

It's Not About Me ... Really?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 April 2023

Preacher: Kevin Smith, Senior Pastor

[0 : 00] You know this song actually says and now I am happy all the day right y'all know that right the problem is that's not true that's not the reality of the Christian we're not happy all the day but I like what our choir did you know what they did you catch it and now I am happy behind the cross that's when I'm happy that's what I'm happiest when I'm behind the cross thank you thank you hallelujah that's that that's good truth right there hallelujah hide me well that's my prayer today and I know it's your prayer for your life but it's my prayer today too Lord hide me behind your cross especially as I open your word pastor Tremue when he was just before he prayed he actually read my text for this morning if you haven't looked it up the text is second Corinthians chapter 5 verses 14 and 15 before I read that I got to say it one more time he is risen he is what hallelujah in time and space in history not spiritually risen not risen according to our faith but actually and truly risen that's the Christian faith that one man came back from the dead he wasn't he was resuscitated he was in a coma he was dead certifiably dead murdered executed he returned that's where we live in the death and the resurrection of Jesus fathers we come to your word now oh oh hide me behind your cross that your people might see Jesus crucified dead and buried and risen from the dead may your word go forth with the power of your spirit not the power of my personality the power of your spirit may it go forth and may it touch all of our lives all of our hearts and may we not be the same because we've been in your presence and heard from you so may we go from this place changed and changing following notes into my head but do you please Lord i came from not so dear to hear ama quindi noi mai ainski wa ta diyorum mi ti 364 nao fi miltonentiary the Father but we have the same we Christine ii diarrhoino my son was given a lawyer in his girlfriend that the woman could suffer from youiley and 15. For the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this, that one has died for all, therefore all have died. He died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised. That is the word of the Lord.

Amen. Please be seated. Thank you. Thank you, praise team. Thank you, choir. That was beautiful. Thank you so much. Appreciate your service.

The death of Christ, Good Friday, according to the Bible, pays the price for our sins. The resurrection of Christ says the payment was accepted. You ever try to pay a bill, online especially, and you did it, but then later you find out that the payment wasn't accepted because they never got it.

Something went wrong when you pushed the button. You hit send, and their website said nada, nope. We don't have that problem when it comes to what God does. Jesus paid the price. He hit send, and God received the payment, and God received the payment, and it's been accepted. But more, the resurrection does more.

The resurrection of Christ means also a new way of living for those for whom he died. If Jesus is raised, then everything has changed. If he truly has been raised, time has hit a speed bump.

[5 : 22] Now we know that death is not the end. You know, we human beings are like caterpillars crawling around in the dirt.

But we were made for something more. The cross and resurrection of Jesus brings us into that transformation for which caterpillars long to be a butterfly.

And key to this transformation is dealing with our caterpillar self-centeredness. It's at the core of our sinful lies. We believe is all about me.

We really do believe it. Each one of us has the same problem. We really believe the world revolves around us.

What I like and what I want. How I look and my brand. All of our relationship troubles are because of selfishness.

[6 : 34] Our marriages struggle and fail. Our children rebel. Workplace drama. Bullying, physical and cyber.

Mass shootings. Failed friendships. Gossip, etc. All because, at core, all of us are selfish. But the death and resurrection of Jesus shouts to all of us, it's not about you. I stopped by on my way to heaven to tell you, it's not about you.

But are you ready to become a butterfly and soar? Or do you like the dirt?

Do you like the dirt? In our passage, Paul is describing his motivation for making known the gospel. He knows judgment is coming.

[7 : 37] He tells us in verse 13. If you have a Bible, you can look at it for yourself. He knows judgment is coming. Now, therefore, he speaks of two motivations in light of impending judgment. Why does Paul risk his life?

Why did he risk his life? Why was he stoned? Why was he beaten? Why did the early Christians risk so much to get the word out in the Roman Empire?

Why do Christians in China do it today? Why do Christians in Islamic nations do it today when they know their lives are at stake? Why do people keep pushing, even in America, where people don't want to hear anymore?

Why do we keep pushing? He says there are two reasons, the fear of the Lord and the love of Christ. The fear of the Lord, meaning reverence and awe of the Lord.

This is what should motivate all of us as disciples of Jesus. But now in our passage, he's at that part where he talks about the love of Christ motivating us. He describes this love for us by using the Lord Jesus as the model.

[8 : 45] Of course, Jesus, unlike us, is truly selfless, not selfish.

And this is what he offers us through his death and resurrection. A selfless living. So, three points. First of all, the selfless Savior's love is compelling. That's what he says in verse 14. That's how he begins the section. For the love of Christ controls us.

The love of Christ is a controlling love. The word for control, in the original language, remember, the New Testament is Greek. In the original language, that word had the idea meaning to urge on, to compel, to seize, or to dominate.

Paul is saying there's something about the love of Christ that it grabs hold of you. It compels you. In English, when we say something is compelling, what do we mean?

[9 : 48] We mean it is having a powerful and irresistible effect on us. Maybe even a controlling effect.

We talk about a compelling argument, right? An argument that we can't resist. We see the truth of it. We see the light of it. But we also talk about people who are compelling.

You ever meet somebody who's compelling? There's a book came out years ago called *Compelling People* by two PhDs who did a study on this in our country. And they came up with two things.

They noticed that makes a person compelling. People you are drawn to. People you want to follow. Two things. First is strength. That person's capacity to make things happen with their abilities and force of will.

We find people compelling who have strength. But there's another thing that must be involved in this. They must also have warmth. Warmth is a sense that a person shares our feelings, our interests, our view of the world.

[10 : 53] You feel supported. When we find somebody who is compelling, who has strength and warmth, we tend to be okay with following them.

That makes sense. You come face to face with someone that just takes your breath away and makes you want to do great things. Well, I want to introduce you to someone who is truly compelling.

Jesus, who cares for all kinds of people with gentleness and compassion, with warmth. Yet, he's not afraid to tell you the truth in love.

Strength. One of my favorite examples, and we studied this as a church a little while ago, it was in John chapter 8. In John chapter 8, you will remember, if you were here, some religious leaders of Jesus' day say they caught a woman in adultery, committing adultery.

I suppose they saw her coming out of some married man's house, and they caught her and grabbed her and drug her to Jesus. It was a trap, by the way.

[12:09] They wanted to trap Jesus, but they brought this dear woman. She was a pawn in their plan. Adultery in that day could be punished by death.

Same today, but when we do it, it's called murder. Never mind, y'all didn't get that. Thank you, brother. I think you got it. It was a trap.

They were trying to get him in trouble with the authorities or with the crowd. Now, Jesus looked at the men who brought this woman, this dear woman in, and he says to them, he who is without sin, let him cast the first stone.

You remember that? Everybody knows that. Whether you read the Bible or not, you heard this story before. He who is without sin, let him cast the first stone. Then he took his eyes off of them, sat down, got on the ground, and started writing on the ground in the dirt.

He like he just dismissed them. Took his eyes off and said, just started writing. And then he stands up at some point, and they're gone.

[13:13] And by the way, Jesus tends to dismiss self-righteous people. Because self-righteous people think they're better or more spiritual than other people. He tends to dismiss them.

And that's what happened. He dismissed those guys. And then he stands up, and they all felt guilty, right? Remember, they felt guilty because they all knew they had sin in their lives. They dropped their stones and walked away.

Jesus stands up and says, where'd they go? He's talking to the woman. Sweetheart, where'd they go? Nobody here? He says to her, is there nobody here to condemn you?

She says, no, sir. And then Jesus says, neither do I condemn you. Listen, go now and sin no more. All of that's important.

He didn't justify her sin. He calls her out, actually. But then offers a change, and he offers acceptance to her. He is offering her love and change at the same time.

[14:16] He's displaying mercy, warmth, and strength. Compelling. That kind of love grabbed her by the heart, I'm sure.

And that kind of love is what grabs us by the heart. That's the kind of love that Paul says grabbed him by the heart and kept him going throughout the Roman world of that day, risking his life till finally he was killed, he was beheaded.

What kept him going? What kept him moving? He had met a compelling love. He had met someone so compelling, more compelling than anyone he'd ever met.

He ran into Jesus, the living son of God, who was risen from the dead. Remember, Paul was trying to kill Christians and throw them in prison, but then he ran into someone who was more compelling than his theology.

More compelling than his personal brand. More compelling than his ambition. More compelling than his pedigree, because he had a very good pedigree.

[15:21] He met somebody named Jesus. And that love, his love that he displayed on the cross, got a hold of him.

And that same love that brought him out of the grave, got a hold of him. And he could not escape. He was dominated by that love. Have you been? Have you been?

Have you been? Have you been? Have you been? Have you been dominated by that love? We need to know this Jesus of the compelling selfless love. Would you like to know that Jesus?

Would you like to know that Jesus? This is why Paul tells people about him. The second thing I want you to notice, the selfless Savior's love is also sacrificial.

Sacrificial. That's what Paul said here, and he repeats it, actually, in verses 14 and 15. We've concluded this, that one died for all, meaning Jesus, therefore all have died.

[16:29] He died for all. Says it again, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised. Three times in his passage, Paul says that Jesus died for all, for his people.

He died. He died that his people might live. You see, here's the thing. You were all born dead in sin. We're all born this way. We're all born unresponsive to God. Like any dead body you might see at a funeral, unresponsive.

But God in his matchless, unearned, undeserved kindness, which is what we call grace, makes people alive so that at some point in their lives.

They see and hear about the death of Jesus. And they go, I see it. At some point, they recognize, it's true.

[17 : 35] He is real. He did die. For me, it becomes personal. And now you are raised from the dead. You who were dead spiritually are now raised from the dead so that you can walk with Christ.

But it's all because of his selfless, sacrificial death. He sacrificed himself for his people who were trapped in sin and at that time didn't even want him.

Romans 5 says it this way. For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person, one would dare even to die.

But God, or that phrase, but God chose his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. His death was to pay for our sins.

And because we're all doomed to eternal death for our cosmic treason against God, we're all doomed. We all stand guilty. Treason against God and thought, word, and deed.

[18 : 49] And when we stand before the judge of all the earth, the judge of all the earth has only one thing to say. The gavel slams. Guilty. Guilty. There's no other, there's no other reprieve.

There's no other, there's no other thing he can say. Because we're all guilty. Unless someone comes along who is perfect and willingly takes our place to make payment for us.

But the problem is no one is perfect. I don't care who you know, who you, the nicest person you know is not perfect. So God did what we could not do.

He provided the perfect substitute for us. He provided one who is perfect. The Son of God in His perfection steps in.

And I know, and I want you to notice this. He doesn't say, if you clean yourself up and promise to follow me, then I will die for you. Oh, if He had said that, none of us would be saved.

[19 : 58] None, we would have no hope. Humanity would be doomed. It would be the flood all over again. But this time, no Noah. Jesus temporarily sacrificed His glory in heaven.

He sacrificed it for the pain, the derision, the torture, the shame, and the death to save people like you and me.

2 Corinthians 5.21 For our sake, God the Father made Him, Jesus, to be sin who knew no sin. So that in Him, Jesus, we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 8.9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, for our sake He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich.

A selfless love. A selfless sacrifice. So what is the effect of this kind of love on those who trust Jesus as their Savior and master of their lives?

[21 : 14] What's the effect? The selfless Savior's love creates selfless people. And you heard it in 15b.

The second part of verse 15. You heard it said, Why does Jesus do this? That those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.

Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Resurrection Sunday. Jesus displays the greatest selfless act in all of humanity at the cross.

But He didn't just die. He rose again for the sake of those who trust Him. Before we surrender to this compelling love, we all live for ourselves.

This is the human condition. The fallen human condition is that we all live for ourselves. To be human is to be self-focused, self-centered, self-assured, self-promoting, and just plain selfish.

[22 : 36] selfish. The Apostle Paul actually warns the church. Now, again, I'm going to tell you, Paul is talking to the church in this warning.

2 Timothy chapter 3. I want you to hear this. It's not going to be on the screen. So pay it. Is it up there? Oh, thank you. Listen, watch this carefully. I'll read it this way.

But understand this. Paul, Timothy's a pastor. In Ephesus, a city called Ephesus, Paul's writing to him. Understand this, Timothy. In the last days, there will come times of difficulty. For, watch this, for people will be lovers of self.

That is the controlling statement for the rest of everything he says. Meaning, lovers of money. Proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents.

Ooh, how'd that get in there? Ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit.

[23 : 46] And then he rounds it out. Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Now, you know, he's talking to the church. Watch this. Having the appearance of godliness, but denying his power.

And then he says that those terrifying words, avoid such people. He's talking to a pastor, and he's telling a pastor he should avoid people in the church who look like that.

People who are so, who live their lives as if they only, they're the only ones that matter, who live their lives. I read that, and I thought, social media. You want to see where that plays out so well? Go on social media. And you see the self-centeredness of people. Matter of fact, there's a word that's been coined over the years, and there's actually a study that's been done that says, it said epidemic proportions in our country.

And there's a word for it, what we're talking about. You know what that word is? Andrew, you know what that word is. I bet you know. Because he's smart. Narcissism. Ah, see, I knew you knew.

[24 : 55] You know, Rachel? There's an epidemic in our country, it's been saying this for years now, of narcissism. Narcissism. Literally, it means self-love.

The Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling, as a Christian, says it, puts it this way. What is narcissism? A vain preoccupation with self, or a preening self-centeredness.

Later, the term described a triad of vanity, exhibitionism, and arrogant ingratitude. Man, that's social media, I'm telling you. The late 20th century has been called the age of narcissism, or an intensely individualistic, self-centered, and hedonistic, that's pleasure-seeking, culture, devoted to the quest of a peak performance.

Many of you are probably familiar with the story of the term narcissism. It's an ancient Greek myth, right? A young man by the name of Narcissus was incredibly handsome.

He was so handsome, he was beautiful. Muhammad Ali used to say he was pretty. This guy had Ali B. And every creature, everything just kind of fell in love with him.

[26 : 16] But one day, this young man was by a lake and he saw his reflection in the water. And he fell in love with his reflection.

He kept trying to grab it, but it was water, of course. He couldn't grab it. And he pined away until he died there. And the gods turned him into a flower.

And it's a flower that's supposed to be, supposed to grow by rivers of water and lean towards them. That's the story of narcissists and where we get the idea of narcissism.

We just love ourselves. Paul is talking about that in 1 Timothy 3. This self-love, this self-focus, and it's in our churches.

And Paul says, if people live like that, Timothy, you're that pastor, have nothing to do with them. I'm just reading the Bible, y'all.

[27 : 18] I just... Because that person doesn't want to... That person wants the church to be for them, to cater to them, to give me what I want.

I pay my dues, not give me. They give nothing back. They're like the pirates in Pirates of the Caribbean. I love that motto. Take all you can, give nothing back.

That's the narcissist. That's what's in our culture. That's what's... That's self-centeredness and self-focus that we all have to deal with. Now, of course, Rev Kev, of course, now I know I should be less selfish toward my family.

I know I should be less selfish toward my friends. You're right, Pastor. You want it, man. You're good. You're good. I know I need to be a good person to my family and friends and better person. I need to help my neighbors maybe, you know, do more about, you know, being nice to my neighbors and, you know, I should be...

And Pastor, I should be nicer on my driving, man, because I'm on the road and people crazy and I really get off. I just... I know I need to be nicer person, less selfish. Well, yes. I agree with you.

[28 : 37] But listen, family. The eternal Son of God did not leave the glories of His heavenly existence, suffered the limitations and plagues of becoming a human, putting up with folk, dogging His steps, plotting His death, then actually achieving His death, executing Him in the worst possible way of that time, the horrible death, as an enemy of the state on a cross.

Then, then, in great glory, rising from the dead in power and majesty, He didn't do all of that merely to make you a nice person.

Right. Because you ain't that nice and you won't ever be that nice. Jesus came to show His amazing, compelling, self-sacrificial love to deliver us from ourselves so that we can then live for Him.

He wants to deliver you from you. That's more than nice, y'all. He's delivering Kevin Smith from Kevin Smith that Kevin Smith might truly serve Him and live for Him.

Listen, the opposite of living for yourself is not, listen, is not merely living for other people or causes, no matter how good they are. Why is that not the, why is that not the right?

[30 : 09] Because it's still about you. And the good feelings you get out of those things. The opposite of living for yourself is living for your Creator.

Why is that so? Because ultimately, selfishness is superimposing your will on God's will. You're self-willed.

Ultimately, selfishness is saying to God, it's all about me. Here are two good questions about how you view God.

Do you want to know God's will to do it or to vote on it? Do you want to know God's will to do it or to vote on it?

Second question. Is your love for Jesus a transactional love? You love Him as long as He does what you want and gives you what you believe you need.

[31 : 12] He's Jesus then. He's all right now. But once He crosses the line, you see, it's all about you.

But there's good news. Steve Matheson, his book Risen, says, Jesus' death and resurrection makes it possible for us to live for someone greater than ourselves.

And I put in there, including other people in our causes. He makes it possible for you to live for someone greater than yourself. And that's what the cross and resurrection does.

It creates selfless people who are willing to lay down their lives for Jesus and are willing to give of themselves to others because they recognize it really isn't all about me.

They recognize because they see, because of Jesus, they recognize that it wasn't really all about Him when He died for us. It wasn't all about Him. He gave Himself. It wasn't all about Him.

[32 : 19] It was about His love, about His Father's glory and His love for us. And now, when you embrace that, when you meet Jesus, when you see His glory and majesty, when you come face to face and that truth, that compelling love gets a hold of you, when you find out, when you really begin to see that Jesus is real and that His death, not just, it was just a death, no, it was for you.

It was for me. When you begin to get, when that grabs a hold of you, maybe for the first time, oh my goodness, He begins to go to work in your heart. He begins to work in you so that now, more and more, day by day, year by year, you live more for Him.

To please Him, to glorify Him, to exalt Him. Why? Because you've never met a love like this before. You've never met a love or a man like this before.

There's nobody like Him. The cure for selfishness and narcissism is not drugs. Maybe not even therapy.

It's coming face to face with the death and resurrection of Jesus and letting His love overwhelm you. So what's it going to be?

[33 : 51] You're going to be a caterpillar? You can. And you'll keep crawling around in the dirt of your own self-centeredness. And that's nowhere to live and nowhere to die.

Christians, Christians, you are in process of being transformed. Are you cooperating with the one who loves you?

Are you coming to Him and saying, Lord, do a work? You see, is God speaking to you? Do you see where you are? Do you see your own self-focused and centeredness and demanding to be served? That's your Savior loving you. And now He wants you to trust Him. Because fear makes people, is one of the things that makes people self-centered. Fear. Fear.

And perfect love, the Bible says, casts out fear. Don't fear. Jesus loves you. Fear Him. Reverence Him. Be in awe of Him.

[35 : 03] And let His love once again renew you this season. In Jesus' name. Amen. Father, bless your word to your people's hearts and to all who hear.

Deliver us from ourselves. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Afe Generally,