

# Intimacy With Christ

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] I'll invite Miriam Montgomery to come and read for us from Mark 14. It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him, for they said, not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.

And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than 300 denarii and given to the poor. And they scolded her, but Jesus said, leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them, but you will not always have me.

She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the 12, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money, and he sought an opportunity to betray him. We're working our way through Mark's gospel, and we will take it all the way up to Easter Sunday. And here we are in the very last week of Jesus' life. It's Wednesday. He's going to be crucified on Friday, and it's just two days before the Passover, one day before the Passover feast takes place on Thursday night. And this passage is all about, I think, what it means to find closeness to God and intimacy ultimately with God. So do you find that in your life you long to be close to God? And I think that in my time in ministry, which has not been that long, but as I've met with people and meet with a decent amount of people now who aren't Christians, who are searching and exploring Christianity, one of the things that usually comes out is despite what people believe intellectually, and despite what we think, the way the life of our minds work, every single human being deep down really just wants to be close to

God, just wants to be known by God and know God, wants to be loved by God and love God. That's really the biggest problem we face in life, and that's really what we want deep down is to have a closeness with the God who made us. I think every person feels that, every person experiences that, and even Bertrand Russell, the great atheist of the early 20th century, he said that he didn't believe that he was an atheist, but yet he longed for it, he talked about it, he said, I longed for it. I wish that God would have come closer to me, he talked about that. I think everybody feels that, everybody wants that, and in this passage we learn that God actually has done that. He's come close, he's drawn near, he's taken the first step, and one of the categories that we see here is that what Mark is trying to teach us in Mark 14 and across the whole gospel is that Jesus became a little bitty baby because he wanted to get close to you, and that he took the first step, and that the way you can find closeness and intimacy with him, with God, is to actually look and see that it all starts with intimacy and closeness with Jesus himself, that those two things are so tied together. If you want to find closeness with God,

[ 3 : 5 0 ] Christianity claims you've got to come and find Jesus, you've got to see the value, the preciousness, the worth of Jesus in particular, that Jesus is the answer of God saying, I want to get close to you, look at Jesus, see his value, give him worship, that's the answer that Mark's gospel gives us, so it ties those two things, closeness to God, the preciousness and uniqueness of Jesus, right together, and says, really, that's the same thing. Now, that is exactly the example of this woman that we just read about, so this woman who has no name in this passage, she comes to Jesus at this feast and she takes a bottle of spiced nard oil, that's the Greek goes out of its way to

tell us exactly what it is, it's spiced nard oil, spiced nard oil comes from northern India, it's the only place you can get it, and that means in the first century it's extremely precious, and we're told in the passage that to get some, you need about a year's wage from a middle-class labor, 300 shuckles of silver, which is about a whole year's worth of money, and so this is an incredibly precious item, very expensive, she probably inherited it in her family, it seems unlikely that she could have purchased it, and what she does is she breaks the neck of the bottle, so the bottle had a long spout on it, some people would even wear them around their necks like necklaces, and it was because you were trying to give off even through the clay jar an aroma of fragrance to make you smell better than you actually did, this is the first century, everybody smells bad, right, everybody does, they don't have the things we have today, no sanitation and sewage, no deodorants of any kind, everybody smells, and you would wash people's feet, and you would do all sorts of things to get the smells away, and people would literally wear oils around their necks as a way of saying, I smell better than, I smell around you better than I actually do in real life, she might have done that, and so for that reason they sealed the caps, this was actually a completely sealed jar, and she breaks the neck of it, meaning that this gift is total, once you break it, it's done, you have to use it, and she pours it over his head, what was she doing, why did she do it, and I think this, she was saying in her heart to him, I'm placing the most precious thing I have on the most precious person I know of, I'm giving the most valuable thing in all the world to the most valuable person, and you see, she saw it, she saw that closeness with God means seeing the value, the preciousness of Jesus Christ, she put that together, she was seeking intimacy with Jesus

Christ, and therefore closeness to God, that's the only, what Christianity says is that's the only way to get it, you want to be close to God, you want to draw near, you've got to see the value, the preciousness, you've got to be willing to pour what is most precious in your life onto Christ, and so let's see that in two ways this morning, first, exactly what I said, if you want to get close to God, first you've got to see the value of Jesus, and then secondly, the need for his anointment, okay, so let's think about that, first, if you want to get close to God this morning, see the value of Jesus Christ, now Jesus Christ's value is immeasurable, we can't today in the next 25 minutes get through all the way as Jesus is valuable and precious, but let me just give you two that I think come right up from the passage, two ways that he's valuable, the first is subtle, but one of the real heartbeats of Mark 14 is that God has come to get close to us and he's taken that step, that's the first thing to see, that in Jesus, God has taken a step towards you, the step towards you, and that is why Jesus is so precious, is so valuable, this is God, Jesus is

God coming to you, coming towards you, now here's how that works in this passage, they are, we're told at the beginning in Bethany verse 3, and they are at the house of Simon the leper, and a woman comes to pour this oil on Jesus, if you back up just verse 1 and 2 you'll see that this is in the context of the fact that the scribes, the Pharisees were trying to figure out a way to kill Jesus quietly, so it says in verse 1 and 2, they were seeking to stealthily capture him and murder him, why? and then it tells us because they knew that if they didn't do it quietly there would be an uproar from the crowd, now that means that this is Wednesday, on Friday remember they're going to all shout crucify him, but on Wednesday the Pharisees and the scribes and the high priest, they are afraid that if they try to arrest Jesus there's going to be a riot, he is still incredibly beloved, he's still incredibly popular, you remember the triumphal entry, he was so popular and so loved, Wednesday he is still so popular and so loved, and so they know if we try to get rid of him today there's going to be a huge issue, now Mark is highlighting something exactly what happened here in the story, and that's that in some sense it doesn't make sense what Jesus does, we're told that Jesus goes to Bethany on the evening before the Passover feast, and Bethany is outside the city, it's two miles away, when you come to a city and you are the talk of the town, you know when you come to the city and people are laying down palm branches, celebrating your entry, you can go feast at any house you want to feast at, you can go sit at any table, you can be a lodger at anybody's home, right, Jesus was so popular he could have gone anywhere, and yet what we see in this passage is he actually leaves, he gets outside, and one of the things that the commentators talk about is how across Mark's gospel there's a real motif that every time you expect Jesus to become an insider he becomes an outsider, and every time you expect him to go towards the insiders of the day he chooses the outsiders, so it's called the insider- outsider motif in the Gospel of Mark, and you can find it in the commentaries, they talk about it they talk about it all the time, and here it is, you expect him to be in the city, he goes outside the city, he goes to Bethany two miles away, and then when

he gets there he's with, he's at the house of Simon a leper, there's nothing more outside you can do, there's nothing farther away from being on the inside than to go eat at the home of a leper, and then even beyond that the woman that comes to anoint him is just a woman, she's got no name, and that's really important, this is an unnamed woman in a leper's home outside the great city in a tiny little no-name village, you see it's a real, it's a real case, he's saying something, he's doing something, he's talking to us about how Jesus came and took the first step, and he took the first step mainly to the outsider, now remember last semester we looked at this, but he talked in the temple about that poor widow, if you were around, and she comes and she gives her two little pennies, and all the rich religious people were dropping in so much cash into the tithing boxes, but the poor widow gave two pennies and Jesus says, you see that woman, no name, that's a true disciple, and an unnamed widow, an unnamed woman earlier before that in Mark had clung to Jesus' robes and said, I'm not going to let go of you until you heal my daughter, and he said, look at this faith, and so there's this motif not only of the outsider and the insider, but also of unnamed women all throughout Mark's Gospel, and if you're reading this in the first century, what you expect, if you're trying to make this religion popular, is you expect Jesus and Mark to be really appealing to the insiders, who are

insiders in the first century, to be an insider in the first century, you have to have at least two of these qualities, male, you have to be a man, you have to be wealthy, you have to be religious, and you have to be healthy, so at least two of those, and instead what you see in the Gospel of Mark is he goes to the sick, to the poor, he uses unnamed women to say this is true discipleship, more often than anything, and that was just the way things were in the first century, those were the insiders, those were the outsiders, and he's flipping it all around, what's the point? Here's the point, Jesus is not saying that he's come to exclude men, the religious, the wealthy, and the healthy, and that's not the point at all, instead what he's doing, here's the value of Jesus, what it's saying is that in Jesus, God came to make anybody who recognizes, I am far away from God, I'm an outsider when it comes to the things of the Lord,

Jesus came to make that person an insider, so he used outsiders in his ministry to say, you religious people, you wealthy people, you healthy people, don't you see that you too are an outsider when it comes to the things of God, that you're far away from the Lord, and Jesus, the value of Jesus is he's come to make outsiders into insiders, and so he used the outsiders to show that I've come to make everybody who's an outsider, which happens to be every person, an insider, and the way that that happens is not by status, not by being healthy, wealthy, and religious, but by humility, the condition is humility only, to actually just say I am an outsider, that's all it takes, before the Lord and without Jesus I'm an outsider, but Jesus's value is that he is the God who has come to make me an insider, a part of the ultimate family, a part of the ultimate people, a part of the ultimate friendship, a part of a community where I can now have an identity that can't be taken away from me. C.S. Lewis wrote in 1944, a famous essay called The

[14:10] Inner Ring, and in it he says, I believe that in all people's lives at some period, and in many lives at all periods, between infancy and extreme old age, one of the most dominant elements is the desire to be inside the local ring, the group, and the terror of being left out. Now Lewis is there talking about, he uses this metaphor, the inner ring, to say that for every one of us, there are circles of people that could be in the church, that could be at work, that could be at school, and university, where you want to be a part of that group and not a part of this group.

All of us have experienced that, we know what that's like, and the simple thing to say, we could spend time here on thinking about that, but the simple thing to say here is that Jesus Christ, the value of Jesus Christ, is that he came to make outsiders ultimate and final insiders, and that he came to bring you into the ultimate family, the ultimate community.

Now, before we move on, let me just mention that I think that does drive us, this outsider, insider motif we see here to say, who are the insiders and the outsiders in the communities that I walk in? And am I aware of the harm and the wrongdoing of unnecessary exclusion in those spaces? Who are the groups that I look out and said those are, quote, those people, the other?

Jesus Christ, God himself, is all about the business of making people who feel excluded included. And am I, are you? Now, the second way Jesus is valuable, we see Jesus valuable in this passage, is that not only does he come to make outsiders insiders, he came to defend not demean. And here's what happens in the story. You see this in verse three and four, they're reclining at the table. By the way, on a first century table, your head and upper body would be facing the table. You'd be

seated on a pillow. The table's only about six to 12 inches from the ground at times, and your feet would be out. So you're reclining, you're halfway laying down with your upper body positioned up. I don't know how they did it. They were much more flexible than us, must have been. So that's the way they were seated. And they're all literally reclining at the table on a pillow. This woman comes, she breaks the vase, and she pours the oil on him.

And what happens? Verse four, there were, quote, look at what Mark says, there were some who said to themselves indignantly, what a waste. Why a waste ointment like this? Now, who are those some?

[ 17 : 02 ] You see in verse one and two, and then in verse 10 and 11, that this story is couched in another narrative, which is the scribes and Pharisees and chief priests want to murder Jesus. And then verse 10 and 11, Judas gave them the way to do that. That means that this inside story is trying to highlight something about how they did it. It's trying to highlight something about Judas. So the some who were so angry is Judas. That's what Mark's trying to point to. But it's not just Judas.

We expect that from Judas, perhaps, if you know the story of the Gospels, but it says, no, there were others, they were all whispering to themselves, who are these? It's the disciples. They're the indignant ones. They're the angry ones. They are the insiders. And they look at what happened, this unnamed woman, this outsider, and they get so angry. And later on, if you look down at verse five, it says, it uses the word, they scolded her. There it is right at the end of verse five.

That's a Greek word that literally means, and they flared their nostrils at her. So they were so mad that their nostril, you know, how when people get raging mad, their nostrils flare. That's what it tells us here. That's how mad they were. And this is the disciples getting that angry. And why did they get so angry? And here's what they said. They said, you know, you could have gotten so much money. You could have sold that bottle and gotten so much money and given it away to all the poor. And of course, when you realize what Mark is doing here, you quickly realize that this is a pretext. The poor, you know, what does the poor stand for? They're literally saying, you know, we could have had the greatest meal of our lives with that bottle. And of course, after that, we would have given some of it away to the poor. This is just a pretext. They're using the poor to say, Judas, he's using the poor to say, I really wanted that cash. I really wanted a chance to get that money. They desire the money, not what it stands for. The poor are nothing but a cover for them.

And immediately what they do is they demean her. So they say about her, why was this ointment wasted? They call her a fool. They scolded her. Their nostrils flare, enrage at her. And Jesus steps up and he defends her. He says, leave her alone. Leave her alone. Now, in the book of Job, in all the way to Romans chapter eight, one of the things we see about God in the Old Testament, about Jesus Christ after he goes into heaven in the New Testament, is that one of his roles is that he defends. He stands in the heavenly realm right now. And the principalities and powers of darkness make accusations against you. And they say, this person says they follow you, but look at their secret life. This person says they follow you, but look at what they've done. Look at what they did in the past. How can you really say they're not guilty? And Jesus comes with his scars and says, I defend her. I defend him. You can't make an accusation any longer. He defends, he doesn't demean. He never does. And here's the beginning of that moment of what he will do in his heavenly ministry. He defends, he never demeans. Now, but who is it that they're really, really demeaning? They demean, they demean the woman. Jesus defends. But more fundamentally, it is not the woman that they're trying to demean. Who is it that they demean? What did they say?

They say, why was this oil, this anointment wasted? And you see what they're saying? They're saying, Jesus is not worth such a lavish gift. You have wasted this on him. They demean her, he defends her, but ultimately they demeaned him. They said, Jesus is not worth this amount of cash.

[ 21 : 01 ] We could have gotten so much money for this and done so many other things. He is not that valuable. Yes, this is the disciples. Yes, Jesus, we think you're great, but let's not get over the top about it. Well, that's not poor such a three years worth of wage upon this man. They don't see, she has some sense of his value, this outsider in a way that the disciples do not yet know.

They can't yet see it. They think that it was completely wasted upon him. Now, before we move to the second and final point, what that means for us, we've got to take note of this, I think, is this, it means that you can be near Jesus, you can be around Jesus, you can be near the things of God and not have intimacy with Christ.

Judas was around Jesus. The disciples were around Jesus. And yet what we see really clearly here is that they don't have intimacy with him. And look at how they look at how this works. Just one

example, they want to replace him with good works. So they pit those two things against one another.

They say, you know, don't value him in that way. Instead, do good works. In other words, they say, it's not about Jesus, it's about religion. It's about going out and giving to the poor. It's about loving your neighbor. You know, that's the real meaning of this. That's what we're here for.

And they don't, they can't see that there's no way to truly love your neighbor and truly love the poor until you first set your eyes upon the fountainhead of love himself. Real love incarnate.

[ 22 : 40 ] You say, this is the difference in Christianity and religion. It's right here. The disciples don't yet get it. Christianity says above all else, you've got to see the value and preciousness of Jesus Christ. Religion says, I'm happy to be around Jesus in order to be a good person, in order to care for the poor, in order to love my neighbor. That's the difference. Christianity versus religion. And Christianity says, no, no, no, you've got to see the value and preciousness of Jesus if you're ever going to truly love the poor. Right? The disciples can't see it. Only the woman can at the end of their life. And we've got to be aware that you can be around Jesus. You can be near and merely be religious, replacing the value and preciousness of God himself with good works.

You can put those in a relationship of exchange. And that's exactly what takes place here. Here's Jesus's preciousness. Here's his value. Here's his uniqueness. He defends. He doesn't demean. Here's how far this goes. Jesus defended her. But the real truth of the gospel is that Jesus Christ came not just to defend the woman, unnamed woman. Jesus Christ came to defend these disciples. He didn't come to demean them. He could have. Jesus Christ came to go to the cross for these men, for this, for me, for you. This is how far he goes with his defense. He became ultimately defenseless at the cross because he wants to defend people who demean him. We shout, crucify him. They're going to shout that on Friday. And so he goes to the cross for the people who are flaring their nostrils at him in the crowd. That's how far the defense goes. He came to defend, not to demean. And he finds us as individuals so precious that at the end of this passage we're told, he says, you know, whenever the gospel is told in all the world for the rest of history, here we are today, right? 2024. Whenever the gospel is talked about in the rest of world history, he wants her to be mentioned in it. That's what he says down in verse nine. What she has done today will be told in memory of her wherever the gospel is proclaimed. And that means the gospel is a history and that history includes what happened here at this moment. Jesus Christ came to die in order to defend those who demean him. That's how far his love goes. That's the preciousness, the value. Now secondly, lastly, and we've got to be brief. Not only do we, if you want to have intimacy with Christ today, with God today, you've got to see his preciousness, his value, at least in those two ways. But lastly, also, you've got to receive and see the importance of his anointment here. Okay, so in some ways the central character of this story is the oil, the oil in its relationship to Jesus. So we need to make sure we don't pass by that. This is a strange event. Why does she pour spikynard oil on his head? And he then turned around and say, anytime you share the gospel, she needs to be remembered. This event needs to be remembered. Two reasons.

There's two reasons in the Bible for pouring oil over somebody's head. The first he tells us really explicitly, he says in verse eight, she has anointed my body for burial. So in the first century, in the Greco-Roman context and the Jewish context, if you had money and if a loved one died, you would typically anoint their body, you would pour oil over them. And this is not olive oil.

This is an oil that has a real fragrance, a real plunageance about it. Why? Same reasons, because you are trying to bathe the body in the midst of what you know is going to happen, decay.

So the body is going to decay and there's smell along with that. And so you would bathe the body, it's a sign of honor, anointment, you're going to cover it in an aroma. So we even read that Joseph of Arimathea and then later the women who came to the tomb brought what with them, spices, because they were going to go into the tomb they had hoped to and lay spices all around Jesus.

[ 26 : 55 ] Right, so that was normal practice. If you were a criminal, if you were executed especially, or if you were poor, that never happened. So the bodies were not treated that way, especially for criminals. Jesus was about to die a criminal's death. He would not in any public way be anointed.

And so she came to prepare his body for burial. Now here's the paradox. If you see the preciousness of Jesus Christ and the value that this is God who has come to take the first step towards you to bring you close to Him, then you know one thing, God should not die.

And yet here we are and his body is being prepared for decay. The God of all the earth, the God who made heaven and earth, the Son of God right here, he should not die and yet his body is being anointed for burial. And when you come to 1 Corinthians 15, Paul highlights and says, what's the gospel? And one of the lines he includes in the meaning of the gospel is he says, Jesus Christ was buried. And if you recite the Apostles Creed, you say Jesus was buried.

In Enrollments chapter 6 verse 4, Paul goes so far as to say, part of the gospel is to say, I was buried with Jesus. And so sometimes we miss this, we talk about Jesus's cross and His resurrection, fundamental, but the New Testament actually comes and says, and He was buried. And that is part of the gospel. And one of the things that his burial says is that he was really dead. He wasn't asleep. Jesus, when He died, He really died. He died all the way.

He died as much as any other body can die. And so He was buried. And Paul comes and says, do you know today, if you see the value and beauty of Jesus and you follow Him, Paul tells you, the day that Jesus was buried, you were buried with Him that day. So that whatever happened to Him on that day has already happened to you before the eyes of the Father. You've experienced that. You don't have to be buried in ultimate judgment because He was already buried. Whatever has happened to Him has now happened for you. That's the first meaning of His burial. She was preparing that. If that's true of you today, if you see, look, if you just see the value of Jesus today, then that means that you were anointed with Him in this moment. You were prepared for burial. You experienced everything He experienced, you in Him, He for you. That's the power of the gospel. This is already true for you. Now, there's a second reason and final thing.

[ 29 : 32 ] And that's that anointment is not just about prepping a body for burial. Anointment is also something that happens all throughout the Bible, Genesis to Revelation. And we see kings anointed, we see prophets anointed, we see priests anointed, we see places anointed, tabernacles, temples. The very first anointment in all of the Bible is when there's oil poured over Jacob's pillow, the stone that Jacob laid on where he had a vision of a ladder between heaven and earth. That's the very first thing that gets anointed in all the Bible. What is going on with anointment in the biblical, wider biblical picture? What is up with this? Anointment is a symbol or a sign that says, here is a person or a place where God has chosen to send His presence. That's what anointment stands for. So in the book of James, James says that the elders of the church can now go and anoint a person, a sick person with oil and seek and ask God to heal them. Why? Why? Because when you do that, you're symbolically asking God's special presence to fall upon that person, to heal them. That's what the anointment symbolizes. And all throughout the Bible, that's what it means.

Where does it come from? Why this symbol of anointment? And here's what the theologians have said. Here's what the Christians have said throughout the centuries. The reason that anointment takes place throughout the Bible is because it is a sign and symbol of the fragrances and the smells of Eden itself. That in the Garden of Eden, you know, what is spiked in our oil? It's actually the oil that comes out of a root. In the very first place that God put humanity was in the Garden of Eden. Full of spices, full of smells, full of roots, full of oils, full of fragrances, full of beauty. And so this act of anointment throughout the Bible is saying, I want Eden.

You know, this is a place where God is momentarily bringing Eden down into the temple, which was decorated like Eden, into the Tabernacle, which was decorated like Eden, into a person. When Jesus is anointed and saying, do you want to find Eden? Do you want to be in the Garden of Eden? Do you want to be close to God? Here he is. It's him. He is Eden. And he smells like it. And he is giving the aroma of the very presence of God from the Garden of Eden because he literally is Eden. Eden is the place where God comes to dwell with us. And that's him. The Garden has come. It's him. He's anointed. This is why we call Jesus, Mark calls Jesus what? Not just Jesus, but what's Jesus's second name. It's not really a second name. Jesus Christ, which is not a last name at all. What does Christ mean? Christ means Christos, Jesus, the anointed one, the one who has come to bring the fragrance of God. Eden itself, right? Here's the gospel angle. She broke that flask and she gave her a gift totally. That was nothing but a microcosm. You know, she doesn't, what does she do in this passage? She points us to the one who gave himself to the uttermost. She gave the whole of her gift, but he gave something that cannot be measured. He gave himself totally and fully so that you could be close. Now, a couple quick ways you can respond today. One, the woman, this woman, this unnamed woman is an example. She saw the preciousness of Jesus. If you feel today like you're far away from the Lord right now, or you're coming today and exploring what does it

mean to get close to God, I don't know that I've ever been close to God. The woman's example is right here.

It's saying you've got to meditate on the value and beauty of Jesus Christ. That's the first thing you're invited to do today is just, do you take time in your life at all to meditate on the reality of his value? All right, that's for a second briefly. What does she do then? When she saw his value, she gave what was most precious to her to the one who is most precious. One of the ways that you grow in intimacy with Jesus is you've got to be willing to give what is most valuable to you, to him, to give it away. One example, for most of us in the modern world, that is time. How do you meditate and see the value of Jesus? You've got to actually say, I'm going to, in the midst of my busyness and the midst of a schedule where there is no time, I'm going to give what is most precious to me time to meditate on the one who is most precious, Jesus. You've got to give time. Intimacy requires time. It requires quality time. That's true with marriage. That's true with relationships.

[ 34 : 33 ] That's true with parents and children. That is true above anything else with God. Intimacy requires time. And so you've got to give away what is precious to you, time to have that intimacy.

If you feel far away from the Lord today, give Jesus your time in order to feel close to him because your feelings will follow your actions. Our feelings often have to follow our actions.

And so if you come today and you say, I don't really feel like worshiping, what do you do? You worship. You do it anyway so that your feelings follow the actions, the time that you've put in.

Jesus says you will always have the poor. Now here, he's not saying, don't care about people in need and struggling. Instead, he's saying, if you want to truly love the poor in your life, if you want to truly love other people and come outside of yourself, the first order of business is steps one and two, seeing the value of Jesus and giving him your love and your time so that then that love can become a fountainhead for the tributaries, the water that springs from it to love other people.

So if we don't come and find the real source of love and loving other people in Jesus first, what's going to happen is that when you try to love other people, it's always going to be for selfish reasons. And it'll eventually just dry up. If you don't have a fountainhead, a source, everything else just dries up. Come to Jesus, see his value, and then you can see the value in other people. That's how it actually grows. And then lastly, I think it's important to just end today by saying we can see in Jesus the call and invitation to every one of us this morning to defend, not demean. To seek, to defend people's name, reputation, honor, and value as much as we possibly can. We see him calling us today to look for the outsider in order to help them become insiders, to look for the person that we've excluded and say, I want to now include, because Jesus Christ in his preciousness took the step towards me to include me. Defend not demean, to turn those excluded into those included. And it's all because of this one power.

[ 36 : 58 ] Jesus came to defend me, the outsider. Jesus came for every human being by going to be buried in death for them. Can you say today, that's me, I'm the outsider, I'm the one Jesus came for.

He came to get close to me. Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you that you came to get close to us. And so we just confess before you today that apart from the value of your coming, we would remain totally far away, apart, separated from God. So I lift up before you, anyone today who is longing in their heart to be close to you and feels frustrated in that, that you would draw close to them right now by your spirit. And I lift anyone up to you today that has yet to feel even frustrated by not being close to you because they are still yet to see the beauty in being close to you. And so we pray for all of us, Lord, that you would draw us back, draw us near, help us to see your infinite worth so that we would worship, ascribe to you the worth that you truly have right now as we sing. So we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.