

Sermon Transcript from January 24th, 2016
The Meaning of the Bible
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Turn to Luke 24. This will not be on the screen. Tonight, the teaching is called "The Meaning of the Bible." Luke 24. I know I say this a lot, and it probably has no more meaning to you. But, this is one of my favorite stories in the Bible. It just has been forever. It's so pregnant with humor and meaning and beauty and surprise. So, on page 851 in my Bible, Luke 24:13. This is after Jesus' crucifixion and there have been rumors of a resurrection. There have been rumors of it. They're like, "A couple ladies went to the tomb early in the morning. They met an angel. They came back and they're like, 'Oh my gosh. He said that Jesus rose from the dead.'"

And there's these rumors. And what's interesting is that these two guys are in Jerusalem that are followers of Jesus who pinned all their hopes on Christ, saw Him be crucified and then heard rumors of Him having raised from the dead, and they somehow just decided to leave anyways. So, they're leaving Jerusalem. I would never leave Jerusalem. It's like, there's stirrings of a resurrection. They're like, "Really? I have a thing. I've got to go."

But they do. They have a thing. So they're talking away. But, Jesus goes after them. So cool.

Luke 24:13, "Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them," – and I love Jesus so much. He's just like, "Hey, umm, what are you guys talking about?"

They stood still and they stopped. I mean, they just stopped. Their faces just downcast.

"One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, 'Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have just happened these days?'"

And Jesus is like, "What things?"

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped..." – one of my favorite lines in this whole section – "...that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since this all took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early in the morning, but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

"Jesus said to them, 'How foolish you are, and slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?'"

Luke 24:27. This is so good. "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets..."

"All the Prophets." That is like a catchall for the writers of the Old Testament. Moses and the writers of the Pentateuch.

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

So, He's walking along with them and He gives them a Bible study on all the Old Testament and how all of it is supposed to be fulfilled in Him. And they still didn't recognize Him.

"As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, 'Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it..." – does that sound familiar? – "...and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight."

That is so good. Like, "Jesus! Jesus? Where'd He go?"

"They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'"

Did our hearts not burn when He opened the Scriptures to us? Let's pray that happens tonight.

God, I thank You for the Scriptures. God, they're so beautiful. I pray that, as we're reading through the Bible this year, that we would not be so naive to think that we're reading the Bible and it's not reading us. Would You read us tonight? Would You know us tonight? Would You connect dots for us tonight? And would You appear to us? I pray that, even as this is a more technical sermon, that something would happen. Whether it's a response time or somewhere in the sermon where our hearts burn within us like Jesus is speaking to me. I pray that would happen. In Christ's name, amen.

So, I'm going to confess something to you. I'm going to confess my culpability in ruining the word "literally." If you've spent any amount of time with me, you know that I use that word not literally. I use it for everything, and I don't know why. I think it's just a fun word to say. You can say "lit-er-ally," you can say "li-trally." I don't know. It just rolls off. I just like it. A couple weeks ago on a Sunday morning, we were gathering for pre-service prayer, and it was really cold. I mean, it was cold. And we're all in there on Sunday morning pre-service prayer, gathered in a circle. And I said, "Guys, it has literally never been this cold in San Francisco."

Then a couple people laughed and then one person was like, "Really?" And then, right before all my pastoral reputation went out the window, I was like, "No no. Not literally. I don't use that word literally. I use that word really loosely."

It's just like, if I want to throw it into a sentence, I do. And we all kind of know this word "literally" doesn't always mean literally. Sometimes, it means "really truly." Like, when you say, "My Uber driver was literally the worst driver in the world." Like, you don't really know. You've never met every Uber driver in the world. You don't know that. But it's like you're saying basically it's pretty true. Like, he was really bad or she was really bad. But sometimes, the word "literally" neither means real or true. It means neither of those things.

Like when you say, "My boss is literally Hitler."

That's neither true nor real nor kind. You should never say that. But, most of us know when we say that word it has a wide range of meaning. It can mean "very truly," it can mean "literally literal," or it can mean neither of those things. You're just saying it to add emphasis to what you're saying. We know this word has a wide range of meaning, except when it comes to the Bible. Because this is the question that's come up a lot. I mean, especially this last month starting this series.

Do you take the Bible literally? This probably has come up in your community groups. This comes up. Do you take the Bible literally? This is like the center of the debate. How do you read the Bible? Do you read it literally? And we don't mean that word like "kind of truly" or "not really." Like, we mean literally. This is where the debate is. The churches that take the Bible literally, they're typically the ones that are accused. Like, "Does your church read the Bible literally?" Those churches are typically accused of not believing in dinosaurs and believing that God made the world in six literal days, 6,000 years ago.

Basically, this camp is accused of not believing in science. If you believe the Bible literally, you can't believe in science. This is kind of how the story goes. But then, if you're like, "No, my church doesn't read the Bible literally, we kind of read it more metaphorically." If you're in that camp, you basically are accused of not believing in the Bible. Like, "Well, you don't really believe the Bible then."

And you're accused of spiritualizing the whole thing. You're accused of not even believing in the Bible. So, there seems to be these two options here. Option one: do you read the Bible literally? And, if you read the Bible literally, then you throw out a ton of science stuff and you can't get into the sciences at all and you can't even get into psychiatry, you can't get into any of those fields. Or the other options is, "Well, I read the Bible metaphorically." Or that word can be a stand in for "spiritually."

Meaning, "This text just kind of informs me spiritually a little bit on my journey with God. I don't really take any of it literally. I mean, I take it kind of literally when I want to take it literally. Like, 'God loves me.' Literal. 'God's angry.' Not that literal. It's for my spirituality.

Whatever helps me that day, that's what I do."

So this question, "Do you read the Bible literally?" is really a question of how do you read the Bible? And the question that we're asking is a question of interpretation. This is a question of meaning. What does the Bible mean?

I grew up in Bakersfield, a very conservative, great town. Very conservative. Like, it's the Bible Belt of California, I think. And I grew up where this bumper sticker was everywhere. It was literally everywhere. Like, I remember seeing it before I was a Christian and after I was a Christian. It said this. You might have seen it. "God said it. I believe it. That settles it."

I saw this – if you grew up in Northern California, you've never even seen this phrase before. But, it was everywhere in Bakersfield. "God said it. I believe it. That settles it."

This is a literalist view of the Bible. "God said it. I believe it."

Now, I would say this is a very naive statement, because no one actually does this. No one does this. First of all, you can't do it because the Bible wasn't even written in English. So, you have to at least do some interpretation to even get it in your own language. So, if this was really accurate, it would be like, "God said it. I can't read it because it's in Greek or something like that," or, "I can't read it because it's in Hebrew."

That would be honest. But, even that, there is a bit of interpretation that's needed to get it from that language into your language. So, you can't really say God said it, I believe it. You have to say something else. And once you eat it in your own language, you might have to do some more work to find out what's really going on there. What does that even mean? Like, there's this ancient Near Eastern context of the Old Testament where, in order to make an oath, one man would put his hand under the other man's thigh.

What does that mean? Like, we don't do that. That's not how Chip Kelly was brought on the 49ers this last week. That's not how it happened on TV. I think it would have made for great television, but it just didn't happen. So you're like, "Okay, I see that. I read that, but what does that mean? And how do we take it to mean in our culture and our language today? We have to. So, there's this huge missing piece in the middle. The Bible says it. Yes. This is true. The Bible says it. But, what does it mean?"

So, the bumper sticker would be better read like this: "The Bible says it. I interpret it. God help everybody."

I'm really being serious about that last part. God help us when we interpret this thing. Because, how we interpret the Bible has everything to do with how we apply the Bible. What we take it to mean will inform us on what we're supposed to do with it and how we live in light of it. And there's a lot at stake if we interpret the Bible wrong. There's a lot. I mean, I feel it as a minister in San Francisco. I feel this all the time. This is like some of the crushing weight of being a pastor in this town. If you get this wrong, gosh, there's some big, huge implications.

See, with this book, you can crush people. I mean, I know I have a small Bible tonight. But, if you have a bigger Bible, it can crush them easier. But, this book can crush people. From it, you can say someone has no worth. That they're going to Hell because of the way they were born or because of where you were born or that God hates you. People do this all the time with the Bible.

But also, with this book, you can free people's conscience to live in sin. I can take the Bible and say, "You know what? That's not what the Bible means. You can actually live in greed, because God wants you to be wealthy. You can actually have a life of sexual fulfillment, because God doesn't want you to go without. You can live a life of violence, because God will give you strength to strike down your enemies."

I can take the Bible to mean something different and then apply it to you as a pastor, and you can be living in sin. But your conscience has a peace because you're like, "But, the pastor said this is the way you're supposed to read the Bible."

I mean, there's a lot at stake here. Interpret it wrongly translates into how we live before God and how we live before others and we can actually be under the judgment of God by interpreting the Bible wrong.

2 Peter 3:15 says this. Peter, one of the disciples of Jesus, later to be an apostle, says,

"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul..." – he's talking about Paul the Apostle. So, Peter's writing about Paul the Apostle.

"...our dear brother Paul also wrote you with wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand," – that is very true. If you've ever read Paul, you're like, "Some things are really hard for me to understand what Paul writes."

But listen what he says. Listen: **"which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."**

Okay. There's a few things going on here. Leave that slide up for a bit. There's a few things going on here. I'll just point out a couple. First of all, it seems that very early on in the Jesus movement, the writings of Paul were taken with a high level of authority in the churches. Peter compares Paul's writing to other Scriptures, and that word is used to describe, when it's used in the New Testament, the Hebrew Bible. So, Paul's writings were taken by the church and church authority to be on the same level as the Old Testament Scriptures. That's one thing that's going on here.

The other thing that's going on here is that Peter very passionately calls them ignorant and unstable. He says that you and I have the capability of taking the Scriptures and distorting them or twisting the Scriptures to our own destruction. We could take them and then run them through a grid of wrong interpretation. Maybe our own kind of "what we feel like" believing in the Bible and we kind of piecemeal it; we choose to believe this part but not that part. Or we choose to live under this part but not that part and we kind of pick and choose what we want to do with the Bible.

He says, "You can do that with the Bible and you can distort it to your own destruction." I mean, there's destruction at stake. I don't think Peter here is just talking about eternal destruction. I think he's talking about how we live in God's world today. That you can live a destructive life. You can be destructive to people around you, your relationships can be toxic, the way you see the world can be messed up. You can live a life so filled with discontent, a life so filled with greed, a life so filled with self-centeredness. Like, your life caves in on itself because you've distorted the Bible.

And ministers, gosh, ministers have it even worse because, if you're a minister, you don't just twist the Scriptures to your own destruction, but to the churches as well. And Jesus had some pretty choice words about that when He says, "It would be better to tie a rock around your neck and jump into a lake than lead people astray like this."

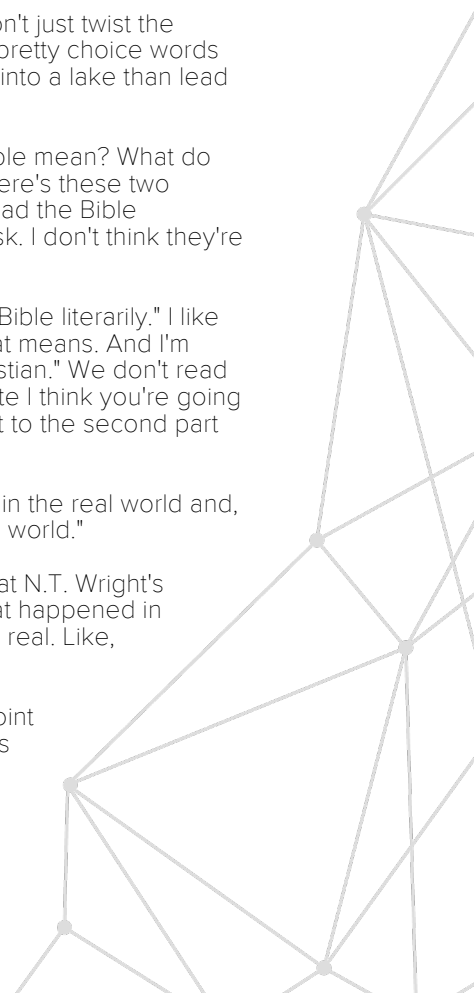
So, this question of "what does the Bible mean?" is everything. Like, what does the Bible mean? What do we take it to mean? How do we interpret it is everything? This is important stuff. So, there's these two options that we started out with. Do we read the Bible literally or, option two, do we read the Bible metaphorically? These are not fair questions. Now, these are questions that people ask. I don't think they're fair at all.

One of my friends has said, "We don't necessarily read the Bible literally, we read the Bible literarily." I like that a lot. I think he's right. We need to read the Bible literarily. Let me explain what that means. And I'm going to explain what that means by a quote from N.T. Wright in his book "Simply Christian." We don't read the Bible literally necessarily. We read the Bible literarily. Now, the first part of this quote I think you're going to agree with. It's the second part that I need you to pay attention to. But, you can't get to the second part unless I read you the first part. So, just hang tight. He says this:

"The Bible is full of passages which really do intend to describe things that happened in the real world and, for that matter, to command and forbid various types of actions which occur in the real world."

So, it seems right now what he – actually, it doesn't seem. This is what he's doing. What N.T. Wright's doing is he's saying that the Bible is literal. The Bible is literal and that it describes what happened in the real world and the commands are real and the people are real and the events are real. Like, this is real stuff here.

"The God of whom the Bible speaks is, after all, the creator of that world. Part of the point of the whole story is that He loves that world and intends to rescue it.; that He's put His plan into operation through a series of concrete events in actual history."



So, he's saying that those concrete events in actual history are literal and that He intends this plan to be worked out through the literal, concrete lives and the world of His people. So, don't go to the next slide yet. Just hang there. So, the Bible literally talks about a real world and real events and real commands and to live into God's real, concrete creation. And you are real people and I'm a real person and God is real and we're really supposed to take this stuff seriously.

So, in that sense, yes. It's literal. What we're saying is literal. But, the very next sentence, he says this:

"But, the Bible, like virtually all other great writing, regularly and repeatedly brings out the flavor, the meaning, the proper interpretation of these actually, concrete, space-time events by means of complex, beautiful and evocative literary forms and figures of which metaphor is only one."

So, what he's saying is that we take the Bible literally and that it tells a true story of human history from God's perspective. Wright's words are concrete. It tells of real events, real people and the real world. But, it does that literarily. Actually, it does that through according to different genres. It tells this real story through things like narrative and poetry and law and biography and prophecy and ancient apocalyptic writings and census data and letters, etcetera. Do you see?

It tells a story, but it does it through these things literarily. Here's a pie chart of the three main types of literature in the Bible. The three main types of literature in the Bible. Notice what makes up a large percentage of that is narrative. 44% of the Bible is narrative; story. 33% is poetry. And only 23% is discourse or teaching. Only 23% of the Bible is teaching. And notice that the biggest literary type represented is narrative. That means it's a story. The Bible is a story.

And, as you read the Bible all the way through, you'll realize that most of the poetry and most of the discourse is embedded in a larger story of who God is and what God is doing to redeem the world. So, even when you do read poetry and even when you do read teachings or discourse, it's set, a lot of it, most of it, inside a larger story of what God's doing to redeem His world.

So, here's the meta story of the Bible. Here's the story of God. Here's the big story. We're going to go through this – this is our next series, by the way. You have creation. Genesis 1, 2 and all throughout the Bible, by the way, as well. It harkens back to this. But, you have creation, then you have fall in Genesis 3 and then you have the covenant that God makes with Israel. He's yoking Himself up to Abraham and his people and, through this nation, He's going to redeem the world.

Then you have, in the middle of the covenant, between covenant and Jesus there is actually a whole bunch of stuff that's mostly Old Testament, of how Israel continues to fail to live under that covenant and in that covenant. Then you have Jesus who comes as a fulfillment of that story; the fulfillment of the covenant. And then you have the Church who lives under the new covenant, right? That's us. You and me. Then you have restoration of all things in Revelation.

That is the big sweeping story. That is so important as you're reading the Bible. The reason why it's so important is because you have to ask yourself some questions. You have to get the story because the Bible is more of a library of books than just – I know it's one book bound, but it's more of a library of books that tells this big story through all these different forms and different ways.

Timothy Keller writes this in "Counterfeit Gods," and I think he's right:

"The reason for our confusion over the Bible is that we usually read the Bible as a series of disconnected stories, each with a moral for how we should live our lives. It is not. Rather, it comprises a single story, telling us how the human race got to its present condition and how God, through Jesus Christ, has come and will come to put things right."

See, the way we get in trouble is we try to read a part of the Bible and find the moral of the story, and we lose our place in the Bible. So, it's important when we try to get to the meaning of what we're reading, we have to pay attention to what we're reading. Or, we have to pay attention – another way of saying it – to how what we're reading wants to be read. How is what you're reading, how does it want to be read? Does it want to be read as poetry? Does it want to be read as discourse? Does it want to be read as narrative? Does it want to be read as apocalyptic? Like, you have to ask that.

Don't say this out loud, because you might start sounding weird. Like, "How do you want to be read? What genre are you? What is this?"

This is the question of genre. Example: if you went to a bookstore or a library and you're browsing through books, it helps to know what genre you're under. If you know the genre of where you're at in the library or the bookstore, you know what to expect and you sort of know how to start even getting meaning out of the book you're about to pick up. So, if you're in the cookbook aisle or whatever, you know you're not in the sci-fi aisle and you know what to expect when you grab the book.

Let's say you're at the bookstore and you're in the cooking section and you read a recipe for tortilla soup. I don't want to make anyone hungry in here. I'm just saying. It sounds really good. And you're reading a recipe for tortilla soup and then you use this recipe for tortilla soup in the bookstore as a set of clues for finding a buried treasure. Let's just say you did that, because you're, I don't know, crazy. No matter how carefully you read it, you will end up poor and hungry. You will have no soup and no treasure because you've read it wrong.

This is exactly what we do – I think we know this. But, we do this with the Bible all the time and we end up distorting it and we end up not knowing what it's saying to us. So we have to know, "Okay, how does this want to be read?"

I think, sometimes, we intuitively do this. Like, if you read, in Genesis, the story of Noah, and there's this whole long paragraph where God gives Noah the instructions for the Ark. But, no one builds an ark. It was el Nino, too, and no one built an ark here. You didn't even think to do that. But we get, just later on in the story, the same sort of descriptions for other things according to the law and we're like, "Okay, I have to do all those things," or, "I have to do some of them, but not all of them."

We kind of intuitively start doing this, but we have to know how to do that and do it right. The other question to ask, in order to get the meaning and to get it right, is this: we have to pay attention to where we're at in the story. Can we put that story slide up one more time? The meta narrative slide?

We have to know where we're at in the story. So, as we're reading through the Bible, it's good to ask, "Oh, where are we at? What part are we at in the Bible? Where are we reading?" And we also have to realize that, as Christians, we access the whole Bible through Jesus. That is so important to know.

So, we have to ask "where are we at in the story?" For example: you're going to get to Leviticus in a few weeks – next week I think – and, as you get into Leviticus, you're going to read about all these food laws. A lot of food laws. And then what do you do with the food laws? What do you do with a lot of those laws? Especially the food ones. So, you're reading and you're going, "Okay, am I supposed to do all these laws? I'm a follower of God. Do I have to do all these food laws? But then you're going to read later on in the book of Acts under the Church part of the new covenant, which, after Jesus death and resurrection, the Spirit of God comes upon the new covenant Church, there's a place where God tells Peter to rise and kill and eat.

Peter's like, "I have never put anything unkosher in my body. I know what Leviticus says. I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to eat these things."

They're all these creatures and things that are not allowed to eat in Leviticus. It's basically a sheet of all Leviticus animals, pretty much. And God says, "Peter, rise, kill and eat."

He goes, "There's no way. I can't do it."

See, the very laws that were once good in keeping Israel separate from the nations are now, later on in the story, bad, because they're keeping the Gospel from spreading to the rest of the nations. Because Peter, what the vision was is Peter was saying, "I want the Gospel to spread to the Gentiles."

And so, at one point of the story you're not supposed to eat, but later on in the story, Peter is commanded to eat. And it's very important to know where you're at in the story. As you're reading these Old Testament laws, it's really important to get to and through those laws through the story of Jesus. So, all I'm saying here right now is basically hermeneutics 101. Hermeneutics is the art of interpreting the Bible. So, let me just give you the laws of hermeneutics real quick. Just super easy. You can write this down and be a nerd at

community group. I don't know. Just look at this.

The first is "observation." What does the text say?

The second is "interpretation." What does it mean?

The third is "application." What do we do with this text? How do we live out this text? So, the way I like to see it is open your eyes, open your mind and then open your heart or, maybe, open your hands. How do you live this out?

Open your eyes. What's going on? What is this saying? Where are you at? What genre is it? Where are you at in the story? Open your eyes.

Interpretation. What does this text mean? This takes some work. You cannot get to the third one until you do the first two.

Lastly, what do I do? How do I open my heart and my hands to do what God is calling me to do or what God is saying to do? Now, the important point to remember here is that we do not create meaning out of the text, we seek to find meaning that the text already has. You can't decide what it means, because it already means something. It already means something. The Bible already means something. It's for us to discover what that means and then live in light of what it means.

You can't create it yourself. You're not allowed to. I'm not allowed to. Now, I know all of this can sound very technical and we haven't even scratched the surface, so it's not that technical. But, it's kind of maybe starting to sound technical as a sermon. But, here's the point. Here's the point of the whole Bible.

The point of the Bible is to listen to God so we can love Him more deeply and love others more completely. This is the point. The point of the Scriptures is to listen to God. And I understand that the "listening to God" we need to interpret a bit. With a lot of the Bible we have to interpret it to know, "Okay, what is God saying?"

So that we can love God more deeply and love others more completely. If this doesn't happen in our Year of Biblical Literacy, this is just a huge, massive failure. This is our hope. Now, there's two ways of seeing the Bible when we look at it like that. One of them is this: these words are authoritative and I'm called to submit to them. That's one way of like, "Okay. So, I'm going to do this. I'm going to love God. I'm going to love others. Okay. So, these words are authoritative. I'm called to submit to them. I'm going to do what it says."

Yes. You can do that. But, here's a better way: "Your words are delightful and I love to do what you ask. I love your invitations; I love your words."

The difference between those two: the first one is a relationship with the Bible, the second is a relationship with God. A lot of us have a relationship with the Bible. We need a relationship with God. There's a beautiful piece of poetry written by someone who seriously loved God's Word. It's Psalm 119 and it's a very long Psalm. I remember one time I was at a retreat and we, at the end of it, were like, "Okay, if God gives you a word, get up and say it."

And the guy goes, "God gave me Psalm 119," and like 45 minutes later, we're done with him reading it. It was awesome. Not really. But, anyway. So, Psalm 119. Very long Psalm. But, it's a piece of poetry that's written and every stanza, is like sequential letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and then every verse in each stanza begins with the same letter of that alphabet in Hebrew. So, it's like, "How much do I love thee? Let me count the ways. A. B. C." And then it had all these stanzas.

Let me just read you a couple of them; his song or poem of love of God's Word.

He says this. This is just a few:

"I delight in your decrees, I will not neglect your word. My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times. Direct me in the paths of your commands, for there I find delight. I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts. For I delight in your commands because I love them. In the night, Lord, I remember your name, may I keep your law. You are good and what you do is good. Teach me your decrees. The law from your mouth is

more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth."

He gets it. I mean, he gets that God's Word is an entry point to get to God and he loves them. He loves God's invitations, he loves God's laws, he loves His decrees, he loves doing what God says. He gets it. Now, there will be some of us who spend time reading the Bible this year, maybe even taking the Bible seriously or literally or literarily, but you might miss the point entirely.

Eugene Peterson, in "Eat This Book," says, "It is entirely possible to come to the Bible in total sincerity, responding to the intellectual challenge it gives or for the moral guidance it offers or for the spiritual uplift it provides, and not in any way have to deal with a personally revealing God who has personal designs on you."

To put it bluntly, not everyone who gets interested in the Bible and even gets excited about the Bible wants to get involved with God, but God is what the book is about. These two guys on the road to Emmaus, Luke 24, they finally get it, right? They finally see Jesus. But, it's interesting. They don't see Jesus after a Bible study is given by Jesus. Jesus gives them a Bible study and they still don't get it. They don't get it after an eye witness testimony of women who saw an empty tomb and they met angels. Still didn't get it.

They got it as they participated in the story that Jesus left for His disciples. Jesus never wrote a word. He left us with a meal. And, as they ate the bread and as they shared community with Jesus, as they entered into that story and they repeated that story – it was like the Passover – they got it. You're going to get the Scriptures as you live into its story, as you respond to communion, as you respond to God.

One writer says this about Luke 24:

"Christian understanding is inseparable from a certain kind of Eucharistic lifestyle and practice. It is to those who are willing to live and act as Jesus did that the way Jesus understood God and Scripture is most likely to make sense."

It is as you start to live the way of Jesus that you start to understand God and Scripture like Jesus did. That it starts to open to you and that you start to see it. And, when that happens, we encounter God. But also, when we encounter God – and I don't know the experiences around this room. But I imagine there's something going on, because I think a lot of you who are reading the Bible daily don't read the Bible daily. Like, you haven't done that maybe ever or for years and years and years.

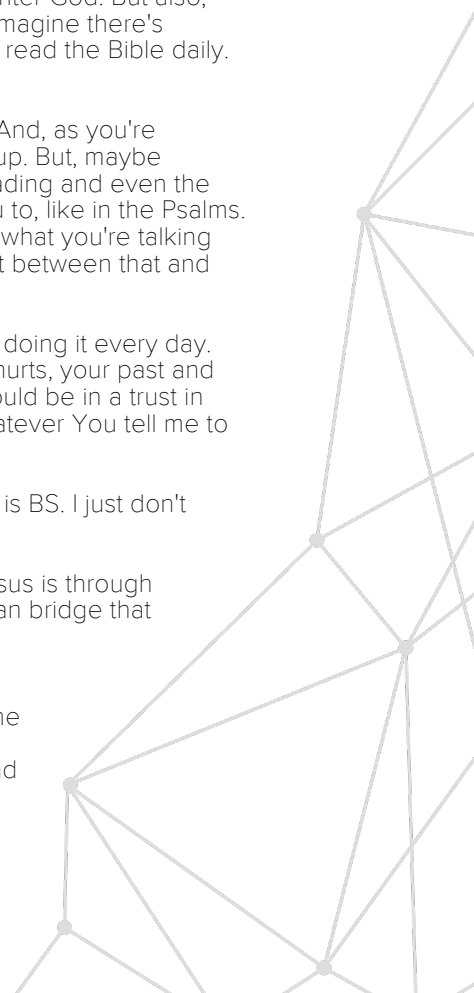
And what's happening is that you're going through the normal stuff of starting a habit. And, as you're reading the Bible, sometimes you go mechanically and sometimes something opens up. But, maybe sometimes you're starting to see that there's this dissonance between what you're reading and even the life of faith of some of the people that you're reading about and what God's called you to, like in the Psalms. Just, as you're reading, you might have this disconnect between what you're reading, what you're talking about in community group, what you're hearing about on Sunday, there's a disconnect between that and the way that you're living. And there's like this gap there.

Now, it might be more acute to you, it might be more apparent to you because you're doing it every day. And then you see your life and what you're doing, your selfishness, greed, pride, the hurts, your past and the stuff that you dealt with and just being angry at God for it. And then where you should be in a trust in God. Almost like an Abrahamic trust in God. Like, "God, if You tell me to go, I'll go. Whatever You tell me to do, I'll believe it. I'll do it."

And you're like, "I want that, but I'm here. I question everything. I think most of the stuff is BS. I just don't believe it."

And you feel this disconnect and, the way that you bridge that gap as a follower of Jesus is through confession. You confess that gap. That's the best thing you can do. I don't think you can bridge that gap, really. You can't just go, "I'm going to be better."

You confess the gap and then you receive the forgiveness of Christ at the table of communion. This is what the Church has done for thousands of years. They confess the gap between what I'm reading and how I know God's called me to be and what He's called me to be and where I'm at today. And I confess my selfishness and my pride and



my sin of doing what I know I should not do and I did it anyways. And then trying to cover it up. I confess that, because I know that's not what God's called me to. And I ask for Christ's forgiveness.

Then, what you're going to see as you confess over and over and over again, God willing, through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, is that gap starts to close and close and close. But, it must be this continual confession, repentance and then receiving the forgiveness of Christ.

So, let's do that as we respond to God.

Lord, thank You for being our redeemer, as we read in that Psalm. My Lord and my redeemer. The one who redeems us from our selves, our sin, our world. Who's setting this whole world right. I want to pray for, God, myself. I know that there's just this huge gap between things I know I'm called to and Scripture and my life with You, Lord, and where I'm at now. I know that I'm not the only one in this room.

Thank You for the Christian confession, that we can confess our sins to You, and, Jesus, You are faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I pray, by the power of Christ, that You would raise dead people to life tonight. Those that feel dead in their walk with You and their life with You, their job, their relationships, that they would confess that. I ask that You would restore, that You would come and meet them, that You would heal them, God.

Keep these words from just being black and white on a flat surface. Make them come alive, Lord. All of us have very storied lives, all of us are all messed up in different ways and we're all being put back together with you in different types of ways. So, tonight, through confession repentance, may You make us one and make us whole. In Jesus' name, amen.