

The Great Commission

Sermon #1: Authority

Matthew 28:18-20

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- January 8, 2023

When I was a younger parent, when the kids were little bitty (they were preschool and elementary age), on Saturdays that were cold or rainy I'd take the kids out before the stores opened and we'd go to Lakeline Mall up the street. And I'd go in one of those corridors or hallways and just sit in a chair and try to exhaust the children. It was going to be a long day inside. So, we'd play Red Light/Green Light. You know? I'm standing at the end and they have turn around. If I say "green light" they run until I turn around. I'd say "red light" and if I catch them moving they have to go all the way back. You know how that works. And then if they get to me, I'm still in charge. Yeah, that's my rules, my house. So, I just kept sitting in that chair playing Red Light/Green Light.

And then when they got a little bit tired of that and I saw it coming, I'd play Simon Says. Oh, I love Simon Says. I mean, whatever Simon says, they have to do. If Simon doesn't say "Simon says," you don't. That's how you play it. You know how to play the game. But just the idea—the power, the authority.

Simon says, Run in circles. And they'd run in circles.

Simon says, Run faster.

Simon says, Jump as high as you can.

Simon says, Fall on the ground.

Simon says, Do a push-up.

Simon says, Jump high in the air again.

I invented the burpee. That's how it happened. Simon Says, right there at Lakeline Mall. It was great.

I probably wasn't a very good parent, but I was a smart parent. And I have fond memories of Simon Says. *Simon says, Cluck like a chicken.* And these kids would go, *Cluck, cluck, cluck* and couldn't be happier, clucking like a chicken.

The hard part was coming home. Because when I came home with all this authority over these children, I'd say, *Okay, Simon says, Clean your room.* They'd say, *No.* What?

I'd look at Melinda and say, *You pick up my socks.* *Simon says, Don't hit your husband.* *Simon says, Red light, red light.* Anyway, it went something like that.

Jesus Is King

Today we're going to learn about authority—real, true authority—authority that has been granted and authority that has been earned—both kinds of authority. This is the theme. There is a kingdom. There's a king. And He has a right to rule and have authority over His dominion. It's not Simon says. With the Bible, it's *The King has spoken.* Because there's a kingdom. And there's a king.

Today there's a pretty simple outline: that Jesus is the King, and the authority of that King. We're going to look at that, as it introduces the passage that we're going to look at later.

Mark 1:1

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

But when you talk about Jesus being the King and the authority of the King, you want to turn to the Book of Mark. That's the theme of the Book of Mark. The very theme is that Jesus is the King. And he starts off by declaring that in the very first sentence, Mark 1:1: "This is the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

That very sentence is just packed full with the identity of Jesus Christ. One translator wrote the sentence this way: "Look, this is how all the good news got started: Jesus the Christ, the Son of God."

Anointed, Approved, and Initiated

The word "Christ"—the Greek word *christos* means "an anointed royal leader." The way a Hebrew person would interpret that word would be the word "Messiah," because it was the promised ruler of the world, the promised ruler of God. The point is that Jesus is not just a king—Jesus is the King.

So, Mark introduces the kingship of Jesus after this sentence by saying, *Look, every king needs a forerunner*. Even today a modern-day dignitary has an advance party that goes ahead of him and cleans up the streets and fills up the potholes and makes everything look pretty. Well, John the Baptist is that forerunner for Jesus. He's not concerned about litter; he's talking about litter of the soul. We have a righteous king coming and he's calling people to repent. He's saying to get your souls right for the righteous king. That's John the Baptist's job.

And so, after Mark introduces John in the context of him being the forerunner of the King, we see Mark showing rapid-fire this presentation of the King. He's going to say that the King has been anointed. He's approved. He will be initiated. And finally, it leads up the King's message. Verse after verse—watch what happens in this explanation of who Jesus is—Jesus is the King.

Mark 1:9-11

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, He saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on Hi like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.

And Jesus' baptism is not like any other baptism. A lot happens in just a few sentences. Verses 9 through 11 in Mark's first chapter says, “At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, He saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove.” That is the anointing of this King.

Next: “And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’” That's the King's approval being granted. He's been anointed, He's been approved.

Mark 1:12-13

The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness,¹³ and He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan.

The very next sentence it's time to be initiated. He's being led out by the Spirit. "And the Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness, and He was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan."

Jesus was to come and submit to the Father and take on the fullness of human experience. And He had to prove himself worthy and earn His authority, in some respects, by submitting to that and showing himself to be fully human and to be showing himself fully enveloped in temptation. He's been granted authority; now He's earning this authority.

The King's Message

Mark 1:14-15

... Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying,¹⁵ "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in this good news."

Anointed, approved, initiated ... and now the message of the King. Listen carefully. I'm going to refer back to this multiple times today. The message of the King is found in the next verses, 14 and 15. "And Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.'" So, the application—"Repent and believe in this good news."

Repent means to change your beliefs, your values about, in this case, the nature of God and Jesus Christ. Often when you change the way you think about something you're going to change your conduct. So, repent in the way you think and in what you do.

In a positive way He says to believe in this good news. Some translations will say the word “gospel” because “gospel” literally translates as “good news.” What’s the good news? What’s the event that He’s talking about believing in? That Jesus is the King. Jesus is that King.

That’s the first part of the outline. The second part of the outline is the demonstration of the King’s authority. When Mark is going to start using this word “authority”—this will be the first time he does that—I want you to know what it means. The root word for “authority” is “author.” The idea is that an author creates and rules and owns. If I’m a writer of something, if I write a book, then I have authority over that plotline. Every one of those characters do whatever I write into the storyline. If you’re the author of something, if you’ve created something, you have authority over that.

And so, Jesus is going to show himself to have authority over His creation. All things were created by Him and for Him. He will show this authority in four ways, just in this first chapter, one sentence after another. He’s going to show that He has authority in His teaching; King Jesus has authority over evil spirits; He has authority over illness; Jesus has authority over disease and even shame associated with that.

Authority of the King: Teaching

Mark 1:21-22

And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²² And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

Here’s what King Jesus does with authority in teaching. The next set of verses, 21 and 22, right after our last section, right after His initiation: “And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished with His teaching, for He taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes”—not as the scribes, the other teachers.

How was Jesus teaching with authority? Why were the people astonished or amazed? Because He wasn’t using other references to validate or prove His points. Jesus wasn’t like other scribes, quoting other scholars. He wasn’t going back and referring to some kind of tradition.

When He taught, Jesus referenced himself, because He's the author of Holy Writ. The people were dumbfounded. Another translation says they were astonished, they were amazed.

When you read the Gospels and you study the teaching of Jesus, you'll hear Jesus say, "Well, you have heard it said ... but I say ..." Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, this is the way it is." He's saying, *This is what I said when I was speaking to Moses, if we're looking at the Pentateuch. This is what I was referencing when I talked to Moses.* He's the author of it. He has authority over it. He has dominion over it.

It'd be like our Thomas Jefferson arguing before the Supreme Court and justices are getting tied up in the meaning of one of the rights in the Bill of Rights and Jefferson says, "No, this is what that right meant. I helped write that. It was a Tuesday morning. I know what it means. I'm the author."

So, when Jesus is astonishing people, and people are taken aback, it's because it's like "Simon says ..."—no, it's like "Moses says ..."—no, it's even more than that—it's "Jesus says ..." That's how His teaching was. He's the author. He's the authority in His teaching.

Authority of the King: Over Evil Spirits

Mark 1:23-25

And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. ²⁴ And he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who You are—the holy one of God." ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"

Right after that happens, Jesus shows himself to have authority over the spiritual world, evil spirits. Look what it says in verse 23: "And immediately there was someone in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the holy one of God.' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!'"

Now if there's a spiritual war going on—and there is—when King Jesus shows up and He wields His sword, it's not much of a battle. There's not even a skirmish taking place. He says, "Be muzzled, get out."

Mark 1:26

And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

And do you know what the demon does? He does what he's told. Look at verse 26: "And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

Mark 1:28

And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

Can you imagine how people reacted? You don't have to imagine. Here's what they did. And when they all saw that, "They were amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? A new teaching with'---there's the word—" 'authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.'"

There is a kingdom. There is a King. And He has authority over all of His domain. And that includes the spiritual world. He rules that too.

I don't know what your parents told you about Jesus or some of your friends or your co-workers or some professor in college. But firsthand accounts of people that saw Jesus interact in real time saw and heard the spirit would say He was the most holy one of God. And whatever He said, that demon did. He said, *Shut up and get out!* And so, they did.

Do you remember the message of Jesus? He said to repent and to believe in the gospel. Yeah, repent—I don't know what you thought about Jesus, but you need to change your view to include this. Because this is the good news. This is great news. And the news is that Jesus is King and He has authority over everything that belongs to Him, even in the spiritual world. Jesus has authority in His teaching; Jesus has authority in the spirit world; Jesus has authority over sickness.

Authority of the King: Over Sickness

Mark 1:29-31

And immediately He left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told Him about her. ³¹ And Jesus came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

The next event that takes place: “Immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told Him about her. And Jesus came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.”

Simon says—I mean, Jesus says, *Get better*. And so, she did. He's the King. You obey. That's how it works.

Authority of the King: Over Disease and Shame

Mark 1:40

A man with leprosy came to Jesus and begged Him on his knees, “If you are willing, You can make me clean.”

The last story here on authority shows His authority over disease and even shame, because the disease we'll be looking at was leprosy. Some of you know about the illness. It's lifelong, it's hopeless. There's a social dynamic that's attached to it. People back then didn't know the difference between the infectious leprosy and the non-infectious kind, and so they put them all together and cast them out from the people that they loved for the sake of the safety of everyone around. But it's incurable. And so, there was shame associated with it. They would have to cover their face with a mask. We know what that's like. But it hides their identity in

many ways. And they'd go around in a tribe of other lepers and they'd have to be yelling, "Unclean! Unclean!" Some of them wore bells like a cow so that other people wouldn't get too close to them.

So, they're ostracized and they're lonely and they're without hope. That's the nature of this disease. And Jesus comes upon a man in verse 40: "A man with leprosy came to Jesus and begged Him on his knees, 'If you are willing, You can make me clean.'"

And King Jesus says, "I am willing. You be well. You be whole." *Here's your dignity restored to you.* Because He could ...

If you look at the miracles in the gospels, they're purposeful. It's layer after layer, it's proof after proof, that all the realms of creation submit to Jesus, as He is King and He reigns. God reigns through the hand and the sword of King Jesus. Everything does what Jesus says and everything obeys.

Repent and Believe the Gospel

If you remember the message of Jesus---remember after His initiation? Repent and believe in the gospel. Maybe that's why He even came here today, January 2023---repent and believe in the gospel.

Let me explain. Repent means to reverse course. It means to change your direction, to turn around; to turn away and to turn towards. And this year maybe that's what is happening in your life. There's a big change coming. And the change is about who runs your life. That's what needs to change. And when you change your thoughts about who runs your life, you'll probably change your conduct. That's what needs to be repented of as well. Stop doing destructive things to you, to other people, in your relationship with God, and start doing things that are spiritually healthy, emotionally healthy, and physically healthy. But repent.

Who has the authority in your life? Who has the authority over your dreams? The message of the King is that you need to repent and bring it online to what is real. And what's real is that Jesus is King.

You have to repent, and He says to believe in the gospel. That word "gospel" is a real church word. It's a spiritual word. But that's not what the word meant back then. It wasn't associated with faith-oriented topics. It was purely a secular word. It means good news. And when you get down to the root of it, even the root of the word "good" is the word for joy. So, it's

a joy-news. It's an event in history that you didn't know about that's brought into your life, and it makes you feel overwhelmed with joy. It's a life-shaping, historical fact that's brand new to you, and you should know about it. It's a gospel event.

It's so secular—again, we've made these church words, but we stole them from regular Greek. A great example of this is when Greece finally defeats Persia at the battle of Marathon. Some of you know this story. When the Greeks finally beat them, they get a runner, a communicator, an evangelist (that's where we get that word), to run to Athens twenty-six miles away (that's where we get the race) because they won. And what kind of news does he tell Athens that they didn't know about? It was good news. No, it was not ... it was great news! It was the gospel. *We fought the Persians, we beat the Persians, we are free!* That's good news. That's great news.

This is the gospel that Mark's referring to that Jesus is talking about when He says to repent and believe in the good news that Jesus has come and He's the King and He rules everything that He touches. Everything belongs to Him. He's the King we've all been longing for and He has authority over everything. And that might be news to some of you. Well, it's real.

But the reason I'm bringing up the secular nature of this is because this is not good advice; it's not good religious insight. It's good news. There's a historical event attached to this information. It is the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the event that we believe in so that we can know with confidence that we have a right standing with God, the holy God of the Bible, because of what Jesus did. He died for our sins and was raised so that we might inherit His righteousness. That's news. That's great news! Believe in that great news. It's not advice. It's not wishful thinking. It's not a religious thing. It's an event.

So, Jesus says, "Follow me. I'll be the King. I'm Messiah. Repent and believe."

Now from what we've studied so far, why would you do that? Why would you follow Jesus? Because He's the King. Because He's been declared the King and He's earned that right. He's the author of our souls. He's the author of our salvation. He owns us. We belong to Him. That's why we should live for Him. Enough said.

He's a good King. It doesn't matter, because we still follow, based on His authority. But He's a good King. It's a benevolent monarchy. He loves us. He's proven that. Whatever He asks us to do is for our best interests. Whatever He's going to require of us would cause us to be better and enjoy this life, but certainly the next more so.

So, we could do it because it's the best thing to do, but also, primarily, because He has the right. He's the King. And that's how life works with a king.

So, what are you going to do about that today? Maybe today is that day for you. It's news to you about the kingship of Jesus, and it's news to you about the forgiveness that's provided. So, this January of 2023 why don't you repent and believe in that good news?

Jesus' Last Words Before Ascending

That's been a twenty-five minute introduction. Now we'll look at today's passage. We'll be out of here by two o'clock. That was a long introduction so that we might understand, by looking at Mark's gospel, about what it means to be a king and what it means to have authority. Because now we're going to look at—and we're going to spend the next few weeks on this—the last words of the King in Matthew's gospel. You always want to take a look at what people start a story with and end a story with. Matthew ends with red letters. In the Bible that means that Jesus is speaking.

Matthew 28:18

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

And he's going to end this gospel with the climax of the King coming and giving us an order. In Matthew chapter 28, now that we appreciate the word "authority" and understand what a king does (he rules over what belongs to him), verse 18 says, "And Jesus came and said to them,"—here it is—"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

We're just studying verse 18 today. But look what He says and look what it means. Now the rest of the section, verses 19 through 20, is what we call the Great Commission, and we'll study that in weeks to come.

Matthew 28:19-20

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

And here's what it says in verses 19 and 20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Look at all the "alls". Look at all that authority. All authority has been given to Jesus. I want you to go and make disciples. Teach them all that I have commanded you. I want you to go to all nations to make sure no one misses out. And I'll be with you all the days. That's power.

You know what's better than power? Authority. The words were chosen particularly for a purpose.

Here's a great quote about the difference between power and authority. "Not merely power or might (*dunamis*), such as a great conqueror might claim, but, rather, 'authority'—a different Greek word—"as something which is His by right, conferred upon Him by the Father who has the right to bestow it." That's what He's appealing to, this right as a King to rule His domain.

Look, in the Bible there are five reasons to do good. There are five different motives that the Bible appeals to, to live a righteous life. The first two are kind of secular. You're going to see those in the writings of Confucius or a Greek stoic.

The first one is that it's right to do right. It's based on our design, the ontological ... the way we're made. Do right—it works. That's the way we're supposed to be living.

The second one follows. Doing wrong is wrong. Doing right is right, doing wrong is wrong. We're not made to do those wrong things. That's why the wrong way is called the hard way. *I learned that the hard way*. Do you know what that means? That means you ignored the way you were made. You don't even need to have revelation from God for that, but it's in the Bible.

The third one is very specific in the Bible, and that is we receive eternal rewards. It just says it. The Bible makes promises. Jesus and other people in the Bible are mentioning this from God's perspective. You make temporal choices and it has eternal rewards ahead of you. There's no such thing as sacrificing in this life. This is the carrot—you should do this because you'll be rewarded for eternity for the decisions that you make in this temporal existence. That's the third reason.

The fourth reason is that God's wisdom is greater than our wisdom. It's different than those first two in that we don't understand, a lot of times, what we ought to be doing, and we just refer to the Bible. And God's wisdom is so much more profound than ours, His omniscience, His all-knowing-ness. So, we just do what we're told to do because it's the wisest thing to do.

But between those four that we've talked about, we're not talking about any of those in this passage of Scripture. There's no reference to rewards or how right is right and wrong is wrong. The fifth motivation in the Bible to do the right thing is this one: authority. You'll see all five of these when you parent, but this one when you parent teenagers. *Because I said so ... that's why you obey*. Remember what authority means? It comes from the word "author." It means that I created this thing. So, usually, the *I said so* is followed by *I brought you into this world*. Yeah.

That's what He's appealing to. "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." There it is. It's granted authority, it's earned authority. Again, if this were mythical or a great story being told, and it's been told multiple times in different ways, the great king is coming. He's taken the throne that He was anointed for, that He was approved for, that He was born into. But He didn't earn it ... and then He did. He went off and was able to slay the invincible dragon, and then He comes back and everyone wants to submit to His authority now because it was granted Him and He earned it.

And what was the invincible dragon that Jesus the King killed? Death. He killed death. And now sin has no sting. And it was just His granted authority, but now it's His earned authority. King Jesus, absolute authority over all the created realm. And every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus Christ is King, to the glory of the Father. Everywhere, everything. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.

Jesus is our authority. He's the author of our existence. He owns us. And so, we belong to Him.

You know, when you look at this passage of Scripture that's pretty common to us—it's called the Great Commission. It kind of stands next to what we call the Great Commandment—to love the Lord your God and to love your neighbor. Those are the commandments of God, this is the commission of God. Am I missing something? It looks like a command to me. I'm only looking at verse 18 right now, but it starts with "All authority has been granted to me in heaven and on earth, therefore ..." That sounds like it's not an option. It sounds like whatever He says next we're going to do, because we're supposed to do this.

The Great Commission isn't for the adventurous Christian. *Okay, you go out there, you do what He told us to do, and, you know ... don't forget to write us prayer letters. We'll be praying for you. And if we have some leftover stuff we'll send you some money. Tell us about that optional little adventure we could be on.*

I'm not seeing that. "All authority has been granted to me in heaven and on earth, therefore ..."

Think of it in a different context. The highest-ranking five-star general—I'm the supreme commander of the military, go take that hill. And the soldier said, *Sir, yes sir.* Right?

I'm the boss of all the bosses. Now I want everybody in the office at 8:00 in the morning. And the people said, *I'll be there early.*

This passage says, *I own you. I own everything. I'm King Jesus, and I say jump.* And we say, *How high?*

Jesus says, *I am the conquering King.* And we say, *We're Your humble servants.*

All authority has been granted to Jesus in heaven and on earth. Why should we obey Him? Because He said so. That's it. The King has spoken. Eternity is a monarchy. It's not a Camelot monarchy where there's a round table and we can all negotiate on what's right, wrong, and real. No, it's a long hallway and at the end there's a throne, and whatever is stated is fact. And if King Jesus said to us, "All authority has been granted to me in heaven and on earth. Shave your heads, go to some busy intersection where your friends can see you and just cluck like chickens..." would we want to do that? It doesn't matter. Would we do it? There it is—would we do it? Simon says, *Cluck like chickens.* Jesus says, *Cluck like that.* Yeah, because He says so.

The Christian should be willing and readily able to humiliate themselves regularly for the King if that's what it clearly says in the Bible. "All authority has been granted to me in heaven and on earth. Make disciples."

We're on it. I mean, I'll tell you what that means in the next week, but make disciples. Do you want to do it? It doesn't matter. Would you do it? Yeah.

What is it going to cost? It doesn't matter, right? It doesn't matter. Here's what it costs. It'll cost you everything. It will cost you nothing. He's going to want everything, and you're going to get everything back. But all the good stuff...

He says, "Take up your cross, deny yourself, and follow me." You're going to lose your ego, your pride, your vanity, all the crazy temporal fears. And you'll gain eternal security. You'll lose your temporal aimlessness and gain eternal purpose. You give Him everything because He said to give Him everything. But He's a good King. And He's going to give you more than you could ever ask or imagine. But it's going to cost you everything. And we'll do it, because we follow the King. Because all authority has been granted to Him on heaven and on earth.

We're looking at one verse today. We're really looking at one concept, at one word, and that word is "authority." Here's what we know from working through this passage together today. The demons obey King Jesus and illness submits to Jesus and disease and shame will bow their ugly heads to that King. And so, now what about me? What about you? Is He the King? Jesus says ... not Simon says. Today let's answer, *We are your lowly servants, happy to do whatever You say.*

Let's pray that God would root out the rebel in us. We have so much practice with lack of submission. We're Americans. We won't submit to the queen. We're Texans. We can start our own country any time we want. We're Austinites—we don't like being part of Texas. I own my own business. We're in a Bible church, because there were 125,000 different denominations that were Protestant and we couldn't find one, so we'll start our own. It's like ... oh, good grief. And the King says submit? Well, we'll have to look that word up. We are practiced in rebellion. Let's pray that God's Spirit would find that out in us and put it where it belongs and send it to hell. Let's send our rebellion to hell like a demon. Call it out. Let's pray.

Dear King Jesus, whatever You ask we will do. We'll go anywhere to do anything. If it's humiliating, that's so much the better. We'll go anywhere to do anything for anyone at any time,

because You're the King. We're just lowly servants. You're a good King. We're grateful for that. But You're a King. You have authority, You rule, You reign in everything, and now we ask, Lord, that You would reign in our lives. I'd ask that You would help us understand the grotesque rebellion that is deep-seeded in the roots of my soul. No one tells me what to do—that's sin. That's a plaque over the gates of hell.

So, Lord, I'd ask that You would call that out in us, that we would hear it when we speak it, that You would amplify that in our conscience when we think those thoughts, when we selectively pick passages that we like to obey, as though that matters; that we'd be good soldiers, faithful servants, members of Your kingdom, known for their obedience. I'd ask that You would do that in our church, that we would be known for doing things that are misunderstood or considered crazy in our culture. Because we'd rather be obedient than respected. Make that true in my life. Make that true in our lives. Make that true in the life of Your church called Grace. We pray this in Jesus' holy name. And all God's people said ... Amen.