like a man. Act like a human being. You're not a dog. Tweet that: you're not a dog. You're not a rat. You're a man. You're a human being made in the image of God, capable of taking responsibility for your part of the situation and then by the power of the cross, finding ways to choose to please and follow your King even when it is hard.

Now, what do we see next in the text? He was also a gracious substitute by his concern and compassion for his mother. Thankfully in contrast to everything else we've said this morning, some chose to stand by the cross. You see the logic of the text, "Therefore the soldiers did what they did but standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." You see, not everybody was distracted, huh? I think it's instructive to note that some of the most focused, courageous people in this entire story were women. Do with that what you want. But now Peter has denied Christ 3 times and the religious leaders have done their thing we've already studied and the soldiers have done theirs but you have some who have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord. They are focused on the cross. In fact, Mary humanly speaking the mother of Jesus, has been speaking of Christ as her Savior since the announcement of his birth and now they are standing at the foot of the instruments they know will bring about their salvation.

Then the scene changes to the dying Savior and he could have used his final breath to condemn and criticize the people arguing about the sign. Do you realize that? Think if you were in that situation watching the scene unfold. You have a few breaths left. Time to lash out, huh? At people who don't even know their right hand from their left. Lashing out at the religious leaders or lashing out at the soldiers. But what does Jesus say and do? It's an interaction of incredible grace. "Woman, behold, your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "John, behold, your mother!" Please take care of my mama, is what that's all about. "From that hour the disciple took her into his own household." What I'm saying is:

that's how a man lives. Have you ever heard a dog make a pronouncement like that? Rats don't talk like that. Do we all understand that? That's how a man lives, in this case the God-man rising above circumstances and choosing to please the Father and think of others in the midst of the worst pain and suffering imaginable. What an incredible picture of grace.

Now, what's the larger picture? Let's step back for a moment and think about this more globally. We have to decide are we going to be like behaviorists or are we going to be like cross-centered Christians? Do we want to be treated like dogs or do we want to be treated like men? Are we going to take appropriate responsibility for our choices or look for a way to absolve ourselves of responsibility because of our environment? And take it one more step: what about those same questions when it comes to the way we evaluate culture and interact with others? Is it going to be like Christ in this passage leading to a focus on grace and a focus on the cross or an approach that is distracted or distracting or both?

Now, I realize you might say, "But Pastor Viars, the reason I struggle so much loving others and pointing them to the cross is because this world in which we live, it doesn't even know its right hand from its left." Well, let's talk about that. I mean, what do you do when you're around persons like Jesus is around these soldiers, Jesus is around these religious leaders, what about when we're around a culture that doesn't know its right hand from its left? I mean, there are people like Pilate in this world today. True? There are people like these religious leaders in our world today. There are people like these soldiers in our world today. All of them who seem to have no understanding of their need for a Savior and do not appear to know their right hand from their left. Welcome to the culture in which we live, huh?

And so you have the Planet Fitness up in Michigan where a young mother of 2 the Sunday before last goes into the women's locker room and is changing her clothes and a person comes in who looks to her like a man and so she goes and tells the people at the counter who tell her that they have a no judgment policy and people can use whatever locker room they want based on their sincere self-reported gender identity regardless of the nature of their body parts. So she spoke to some of the other ladies about that just to be sure they knew as they are changing in the locker room they might want to keep themselves covered up because men can come in there. What was Planet Fitness' solution to that problem? Revoke the membership of the woman who made the complaint, not construct a separate restroom if that's what you really believe you need to do. You see, that's what's coming next, friends, in case you're wondering what's down the pike unless Jesus returns and I hope he does today. But that's what's coming to a restroom and a locker room near you. People who don't know their right hand from their left.

Or this one from the University of Minnesota. If I have an opportunity to get on another Big Ten school, I want to although I wish I had a bad illustration about the University of Wisconsin right about now, honestly. I worked this morning and I couldn't find one. Did you hear what the University of Minnesota did within the last couple of weeks? They adopted a policy that when making a campus crime alert, you know, when you have to



shut things down on campus because of some crime that has been committed? They will not mention the suspect's race so if I was on campus going from place to place shooting people, they would not say that I was a white male because in their judgment that is viewed as being racist.

So how do we function in a culture that seems to be coming apart at the seams? Well, I would suggest an answer from this passage would be: respond with grace and point others to the cross. There is the answer: respond with grace and point others to the cross. The only hope for genuine change in ourselves or anyone else is the forgiveness and new life available through the shed blood of Christ. And I'm suggesting, friends, that if we are distracted by shallows substitutes or just overcome with frustration or anger or hatred of our world for that and a whole lot of other reasons, the powerful cross is nowhere in sight.

Here's another way to say that: don't be like Jonah. Don't be like Jonah. What was Jonah's problem? Do you know this story? God sends Jonah to wicked Nineveh, the arch enemies of the Jews to preach a message of what? "Your environment is bad"? No, that wouldn't even have made their roof creak. No, it was a message of repentance at the level of the heart and pending judgment and Jonah did what? He refused to go and at first you assume it's because he's afraid of the Ninevites because after all, they were the arch enemies of the Jews and they were known for being ruthless but as you start digging into the book, you find out it's not a matter of Jonah being afraid of the Ninevites, it's a matter of Jonah being afraid of God because he's afraid if he goes and encourages the Ninevites to repent at the level of the heart, if they do then God's going to what? God will forgive them and change them so he prefers to be thrown overboard. And I'm summarizing the story for sake of time but then he goes for a little fish ride. Remember that? In the belly of the whale he says, Jonah 2:8, "Those who regard vain idols," like the ones I've been worshiping because of my racist views of another group of people I have decided are not worthy of God's love and truth, "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness, But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving," finally. "That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD."

So finally Jonah repents and we have a reset and so in chapter 3, he does what he was supposed to do at the beginning. He preaches a message of repentance at the level of heart to the wicked Ninevites and what do they do? They actually repent. This is from Jonah 3:5, "Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them." Even the king gets involved in leading them in repentance at the level of the heart and you would assume what you're going to read next is what? Jonah rejoicing in the fact that God will forgive people at the level of the heart, that God will deal with those who repent well, he will change them. Here's what you read instead. It's one of those books you wish it didn't have the last chapter because here's what happens, "But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD and said, 'Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country?'" This is why I didn't want to go to begin with, he says. "Therefore in order to forestall this," their repentance and your forgiveness of them, "I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate," and I don't like

that unless I happen to be the one in need of it at the time in the belly of the whale. "I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity." There's a lot I have to skip here because of time including one of the most bizarre stories ever in the Bible involving a gourd but here's the very last verse in the book of Jonah, God said, "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"

What I'm saying if you draw all of this together, what I'm saying is: the world's behaviorism takes people away from the message of the cross and our anger and disgust with those who sometimes seem as if they don't know their right hand from their left does exactly the same thing which is why this part of the chapter ends by affirming that he was a gracious Savior by completely paying for our redemption. The text ends with a beautiful emphasis on his humanity. "After this," John reports, "Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, 'I am thirsty.'" Yet another Old Testament prophecy fulfilled by these events. Then the cry of victorious completion where Christ said, "It is finished," tetelestai, "And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit," proving that redemption at the level of the heart is unattainable by behaviorism. It requires a substitutionary payment by a sacrificial Savior.

Now, let me address something here. I realize you might say, "Pastor Viars, you just played right into the secularists' hands this morning because you mentioned Jonah. I can't believe you did that and you alluded to Adam and Eve's original sin in the garden of Eden and you've been speaking to us this morning about the substitutionary death of Christ. You've been talking about his literal, bodily resurrection. People are just going to reject Christ because they are going to say we're part of the war on science." You're hearing a lot about that right now, aren't you? Because of, in part, this particular issue: the current issue of National Geographic about the war on science.

Let me just mention that. Listen, there are extremists on all sides of everything, right? Every group has its set of nut jobs. I'm not going to say that they don't or that we don't but I want to affirm this morning: it's possible to believe in the literal truth of the word of God and be an effective scientist. That's been true of many current and former members of this church who would say that their belief in God, the literal God of the Bible, is what motivated their scientific pursuit because they were looking for more ways to reveal his glory. That's why young people in our school often excel in the science portions of the I-Step exams. It's been true of many scientists historically who have been believers in the literal God of the Bible, even contemporary astronauts. You may know that the families of the astronauts were able to choose what was the wake-up song for the crew on any given day. I loved it when the family of Michael Good chose Steve Green's "God of Wonders" to be played to wake up the crew. Can you imagine being in a space shuttle looking out the window at outer space and hearing Steve Green's "God of Wonders." It makes me want to belt it out right now which would ruin the point. But we're not involved in any war on science but just like we reject behaviorism, we also reject scientism, the belief that science alone has answers for all ultimate questions because

both positions leave no room for a proper diagnosis of the sinful nature of man or the sufficient solution provided on the cross of Christ.

Now, what are the takeaways of all of this? One, if you've never trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, friend, we would encourage you to look away from what might be happening in your environment, look away from what might have happened even if it was distressful in your past and man up meaning own your own sin and then run to the cross. Don't be distracted by anything else. Run to the cross and place your faith and trust in Christ as Savior and Lord and do so today.

If you're a Christian but you're struggling, don't spend so much time focusing on what people did in the past or what people are doing to you now or what might be happening in your body or whatever to fail to man up and take your responsibility for your side of the issue and then run to the cross for the power you need to live for Christ effectively as your King today.

Thirdly, I would encourage you to invite everybody you know to the Passion Play. Why? Because there's a zillion things that we could be talking about in this culture. What do we need to be talking about? The message of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It's powerful, friends. It will transform us at the level of the heart. Let's be sure that we're using the freedom that we have in this culture to proclaim that message.

I want to encourage you to invite someone to church on Easter Sunday and for the outreach series that we are going to start after Easter. We need to be known as people who are doing everything that we can to not be arguing about the message on a sign, to not be gambling about the future of the clothes, we need to be all about what? We need to be like the 3 Mary's. We need to be like John. We need to be focused on the beauty of the cross.

Let me say one more thing to us: I want to encourage you to be praying for some meetings that I'm going to be having the week after next with Dr. Charles Weare and Bob Kellemen, 2 good friends of mine. Dr. Weare is the president of Crossroads and the reason I'm telling you this is that it gives the antidote to the Ferguson behavioral emphasis problem. Dr. Weare is a good friend of mine, a graduate of Baptist Bible College where I went to school a long time ago along with a number of our other staff members. He's the president of Crossroads Bible College down in Indianapolis. He's a great preacher of the word. He has preached in this pulpit many, many times. He's written and spoken on racial reconciliation but what's unique about Dr. Weare's ministry is his view of racial reconciliation is based on the life-changing power of the Gospel. He's also been influential in urban ministry in places like Indianapolis and Gary. There are some very exciting things happening in Gary right now, did you know that? Tweet that. There is. Fort Wayne. You say, "Why are we meeting with him?" The gentleman on the other side is Bob Kellemen, my friend who I mentioned earlier who wrote "Beyond Suffering." He's now a vice president at Crossroads Bible College, serving under Dr. Weare's ministry. We're talking about the possibility of establishing a branch of Crossroads Bible College right here in Lafayette. Now, these are just dreams. Nobody is committing

anything to anything but this would be the beauty of it: where the students, the college students would study the word of God but then as part of their educational track, they would be involved in practical urban ministry. Urban ministry with the goal of seeking racial reconciliation and urban development based not on behaviorism, based not on scientism but based on the powerful message of the cross and I would encourage you to pray about that possibility and what our God might do.

Would you stand with me as we pray?

*Father in heaven, Lord, thank you for giving us these details from the cross work of Christ. Lord, we acknowledge to you that sometimes we're distracted by all kinds of things. Lord, help us not to be like these religious leaders arguing about the sign, the soldiers arguing about the clothes. Help us not to be like Jonah, the racist who had no concern for legitimate repentance on the part of others at the level of the heart. Lord, I pray that our lives would be all about the cross because we understand how much we need it and because we consider it a marvelous privilege to be able to proclaim it. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*