God's Mystery & You — Delivery Transcript

1 Timothy 3:14–16 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, December 19, 2021 · *The Mystery of God*

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If you have a Bible, you can open it to the book of 1 Timothy. We're in 1 Timothy today. If you're new to Broadview, some of you very well may be. First off, thank you so much for being here. We're glad that you are present with us today. We consider you a special gift. And before you leave, don't forget that out there in our gathering place there's a Connect table with some bags on there that you can take for yourself. It's got a coffee mug in there, a gift card, and some info about the church.

You take it. It's our gift to you. If you'll put an email address on that Connect card, we're able to send you access to a resource for you to use called RightNow Media that's got 16,000, 17,000 video Bible studies. Again, our gift to you. You don't got to like the sermon or come back, just take it. We want to bless you and benefit you. But anyway, if you're new to our church, we typically go through books of the Bible, and we have been going through the book of the Revelation, line by line, chapter by chapter.

And we press pause because of this phrase in Revelation chapter 10 called the mystery of God. And it's kind of an interesting phrase. You think mystery of God, especially when it comes to religion, you think, ooh, mysterious secret hidden knowledge, maybe like a secret decoder ring, secret way of interpreting the Old Testament. And that's really not what the mystery of God is as we've discovered over these last four weeks. The mystery of God isn't secretive anything. Biblically defined— mysterion is the Greek word for it— is something that was previously hidden but later revealed.

The illustration that I use: my son and I were watching a Marvel movie the other day, for whatever reason Marvel decided to have a romantic scene in there, so there's this guy and this girl kissing. And Blaze was like grossed out by it, right? He's like, oh gross, you know, girls have cooties and I'm glad he thinks that now. But there's coming a day where I'll pray

that was the case, right? I'll pray he thought girls had cooties. It's hidden now, but it'll be revealed later. And another example is, I'll say, a lady who was perfectly fine in terms of an upset stomach, but for whatever reason she woke up one day and she's, you know, throwing up.

She got morning sickness. What's going on, ladies? Bad burrito or something else? Could be something else, right? Could be you're pregnant. But you don't know you're pregnant until you take a test or you go to the doctor and they tell you that you're pregnant. Now the doctor didn't make you pregnant, right? Something else made you pregnant. The doctor just told you that you were pregnant. And so it was a mystery that was hidden, but later revealed. But you still don't know much about the baby, right? You've got to figure out the gender of the baby.

You've got to get some blood work done or a sonogram. You don't know the physical attributes of the baby until you get one of them really cool 3D sonograms or until the baby's born. Then you see the physical attributes. It's hidden, later revealed. You don't know the full attributes of your child's personality and whatnot until they're about two or three years old, then it really starts to blossom, hidden, later revealed, and the full-orbed nature of your child really doesn't blossom until way later on down the road. It's a mystery. Okay, that's the dynamic of this word.

The biblical word mystery means hidden in the past, later revealed. And we see this dynamic at play in all sorts of ways. Paul and John in these passages that we've been looking over the last four weeks have said that's the way the gospel is. That's who Christ is. Christ is the mystery of God revealed. And we see little hints of that in the Old Testament, that Christ is revealed in types and shadows you see things like in Genesis chapter 3 when Adam and Eve sin against God, there is a promise that is given that says, from the seed of the woman is going to come a man who will crush the head of the serpent.

So there's this— theologians call it the protoevangelium, the first gospel— that Christ, a deliverer, a Messiah, the Christ will come and deliver you from this evil and bondage to sin that you are now enslaved to. You see Christ in the book of Genesis when they sacrificed the animal to make clothes for themselves, to cover their nakedness. You see Christ in the Old Testament with the sacrificial system, the golden slab on the mercy seat, all of that was pointing to Jesus. He is the Passover Lamb. When you have the Lord's Supper and he kind of redefines the Passover meal and says it was all pointing to me.

He's the lover of our soul in Song of Solomon, he's our kinsman redeemer in the book of Ruth, he's the suffering servant in the prophet Isaiah, he's the weeping prophet in the prophet Jeremiah, we could go through every single book of the Old Testament and see Christ typified, or shadows or pointers to Christ. He's the fourth man in the fire. Every

prophet, every priest, every king was ultimately pointing to Christ, to Jesus. And then it's not until you get to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that he's finally born. He's in the flesh.

But he's just a baby, right? There's more development. There's more that takes place. He grows in stature and favor among God and man. And then at thirty years old he starts preaching and teaching that the kingdom of God is among you. So it's here in seed form. It's not here in its fullness yet. It's here in its seed form. And his kingdom was a revolutionary kingdom. It advanced through love and not force. It was from the inside out, not from the outside in. It was unlike other kingdoms. And as you go through the gospels, you see the mystery revealed further and further and further.

And then Jesus dies, he's buried, he is raised from the dead. Three days later he is raised. Forty days after that he ascends to the Father. And then the mystery that was revealed through Christ is then given to the church. And just as Christ revealed the mystery through his person and work and all of the Old Testament that was leading up to that, now he gives the church the responsibility of displaying the mystery. So the mystery is revealed through Christ, that was week one. Then it's displayed through the church, that's week number two.

We're displaying to principalities and powers the true nature of the gospel. And that mystery that we're displaying is being resisted by a counterfeit mystery that we're just going to call the mystery of lawlessness. This was last week. We looked at 2 Thessalonians, this idea of an Antichrist who is the opposite of Christ, makes promises like Christ, is attractive, is winsome, is charismatic like Christ, but he's the opposite. Christ says it's my life for you. The Antichrist says it's your life. And so it's resisting, trying to oppose what God is doing in and through the church.

And that's really the dynamic of New Testament Christianity. Christ is the gospel. He is our salvation. We the church are Jesus continued. We're his ministry continued on the earth. And there is a force, a spiritual battle that is taking place resisting what God is doing in and through the church, in the world, through the church. And it'll be that way until Christ comes again. What I wanted to do to close the series was to answer the question of a practical application. It's easy to get super theoretical like I just did.

You know, talking about Christ and progressive revelation in the Old Testament and the church and ecclesiology and all those big ten-letter words. Well what about you? What does it matter to you? What's the relationship between the mystery of God and Monday through Saturday in your life? How is the mystery of God developed in you? That's what I want us to look at today in 1 Timothy chapter three, how the mystery of God is developed in you. Because this mystery that Paul says he's a proclaimer of, he planted this church in Ephesus.

He left. He put Timothy in charge. And Timothy's in charge of a big church in a big city. It's a big responsibility. And there's a couple of people in the church who are talking nonsense,

creating trouble, and Timothy's not sure quite how to deal with it. And so Paul writes him this letter and says, here's how you deal with it. You put a certain type of leader in place. You have certain kind of preaching. Resist certain things, press into other things. That's what the whole book of 1 Timothy is about.

It reminds me of something a pastor friend of mine, Blake White over at Southside, said. Because I was talking about Broadview and how things were going well, and I was very hopeful and encouraged in the Lord, and he said much of the same thing. But then he said, but we both know any local church is about three weeks away from total disaster. And I was like, thank you for the encouraging word, Blake. That's good. But it's 100% true. Every church is about three weeks away from just utter disaster because it's such a human thing.

And that's what was going on in Ephesus with 1 Timothy, Paul saying, you're on a razor's edge, you've got to pull some of these things in and challenge God's people to act godly, and that's what our passage is ultimately about. So let's pick it up. 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 14. Paul says, I write these things to you, hoping to come and see you soon. But if I should be delayed, I've written you this letter so that you'll know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household. So I'm writing you a letter so that you know as a pastor how people in the church ought to conduct themselves.

In God's household, which is the church of the living God, or the living God's church, a pillar and foundation of the truth. And most certainly, and here's our phrase, most certainly the mystery of godliness is great. He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the spirit. Seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, and taken up in glory. So Paul: Timothy, I hope I can come and see you. But if I can't, this letter has given you everything you need so that you know how people ought to conduct themselves in the church, because the church is God's house.

The church is a pillar and a buttress or a foundation for the truth. And the mystery of godliness, godliness in the lives of people in the church, is indeed great. And then he goes into this Christmas carol or this hymn about the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the bottom line Paul is saying to Timothy is, Timothy, godliness is a big deal in your local church because the proof of God's mystery is in the conduct of God's people. The proof of God's mystery is in the godliness or the holy lifestyle, the character of the people of God in the church.

We hear the phrase the proof of the pudding is in the tasting. It doesn't matter what you say, it matters what you do. And much the same is true in this passage. He's saying that the proof of the pudding that the gospel really is true is in how it transforms the lives of people who profess to believe the gospel. And so godliness in your life, Timothy, and in the church is a big deal. This is actually, he's been developing this theme. Paul says, I encourage you, Timothy, to be a praying church, to have prayers and intercessions for kings and queens and people in high authority.

But the purpose statement for why a church should be a praying church is so that you can lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. How many of you say I want a peaceful and quiet life? Everybody, right? Just give me a peaceful, quiet life. Paul says there's a relationship between a peaceful and quiet life and a godly life. A life that embraces godliness is a peaceful, quiet life. He says in 1 Timothy chapter 4, this will be up on the screen if you don't want to turn there.

To Timothy in particular. He says, you're a pastor. You love working out, Timothy. But physical working out is only good for your physical body. And rather, instead of focusing just on physical training, train yourself for godliness. Godliness. Make an effort to discipline yourself to become more and more godly in your character and your behavior because physical training is great, but it's temporary. It's for this world alone. Godliness is helpful both for this life and in the life to come. He says at the very end, in 1 Timothy chapter six, verse six, godliness with contentment is great gain.

You got people who are preaching the gospel to make money for themselves because they can use the gospel for a profit. He says, don't be like that, be a godly man. Godliness with contentment is great gain. He says at the end in verse 11, flee from those things, the kind of the greed, the corruption, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. So the issue of godliness is a big deal. That's what Paul is saying. And that's what I'm going to say to you as your pastor. When it comes to your lifestyle, the character of your life, the moral virtues, vices that you tolerate or don't tolerate in your life, they matter.

And it matters in the church because the church is the pillar and buttress of the truth. The church is what's displaying the mystery. And the proof that God's gospel is true, that it is a transformational work of grace, that it is the power of God unto salvation, that is displayed through our character, through godliness. Godliness is the proof. Now in your notes, the phrase I want to use is this idea of God's incarnation. Paul says, so that you know how people ought to behave in God's household. It's a really interesting phrase.

We are the incarnation of the family of God on the earth. We talked about this a couple of weeks ago that the problem with the universal church is you can't see it, right? You can't go talk to the pastor of the universal church. You can't be in the small group of the universal church. You got to have a local church. That's why local church membership is so important because you see the family of God, you see the truth of God, you see the love and goodness of God through people in the context of a local church.

We are the incarnation of the family of God. We're the means that God uses to show the world that it really is a better love and it really is a better joy, it really is a better peace. It really is different. It is really worth believing in. It's worth following Jesus because look at how he's transformed this group of people in this local church. Godliness is the proof of God's mystery. Paul uses these pictures. He says that the church is a pillar and a foundation

for the truth. Some of your translations may say pillar and buttress, which I kind of like that word.

Buttress for the truth. Feels like a strong word. You got to remember Paul's writing to Timothy who's in Ephesus, and he's thinking in his mind when he thinks pillar and buttress. He's actually thinking of the temple of Artemis. And this may feel like a boring history thing to you, but it's really fascinating. If you look at any temple in the Greco-Roman world, they had these big tall pillars and at the top of every temple was this thing called the capstone. Do I have a picture of this, Jace? When he says that we're a pillar and the buttress of the truth, this is kind of what he has in mind.

This is the temple to Artemis. Artemis was a Greek goddess. Everybody loved worshiping Artemis, not necessarily because Artemis was so great, but because the religion backing the worship of Artemis had all female priestesses. And you worshiped through go-talk-to-your-kids-about-it-at-home-by-yourselves kind of behavior. You know what I'm talking about? So everybody wanted to be all about Artemis. And when Paul comes into Ephesus preaching the gospel, many people repent of their sexual immorality, they start to believe the gospel. And the vendors who were making money off of the worship of Artemis, they get upset.

So they come up against Paul. I believe it's Acts chapter 19 or Acts chapter 18. I think I've got the verse up there. And they say, Paul, who do you think you are? You're robbing us of a profit. And then they make this phrase, great is Artemis of the Ephesians. Artemis of the Ephesians is great. Well, Paul in our text, 1 Timothy chapter 3,[1] he says, no, Artemis isn't anything. The mystery of godliness is great. So he's comparing the temple of Artemis with the church. And he's saying the church, the expression of God, the godliness of the people in the church, that's what displays true beauty.

That's what displays true excellence. So let's throw that picture of the temple back up there. The church is a pillar and a foundation. What does the pillar do? Well, the pillar doesn't just hold up the capstone. The pillar points people's attention to the capstone. And Ephesians chapter two says Jesus is the capstone of the church. The capstone was the chief. It was the main thing. Everything pointed to the capstone. The capstone had the most exquisite artwork, the most compelling narrative. It communicated the most glorious reality. The capstone was the big deal.

So Paul's saying Jesus is the big deal, but the church is the pillar. So the church is pointing people up, saying, look at how great God is or look at how great Jesus is, look at how sufficient his grace, look at how beautiful, look at how compelling. The church is a pillar of the truth. But not just a pillar, we're also a buttress. And I don't have this on this picture, but a buttress was basically, in masonry, kind of like an adjacent support to the load-bearing wall. Yeah, here's a picture.

So you got the load-bearing wall here. Well the buttress would kind of come out. These are actually called flying buttresses. It's a fun word too. But that kind of comes out and supports the load-bearing wall. So Paul's saying you're a support to the truth. I think the way I put it in your notes is the way we live our lives in the church commends and supports the truth of the gospel. It says to people who are wondering, I wonder if Christianity is true. It says, of course it's true. Look at how it's changed these people.

Now you might be saying, well, that's a genetic fallacy. A genetic fallacy is where you say something is true or false based on the lifestyle of the person who believes it. So Christianity can't be true because the church is full of hypocrites. Well, that doesn't make Christianity false. Jesus not rising from the dead makes Christianity false. That's true philosophically, that's true logically. But the truth quest that people are on is fundamentally not necessarily a philosophical truth quest. When people are trying to find truth, they're wondering what's going to work, what's going to change my life, what's going to make things better for me.

And that's what Paul says the church can help with. The church commends the beauty of the gospel. The church supports the truth of the gospel so that when people say, why would you follow a Jewish carpenter from two thousand years ago, why would you believe in what Christians believe in our culture when it's so unpalatable and so judgmental and so exclusive? When the church is attacked or when people are inquiring what the gospel is about, our lifestyle, godliness in the lives of the people of the church commends it and supports it.

We through our lives can powerfully persuade people that Jesus really is who he said he is and really did what he said he would do. Everybody's on a quest. Otherwise you wouldn't have all these different religions. You've got Islam, you've got Buddhism, Hinduism, all these different things. The reason why a lot of those people are in the religions that they are is because they thought that was what was going to work for them. Their truth quest was not philosophical first and foremost. It was practical. And when you through your life can show Jesus changes everything you've piqued the interest of people who are looking for something to fix their lives.

When you can show that the gospel properly applied to a marriage, can take something that is dead in the water and bring it back to life. It's a powerful persuasive argument for the truth of the gospel. Or when you can take a prodigal son or daughter who, in most situations, would be cut off from the family, and you, through the power of God, can give forgiveness and grace and reconciliation. And you can have what the culture would say is a totally dysfunctional, broken family. And yet you're all sitting on the front row in church and you love one another with the love of Jesus.

That's a powerful persuasive argument for the gospel. That's what Paul's saying. Through your life, you're commending and displaying the truth. And that persuasion works in either

direction. There are a lot of people who say, I don't want anything to do with Christianity because the church is full of mean judgmental people. Why would I want to be a Christian when my mom was a Christian and it didn't change her life? Why would I want to be a Christian when my dad was a Christian and he beat me when I was a kid?

Why would I want to be a Christian when the guy that I dated in high school said he was a Christian and he abused me? Why would I want anything to do with Christianity? You see your life has an impact on what people believe about the truth. And Paul is saying, that's why, Timothy, you've got to embrace godliness. It's not a salvation issue. You're not saved by your works. I'm not saying get your act together so you can become a Christian. We're saved by grace through faith, not of works, so that nobody can boast.

That is very clear in the New Testament. But your life matters. How you live matters. Works matter because they display and commend and support the truth of the gospel. So you should be godly. I should be godly. We should crave it. We should make it a goal, a priority, just like you want to make a certain amount of money or have a certain kind of house or have a certain kind of family, you should have a goal. I want to have a certain kind of character. I want to have a certain kind of godliness in my life because I believe godliness matters at the end of the day.

And it's going to persuade people either direction. It's either going to commend my life or discourage people from believing. That's why I didn't want to be an atheist. You know, when I was doubting Christianity, I had a lot of intellectual doubts in college. And as challenging as the arguments from atheism and secular humanism were, I never was attracted to that camp because they seemed very arrogant and haughty and mean. And I didn't want to be that. So even though the arguments were challenging, I wasn't attracted to the movement. Same with Islam.

You know, there's a lot of people— Islam's spreading like gangbusters right now. But for a lot of people, probably in this room, you would look at Islam and you wouldn't say I denounce Islam because it's historically unreliable and philosophically untenable and kind of works-based in its theology, you'd say I reject Islam because it's oppressive, it's unjust, it's fear-based and power hungry and I don't want anything to do with that. How people live their life commends what they believe, persuades people one way or the other. So we've got to embrace godliness.

Godliness is a proof. That's the first point. Godliness is a proof. Second thing, godliness is a process. And this is what he says at the very end. He says, the mystery of godliness is great. And then he breaks into this hymn. He says, most certainly the mystery of godliness is great. And then he goes into Jesus, he was manifested in the flesh, he was vindicated in the spirit, he was seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, and taken up

in glory. On the one hand, I think what Paul's doing, as he's going into this hymn, he's saying, the mystery of godliness in Christ is great.

He's been talking about the character of the church, and then he transitions to the beauty and the greatness of Jesus Christ. And he goes into this hymn that talks about his incarnation. He was manifested in the flesh. That's what we celebrate at Christmas. But it wasn't just that he was born, it's that he lived. He grew in favor of God and man. He had a human life, he had human relationships, he showed what God was like in his compassion and his mercy and grace through his relationships with other people. So he was manifested in the flesh.

You want to know what God looks like, acts like, talks like? Look to Jesus. What he looked like, acted like, and talked like shows you the fullness of God. But then he was vindicated by the Spirit. That's talking about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. That's Romans 1:4.[2] The Spirit vindicated the claims of Jesus Christ by raising him from the dead. And the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is going to give life to our mortal bodies. And so it's a sequence of events. He was born, he lived, he was raised, and then he was seen by angels.

A lot of people think that's when Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison. You know, I don't know about all that. Some people think it's a reference to the angels around the throne in heaven worshiping Jesus. He's uniquely worthy. Could be that. It could be a reference to Ephesians 3 that we looked at a couple of weeks ago that says the church is displaying to principalities and powers, or the angelic realm, the truth and beauty of Christ. But the point is he was seen by angels, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels.

Remember, a lot of angels didn't know the plan of God. It says that they were desperate to look into the mystery of God of how is God going to take this seeming defeat and bring victory? How is he going to take the cross and bring a crown? How's he going to take tears and bring rejoicing? All of that was made manifest through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And angels saw it and they longed to look into it. So after he says he's seen by angels, then he says he was preached among the nations, believed on in the world.

Again, this is the mystery being unfolded. It was hidden and then it was revealed. Christianity is the only religion that I know of personally that, when it inserts itself into a culture, it transforms that culture, and that culture transforms the expression of Christianity. What I mean by that is that when you go to South Africa, what Christianity looks like being expressed is totally different than the expression of Christianity in West Texas, right? They got a lot of fun dancing and all kinds of stuff. It's way cooler. But if you look at the expression of Christianity in Europe, it looks different than South Africa.

And if you go to Brazil, it looks way different than Europe. Christianity assimilates into every single culture without any issues whatsoever, but in every culture into which it assimilates,

there's a unique expression of that Christianity by that culture because Christianity was meant for the whole world. It's not a Western thing. It's not a Roman thing, it's not a Greek thing, it's a worldwide thing. He was believed on by the world. Every tribe, tongue, and nation will be gathered around the throne. That's what he means by this. It's a mystery that's being revealed as it's preached among the nations being believed on in the world, and then he was taken up in glory, talking about his ascension.

So Christ is the only one who perfectly embodied godliness. That's Paul's point. He's the only one who displayed the mystery perfectly. He was born, he lived, he was raised, he commissioned the church to go and preach and he ascended into heaven. But that perfect demonstration of the mystery was a process. Okay? Because all mystery is a process. All mystery is something hidden at first and then later revealed. And so I think what he's telling Timothy and you and us today is when it comes to your godliness, you need to remember it's a process.

It's a mystery. It's hidden and then it's revealed. How many of you know godliness is a process, right? Because when you got saved or when you became a Christian, you didn't become holy overnight. Did anybody have an overnight holiness experience? You know, you were totally living wild, crazy, smoking, drinking, addicted to drugs. It's not saying everybody did that, but some of us did. You get saved. Did you immediately stop drinking? Did you immediately stop cussing? Did you immediately kick the vices and bad habits? No. Most of us not. It was a process.

It's a mystery. It was hidden at first and later revealed. It's as if God planted a seed and that seed began to develop and grow, and over time, slowly but surely, it changed us. Just like the seed of a baby, just like the seed of many other ideas that develop later on in life. The mystery of godliness comes in stages. Sanctification is a process. Already you're justified. Already when you believe on the Lord, it's just as if you had never sinned. But becoming in practice who you are in principle takes a minute.

One of my pastor friends, Nathan Lino down in Houston, Texas, he likens this to The Karate Kid. Did anybody watch The Karate Kid growing up? Am I showing my age here? Alright. Remember Daniel in The Karate Kid? He goes to a new school. And he's got bullies in the school and these bullies know karate really good and so they're kind of picking on him and he's discouraged and defeated and so he wants to find a way to defend himself and lo and behold he comes home to his apartment complex and there's Mr.

Miyagi, right? Mr. Miyagi is the— is he the janitor or something? He's the maintenance man, right? He's a maintenance man, but he's also awesome, you know, he can karate chop people like crazy. So he tells Daniel, I can turn you into a warrior. I can turn you into a great fighter. And Daniel says, sign me up. I got to do it. I want to defend myself. I got to get rid of these

bullies. And then Mr. Miyagi has Daniel doing all these weird things, right? He goes and he paints the fence and he goes to the cars, wax on, wax off.

Wax on, wax off, the classic line of The Karate Kid, right? He's standing in the middle of the ocean, the waves are beating on him, and Daniel at one point gets pretty perturbed, right? He's like, why am I doing this? I think Mr. Miyagi just wants me to do his chores. He's kind of getting upset about it. But he doesn't understand there's something taking place under the surface. It's a mystery. It's hidden. But later it gets revealed because he realizes later the wax on was actually muscle memory teaching him how to block.

And the wax off was really muscle memory teaching him how to chop. And these other things that he was doing were teaching him, even though he didn't know it at the time. Transforming him into a great warrior, a great fighter. And he actually becomes a great warrior and a great fighter and he defeats his bullies. And it's such an amazing story that they now have a Netflix series playing off of it. It's the gospel. Okay, that's the gospel. That'll give me an email. All right. No, I'm that serious. Mr. Miyagi is Jesus.

You and I are Daniel. And there are times in your life where Jesus is going to have you doing things that feel absolutely pointless. I read the Bible and I pray every morning. I get up, I read the Bible and I pray. Sometimes I feel things, sometimes I don't feel things, sometimes I just feel like this is a chore I got to do. I go to church every single Sunday. I go to church on Wednesdays. I attend my small group. Sometimes it feels awesome, sometimes it's not. But I keep doing it because I think that's what Jesus wants me to do.

And maybe early on you don't sense much of a change. Maybe early on it feels like it's just tedious repetition. And maybe even there's times in your life where you question if he's really good. Is he really for me? Is he really changing me? Is this really necessary? Do I really have to go through this pain, this suffering? Does it have to be this bad? Did it really have to be then? Did it really have to be now? Does it really have to be this? And it's very easy to question the Lord.

But here's the point. If you'll trust him and if you'll keep walking and if you'll keep being faithful and if you'll keep doing the things he's asked you to do, slowly but surely he'll change you. He'll transform you. It's gradual and then it's sudden. I've seen it happen a hundred times. I've seen it happen in my own life. Slowly but surely you're changed. As Philippians says, you work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Because you know God's working in you during this process. And so that's the Christian life. The Christian life is this mystery.

It's hidden and then it's revealed. It doesn't happen overnight. It's a process, but you've got to come to a place where you're able to trust the plan, to trust the process even when it doesn't make sense because of this conviction that he is good, his plan is effective, and if I'll keep walking eventually I'll see the result. The mystery of godliness is great. So as we bring

our time to a close, I want to ask you a couple of questions. Number one, is godliness a big deal in your life? There's a tendency, and especially in churches like ours, to focus on the grace of God and salvation by grace, and it's not of works, and all that's true.

I'm not denying that. But sometimes churches like ours that emphasize that demote the importance of character and godliness in your lifestyle. Oh, it's Jesus forgives me of my sin. It doesn't matter what I do with my sexuality. You know, God is gracious. It doesn't matter my language. You know, I know I cuss like a sailor, but it doesn't really matter. God is gracious. Yeah, I have this issue or that issue. It's a character flaw, but you know, God's good. He is good, he is gracious, he does forgive you. You are condemned by those actions, but you're saved by grace.

But those things are a big deal because you, if you're a Christian, you've been put in a church. If you're a member of this church, you've been commissioned to display the gospel, and your lifestyle has a great effect on how persuasive you are. And so make godliness a big deal. We're about to enter into a new year; you're going to have weight loss plans, you're going to have money-making plans, you should have a character plan. How am I going to become a godly man, a godly mother? How am I going to train my kids to be godly children?

Godliness is a big deal. The tools for developing that are repentance and faith. So this morning, there may be an area of your life where God is saying, we're not in sync here. And all repentance is saying, God, you're right, I'm wrong. It's agreeing with God about his assessment of the facts. So I don't know what that looks like in your life, but I want to, as Taylor leads us through this time of response to open up your heart to the Lord and say, is there any areas where I need to repent?

Are there areas of my life where godliness is not coming to fruition because of me? Because I'm resisting. That's number one. And the second thing is faith. Repentance is agreeing with God about his assessment of the facts, and then faith is just trusting God enough to do what he says. And this may be as simple as starting a quiet time. You say, I'll never become a godly person. I'm never going to be like him or my small group teacher or my dad. Have you even started the process? Have you even attempted to put in the work and the discipline necessary for Christ to change you?

So maybe it's something as simple as that. Maybe it's starting a new venture, maybe it's starting a disciple-making relationship, maybe it's starting to come to church more often. I don't know what the case is, but trust God enough to do what he says. And so as we respond, I want you to present that to the Lord and ask for the Holy Spirit to show you what that's going to look like in your life. If you're here and you're not a Christian, then repentance and faith is the way into the Christian life.

You repent that your sins have separated you from this holy God who loves you. He wants a relationship with you, but that can only happen if you're forgiven of sin and clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. He's the only one who perfectly displayed godliness. And the way to do that is by repenting of your sin and trusting in Jesus. To trust that he paid the price, that he's your Savior, that he can deliver you. It's nothing you do, it's nothing you earn, it's a gift that you receive. And if you want to make that decision this morning, you can do that now as we respond.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "1 Timothy chapter 6"; "the mystery of godliness is great" is 1 Timothy 3:16, the passage Wes was preaching. Source: 1 Timothy 3:16 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "Romans 1 14"; the verse about Jesus being "appointed to be the powerful Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead" is Romans 1:4. Source: Romans 1:4 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩