

Don't speak that over us, all right.

Hey, if you've got a Bible, I'd love for you to grab that and turn to two places.

By the way, if you don't have a Bible and you wanna use a Bible, we've got some physical copies of the Bible, some house Bibles.

We're certainly gonna have the words up on the screen, but if you wanna use a house Bible,

Put your hand up, and we've got some ushers who can pass out Bibles.

Got one here in the middle, and so keep your eye out for that.

So I want you to turn to two places.

In order to not do a Bible drill later, I'll preload these for you.

I want you to turn first to Acts chapter 17, Acts 17, and then mark your place there, and then turn to Romans chapter 1.

Romans 1 is where we'll get started.

And if you're like Jeff, neither of those places is actually Exodus.

I'm aware of that.

If you're new to the conversation, we started a systematic journey through the book of Exodus at the beginning of the year that has been fantastic.

And we finally come to the account of the plagues.

which spans the middle of chapter 7 through chapter 11.

And as you think about the plagues, there are some pretty significant theological lessons that we can glean from what we see happening in the plagues.

And so as we were praying over this and how we were going to present this, we thought...

that instead of just reading through each passage and dealing with the mechanics of what's happening, because it does get a little bit repetitive, that we would dig on each one of these theological lessons that we find underline the narrative of the plagues.

And so that's what we're going to do.

We're going to do it a little unconventionally.

Here's what I would recommend that you do, by the way.

Bless you.

I would, over the next six weeks, read...

Exodus 7, midway through, all the way through Exodus 11, and just play on repeat in your personal reading what is entailed in the plagues.

So that as we're studying these theological, these underlying theological lessons, you're going to be reading God's word along with that.

But that's how we're going to unpack this.

And if you're like, and we get to the end and we're like, man, that was incredible.

great.

If you're like, that was the worst, we'll know not to do it this way again, if I ever preach Exodus before I die.

So that's what we're going to do.

So each week for the next six weeks, I'll introduce a topic, which this morning is monotheism.

And then we're just going to unpack that.

We'll talk about how we see it

displayed and God bringing the plagues against Egypt, and then we'll do some work to explore it from the whole counsel of God's word.

So we're going to be kind of all over the place this morning.

Does that sound fair?

Okay, now before I get into this, I do want to set some ground rules.

Maybe a better way to think about it is I want to highlight a few important things that we need to remember as we walk through these kind of theological lessons.

And the first thing is this.

There is no way that we can explore each of these subjects in their entirety.

It's just not going to happen in a 45-minute sermon.

I know you're like, 45-minute sermon.

Right.

Yeah.

We can't do it.

I don't care if the sermon's three hours long.

In fact, let's be honest.

It doesn't matter.

These theological topics, we won't be able to explore those in their entirety ever because...

For all of eternity, we're gonna be digging on these things and understanding more about the character and nature of God and never come to the end of that exercise because God is infinite in his character and nature.

You and I can't get to the end of these roads when it comes to who God is because there is no end to the road.

And so if you geek out on theology, I think that's great.

But if you're looking for something exhaustive in these times, you're going to be frustrated.

My goal is simply to give you a primer of sorts that gets our hearts moving in a direction that can keep us exploring and digging on the particular topic.

So just understand that it's impossible to be exhaustive.

The second thing that I would say...

is to highlight what a beautiful opportunity we have as an interdenominational church body.

The truth is, is that Heartland is kind of a melting pot denominationally.

There's not really a predominant denominational background here.

We're a mixed bag.

And what that means is that there's probably a whole bunch of different presuppositions represented in the room here

on most of these subjects that we're gonna be dealing with.

Now, I'm gonna suggest that that is an absolute gift for our body because we can take, all of us can take those presuppositions, those things we've sort of always believed in whatever tradition we've grown up with,

And we can put those presuppositions on the shelf, look at what the Bible actually says about the subject, and then run those presuppositions through the filter of Scripture.

And then we have a choice to make based on whether or not those line up, right?

If they line up, it's like, praise God, that's awesome.

I'm going to keep believing that.

If they don't line up...

You got a choice to make, right?

Are you going to believe what you've always believed because it's what you've always been taught?

Are you going to believe what the Bible actually says?

You know, there's great danger when we get in echo chambers, like denominational echo chambers, and everybody just believes the same thing historically.

And nobody's actually saying, but what does the Bible say?

Because it's amazing how quickly we can drift from scripture into extra biblical beliefs, is it not?

We all have a tendency to do that.

And so

To be able to go back to scripture and say, man, what does the Bible actually say about this particular subject?

And that what we believe is such a gift.

So I think the way that Heartland's constructed now is a wonderful environment to explore these kind of theological things.

So I'm excited about that.

The final thing that I'd say.

is that my heart, my deep desire in this six weeks is to make each one of these subjects accessible to you.

I don't want to do such like a deep theological dive that you're left with smoke coming out of your ears and you walk out of here more confused than when you first walked in.

Now, we're going to touch on some deep concepts at times, but I want to make these subjects as practical as possible so that you know how these things actually matter and are applied in everyday life.

Did you know that when we study theology, theology is the study of God, when we look at theology, that that theology is supposed to make you fall more in love with Jesus?

Did you know that?

Like, if theology is not causing you to fall more deeply in love with Jesus and treasure him, you're not doing theology the right way, and it can actually be counterproductive.

I forgot who said it, but it was somebody who was a preacher, and he was talking about homiletics, you know, kind of the...

the art of preaching.

And he said, preaching's like, it's taking theology and putting it on the bottom shelf.

He equated it to taking the cookies and putting them down on the bottom shelf.

So what I don't want to do is frustrate you by pointing to the cookies on the top shelf that none of us can actually reach and enjoy.

The

the point of cookies, I speak from experience on this, by the way, I could turn sideways and you'd see the point of cookies is to actually enjoy them.

So I'd rather get all, I'd rather get those down all the way to the bottom shelf so that we can partake of them together.

Sort of like, hey, let's taste and see that the Lord is good in these areas of theology.

And then we want more of him.

You guys with me on that?

That's my heart.

That's my desire in this.

So with all that in view,

Let's start by digging on our topic this morning.

Monotheism.

It's not that difficult to define monotheism.

It simply means that there is one God.

There's one God.

Now, I'm going to be honest with you.

I had a tough time writing this sermon this week, not because it's hard to find passages that present the theological position of monotheism, but because it's hard to find passages that don't present that position.

It's just so woven throughout the fabric of God's word.

There's so many texts that we could go to to explore this core theological truth.

In fact, you don't even have to go any further than Genesis 1.1.

The very first verse in the Bible, because that verse says, in the beginning, God created.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

And then it goes on to say, and everything that's in the heavens and the earth.

That's it, you see.

There is nothing that predated God.

Monotheism.

He's the uncreated one.

The one who brought everything into existence by the word of his power.

There's not one thing that is before God or above God or who compares to God.

He is unmatched.

In his existence and his glory and everything finds its definition and its meaning in God.

Now that's really important because a whole lot of people, and I mean a whole lot of people, will spend their entire lives trying to figure out what the point of life is.

So they go through and they're spinning their wheels trying to figure out, why am I on this playground called earth to begin with?

Like, what's the point of life?

And I'm just going to tell you, unless you understand the truth that God is the point of all of life, life will never make sense.

That's because you were made perfect.

for him.

It's because all things were made for him.

And that's what we see throughout the creation narrative.

God spoke and things were created out of nothing.

Now,

We all understand that there's a big difference between us and God in that, right?

Like as image bearers, we are creative beings.

That's part of the Imago Dei and it's the image of God.

God made us that way.

So we all are wired by God to...

imagine and design and build and construct things.

There's not a single one of us in this room that's not creative in certain ways because God made us like that.

But the difference is that you and I need materials with which to create.

So you and I need created things in order to create other things.

Does that make sense?

So if I want to build a table, which I've done, it turned out okay, I need things to do that.

I need wood.

I need hardware, things like screws and brackets.

I need tools with which to do the work.

But that's not how God creates.

God speaks things into existence out of nothing.

That's pretty profound, right?

Think about how that relates to our topic.

There cannot be anything over and above God because he alone is the creator and the sustainer, the one who gives meaning and purpose and definition and texture to all other things.

So there's one God.

There's one God who is the source of everything.

And the pattern that we see throughout scripture is God constantly bringing us back to the truth that he alone is God and there is no other.

We see it in the creation narrative.

We see it in the law that was given to God's people in Exodus.

We're going to get there eventually in Exodus.

What's the very first commandment that God gave to his people?

You shall have no other small g gods before me.

Why?

Because there are no other gods.

And when we live as though there are, it is the very essence of sin, of glory thievery.

I'll talk more about that in just a moment.

But you know what's interesting about that first commandment?

Most people, when they read that and they read, you shall have no other gods before me, they think that God is saying, don't put another God before me as in ahead of me.

And I think, of course, that's true in part.

But I think what God is really saying is don't put another God before me as in in my presence.

And God's presence, think about how profound this is, God's presence is all-encompassing throughout all of creation.

There is no place where God is not.

So God's essentially saying, there are no gods, there's only me, and when you live as though there are other gods, things that you're worshiping, and you put those things in my presence, that's called sin.

You see how that works?

And we all do this.

We all do this.

I'm going to talk about that in just a minute.

But it's certainly the pattern that we see played on repeat throughout the entire narrative of Scripture.

I mean, listen, let's go back to the beginning.

The way things were in the garden.

The fact that there is only one God was unquestionably true in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, right?

I think we can all agree with that.

What changed?

What changed was sin entering the world with the fall of man.

And that's when the heart was corrupted and became, as John Calvin put it, a factory of idols.

So we went from worshiping God and focusing upon his presence and his glory as the primary central point of our existence.

We went from that

to the worship and pursuit of lesser things, where we take those things and we elevate those things above God in our worship, in our trust, in our affection.

Now, this is the main idea that I think we have to understand this morning.

If we're really going to think about the subject, not just theologically or intellectually, but practically for our lives, we have to understand that we are all of us, because of the fall, because of sin, because of deadness in the heart, we are all of us naturally polytheists, right?

That's the point that I want to make to you this morning.

That in our broken state, we are naturally polytheists.

Now, I'm not saying that's true up here.

I know you don't believe that probably if you're sitting in church.

You probably don't believe that.

I'm saying it's practically true for all of us in here in the heart.

We are all given to, we call it this, we're all given to practical polytheism because we all struggle with idolatry, the pursuit and worship of lesser things.

That's exactly what Paul wrote about in Romans chapter 1.

As he starts unpacking for us sin and idolatry in order to get us to the only solution, the beauty of the gospel.

So look at this passage with me in Romans chapter 1.

This is verses 18 through 25.

It says, What truth?

That God is who he says he is.

That he's done what he says he's done.

The truth that God alone is God and there are no other gods, least of all me.

Because that's essentially what we do is when we worship lesser things, we're actually worshipping ourselves.

So we exchange the truth of who God is for a lie in our natural hearts that are broken and separated from God.

Paul goes on, he says, look, what can be known about God is plain and

Because God has shown it to them for his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power, his divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

So they, we, are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him.

But they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie.

Now listen, and they worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever.

Amen.

Now here's what I want for us to see here.

This is the real issue that lies at the heart of polytheism, the belief or the practice that there are many gods.

It's the fact that in our sin and in our rebellion, we all worship created things instead of the creator of all things.

Even though it is plain to see in creation that there is a creator, a designer, an architect who is the source and who is the definition of everything.

And so what we see pervasively throughout biblical history and throughout the ancient world and frankly throughout the modern world is this idolatry played out in the hearts of people.

We see all kinds of cultures worshiping all kinds of small g gods.

In fact, if you track in Genesis, that is the state that Abram was raised in when God initiated with him.

Remember in Genesis chapter 12, God comes to Abram and calls him out.

Later, he would name him, of course, Abraham, but he was from a place called Mesopotamia, which meant that his family would have been deeply polytheistic.

They would have been worshiping different gods.

And what's the work that God did with Abraham?

He initiated with Abraham.

He revealed himself to Abraham.

He called Abraham.

He gave Abraham the gift of faith to hear and obey him.

It's very much the same way that we see God working in the life of Moses.

What we've studied through his calling and introduction of Moses in his life.

Get this, it was the grace of God in Abraham's life to bring him to the truth that God alone is God and there is no other.

Look at this passage in Nehemiah chapter nine, it's verses six and seven, reflecting back on Abraham.

It says, "You are the Lord, you alone.

"You have made heaven the heaven of heavens.'

With all their hosts, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them, and you preserve all of them.

And the host of heaven worships you.

You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram.

And brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham.

The point is, is this was God's work in Abraham.

And it's the exact same work that he's doing with his people in Exodus.

You see, this is the culture of Egypt that we see on display in the book of Exodus.

It's a pagan polytheistic culture.

And a big part of the work that God is doing through the plagues is to display to everyone the futility of idolatry and the worship of lesser things as though they're God.

We see that as a theme throughout the entire narrative of the plagues.

I'll give you one example that's pretty clear.

It's Exodus 9 verses 15 and 16.

This is what we find in the plague of hail that God brings.

God says, for by now...

I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth.

God's basically like, look, I don't have to do what I'm doing, right?

I could think.

I could do a Thanos finger snap.

I don't even have to do that.

And all of a sudden, you don't exist.

I can cut you off from the earth.

But listen to what he says.

But for this purpose, I have raised you up to show you my power, right?

so that my name, my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

Understand that this is what God's doing in the plagues.

He's taking the polytheistic structure of Egypt.

That's the backdrop.

He's taking the worship of Pharaoh as though he is a God.

That's what people believed.

And he's subjecting all of that to open shame as he shows off his power and his glory through the redemption of his people.

That's because God's purpose from the very beginning was to show the world that he alone is God and there is no other.

And listen, this is the story of Scripture.

There's nothing new under the sun.

This is why we've seen...

This is what we've seen dominate so many cultures throughout human history.

Think of Norse culture and Roman culture and Greek culture.

It's all polytheism.

Hinduism is pervasively polytheist.

You are not going to find a more spiritual culture, I say spiritual culture, on the face of the earth than in India and Hinduism because literally about everything is a god.

It's polytheism.

So here's what I want us to see here.

What we see played out on the global historical stage, what we see played out in Exodus is the same work that God is doing in each one of our hearts to fix

what is broken in us, to unbend what has been bent by the fall.

Back to the point that I made earlier.

We are all naturally polytheistic in our sin and rebellion.

which means that we will work, and we work tirelessly at it.

We will work in our sick, rebellious hearts.

We'll work to attach our worship, our hope, our trust, our affection to anything over and above God.

We will even take good things that God has given to us and try to make them God things as we elevate those things above him in our worship.

So if you want to know what...

what the redemptive work that God is doing looks like, here it is.

Here's what the gospel does.

By the way, the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

That's what Romans 1.16 says.

The gospel is the good news.

That's what it actually means, evangelion.

It's

Good news that Jesus Christ stepped out of heaven, took on the form of his own creation, lived and died in our place, and was raised victorious over sin and death.

All of that so this great exchange can happen where he takes all of our shame, guilt, condemnation upon himself.

He takes our sin upon himself, becoming a curse for us so that he can give us his righteousness in return.

Righteousness just means right standing with God.

That's what we get in return.

And the Bible says that that only happens as an act of God's grace.

It's a gift and it happens through faith in Jesus Christ.

That good news, that gospel is doing the work of

of giving us a new heart initially, and then helping that heart be softened over time and pointed back at God, who is the one true God.

So the gospel is unbending what was bent in us towards self-worship and self-glory in the fall, and the gospel is the only thing that fixes this.

God's work of redemption is the only thing that sets this right in our hearts.

But I need you to hear that is a progressive work over the course of our entire lives.

God doesn't just save you and then all of a sudden everything's magically delicious and you no longer chase after idols.

It doesn't work.

I would love for it to work like that.

It would be great if he saved us and just beamed us up to heaven.

It doesn't work like that because God's doing a work to progressively soften our hearts and deepen and build our faith.

And he's doing that as these things are slowly ripped out of our hearts by the work of the gospel.

That's what our sanctification is, which means you're going to screw up all the time, and so am I, but God's grace covers it.

It means that you and I are going to get...

lose our focus on Jesus, we're going to get pointed at other things, start chasing after lesser things as though they're God, and God's going to continually woo us and draw us back in repentance because he loves us.

But it's the beauty of that process.

That's what we're talking about here.

This is the work of the gospel to drive us to the truth that God alone is God and that you and I were made by him and for him.

And just like with Abraham...

It is the gift of God.

That's what faith is.

It's God's gift to us that allows us to even fix our eyes and our hearts on him and live with Jesus as the center, which is the only place where life really makes sense.

Are you guys tracking with me on this?

This is the story of redemption.

So when we talk about monotheism, okay, it's not just like, hey, let me crack open Wayne Grudem's systematic theology and let's just define monotheism in a cold way.

Monotheism and this idea that God's working that in our hearts and drawing out these polytheistic tendencies that we have in idolatry, that lies at the very heart of the work of redemption that God is doing in our lives.

Because you and I, man, we are, sorry, we are dumb sheep.

We are dumb sheep.

We get distracted so often.

I mean, there are ways like, have you ever had it?

Like, I'll walk out of a quiet, I'll have a quiet time and I'm like, man.

I feel like Moses up on Sinai.

I feel like I'm walking, like, I'm like, is my face glowing right now?

Like, I feel so close to the presence of the Lord.

I feel so present with him.

And then I'll get distracted, right?

It's like a dog with a squirrel running by.

I'm like, squirrel.

And all of a sudden, my heart is running after something completely different.

Have you ever had that happen?

I hope so, because otherwise I'm alone and I'm a mess.

I think we're all a mess.

I don't hope so.

I really hope that you can like just float around in the Shekinah glory of God all day.

I, for one, am like, I struggle with this.

And it's super encouraging to understand that this is the work of redemption that God is doing in our lives to continually woo us back.

So let's jump over to Acts 17 and

where I had you mark your place and see if we can't make this just a little bit more practical.

I want to look at it in the New Testament.

So here's the context of Acts 17.

Paul and Silas are running around preaching the gospel, planting churches.

They'd been in a place called Thessalonica.

If you've ever read Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, that's who they're addressed to.

So they're in Thessalonica.

They get run out of Thessalonica by some Jews who are angry that they're preaching the gospel.

And so they chase them to a place called Berea.

where they're able to preach for a while until they get caught up with, and then they run, and they escape from Berea.

They go to Greece, okay?

So Paul and Silas find themselves in Athens, Greece.

Now, this is, I mean, you know Greek culture.

It's like the

that in Roman culture is like the epicenter of polytheistic culture.

And what's so beautiful about Paul's heart, okay, when Paul rolls into Greece, we read this in Acts 17, 16, it actually says that as Paul looked around the city and all the idols that are everywhere that people are worshiping, it says that, I love the language, his spirit was provoked within him.

So he looks at culture, sees the pervasive idol worship,

All these lesser, not gods, but people are acting like they're gods.

And it actually provoked his spirit within him.

I thought about that this morning, and that was convicting for me.

I love to do this when the Lord roughs me up on something.

I just kind of give it back to you this morning.

You're welcome.

But just a question.

Do we respond that way when we see pervasive idol worship?

Is our spirit provoked?

Like, do we have this burning desire to see people's hearts pointed away from those false gods to the one true God?

Or I'll ask it a different way.

How about when we see pervasive idol worship in our own hearts?

Does that provoke us?

Because I'm thinking that we might be so caught up in our own worship of idols that we don't even notice all the idolatry worship around us.

And that's where the Lord convicted me.

Because I was like, oh, yeah, God, I'd be ticked.

If I was rolling around Athens, I'd be like, Paul, I'd be like, you know, let's throw down and, you know, preach the gospel and all that stuff.

And the Lord's like, oh, really?

Because your heart looks a lot like Greek culture, Jeff.

Right?

And so I'm wondering if you don't chase after idols in your own heart so much that you're blind to it around you because you're a part of that culture.

I was like, am I allowed to preach this morning?

Because that's convicting.

I feel disqualified.

But that's the beautiful part is that we're covered with his grace, right?

So that's the context of what's happening.

So Paul gets into Athens.

And he did what he typically did when he came into a new area.

He goes first to the Jewish synagogue and he preaches the gospel, talks about Jesus, and then he gets booted from the synagogue.

And then he does what he always does when he gets booted from a synagogue.

He starts preaching Jesus then throughout the whole city.

And as he was doing that, Paul was invited to speak at the Areopagus, which is Mars Hill.

It's an invitation that Paul was quick to accept.

And that's where we pick up the narrative.

It would have been helpful if I would have turned there myself.

That's where we pick up the narrative, Acts 17 in verse 22.

I'm just going to read.

So here's what I'm going to do.

I'm going to read this, 22 verse like 31.

And then as I read this, I want you to see what we've been talking about played out in this passage, in this narrative.

And then I'm going to try to just crystallize that with a few points at the end.

And this is what it says.

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus said, men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.

For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription to the unknown God.

What therefore is brilliant.

What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything else.

since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.

Listen to this now.

that they should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.

Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.

I love that.

You can underline that, by the way.

For in him we live and move and have our being.

As even some of your own poets have said, for we are indeed his offspring.

Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

The times of ignorance...

God overlooked.

But now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

I'm going to read that part again, and I want you to underline it if you're taking notes in your Bible.

He commands all people everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed to

And of this he has given assurance to all by raising that man from the dead.

And that man is Jesus Christ.

Now, do you see this?

What Paul preached...

to the people of Athens in the Areopagus on Mars Hill was what we've just been talking about the entire time.

And it is this grand narrative of redemption that is being played out in the world through the working of the gospel.

And it starts with this point.

Everyone is religious.

Let me define that, because Paul says it of the people in heaven.

He says, I can see in every way that you're religious.

Let me use a different word than religious.

Everyone is a worshiper all the time.

That's what I mean.

There is not a single moment...

When you and I aren't worshipping something, not one single moment, and you know the reason that's true?

Because God designed us that way.

He made us to be, now, where's our worship supposed to go?

Him, all the time.

It's where we find life and joy and peace and satisfaction, contentment, all the rest.

That's why we were made is to worship him.

That member that worship in the fall has been bent.

But we're all worshipping something different.

All the time.

So every decision you make, no matter how big, no matter how small, is coming from a heart of worship.

Paul acknowledges that here in Greek culture, and we need to understand that dynamic in our lives.

Now, here's the second point I'd make.

In our spiritual death and blindness, I just alluded to it, that worship is bent away from God, and it's bent towards lesser created things.

We see this in the many gods of the Greeks.

But we see this pervasively in our hearts.

We've had this conversation in our family because we live for a time in India.

Okay, Soman, you're from India.

And it's just, there's pervasive idolatry.

I told you that as though you don't know you're from India.

That was funny.

So if you didn't know, Soman, you are in fact Indian.

So I don't know what's wrong with me.

Now I've lost my train of thought.

Oh, the idolatry in India, it's so obvious.

It's so pervasive.

It's right in front of you all the time.

And so, like, for my kids living in that culture and us talking to them all the time about the gospel and talking about idolatry, that situation's always, it would always bring up this conversation where they're like, it's so foolish.

for them to be worshipping this thing, which is so clearly not God or a God.

It's just silly.

And I said, yeah, but isn't it sneakier and more dangerous that we don't have these things that we physically bow down to?

What we do, way more nefarious, we take our idols into the heart.

This is what God's people have done historically.

In fact, when you read Ezekiel, God says through the prophet, you tell the elders of Israel that when they come to me, I will deal with them based on the multitude of their idols, which they have taken into their heart.

That's dangerous.

So what we do is we worship our kids, we worship our jobs, we worship career, success, money, position, power, security, comfort.

Literally the list of American idols goes on and on and on and on, and we take them into our hearts, and it's sneaky because we can hide easier than if we're just bowing down before them.

So what we do is we wear a mask, we pretend, we slap Jesus' name on everything, we pretend like our hearts are focused on him, all the while we're chasing after these idols.

So I would ask you, which one's more dangerous and nefarious?

You see what I'm saying?

So it's every one of us that does this.

And here's my third point.

It is an absolute grace, mind-blowing grace that God has made himself known to us.

unbelievable that God would make himself known to us and that he would draw near to us and make the way that we could actually know him like this.

I love how we see it in the narrative because Paul is essentially saying, oh yeah, see the one down at the end, the unknown God?

Let me tell you who he is because he's the only God.

And

And it was grace upon grace to the people of Athens that day as Paul proclaimed the gospel.

And it is grace upon grace upon grace every moment of every day of our lives where God beckons our hearts back to him and says, let me remind you of who I actually am.

And there is no other like me.

And you will find no life outside of relationship with me.

This is grace, my friends.

Unmerited, unmatched grace.

So what is the call upon our lives?

We see it here in the text.

The call upon every one of our lives is to repent while there's still time.

That's essentially what this is saying.

It's saying God has appointed a day, and that day is fixed, and that day is coming.

I don't know when that day is.

You don't know when that day is, but God knows when that day is.

But his point is, repent while there's still time.

You say, repent.

That sounds like a really churchy word.

It's actually not that complicated.

Here's what it means.

You're walking.

I can't walk too far, they've told me, because we have cameras now.

So I'll back up and start back here.

You're walking in a direction, okay?

And when I leave the camera, that's when you fall off the edge.

You're convicted of sin because you've heard the truth and God is awakening your heart as a gift of his grace, giving you faith, regenerating.

And by the way, the reason you're hearing the gospel this morning is because God wanted you to hear the gospel this morning.

And I'm so thankful he uses a broken stick to draw straight lines because I don't present it that well, but I'm telling you, God is good.

right?

It's his grace to come in and awaken our heart and our movement, which is fueled by what he's doing to regenerate the heart, is to simply turn away from chasing after lesser things and walk back towards the one true God in faith.

That's what repentance is.

It's not just changing your mind.

It's with your entire being.

Your heart is what the Bible says.

It's the very center of your will and all the stuff that makes you your essence.

It's taking all of that and walking towards God as he enables you to walk towards him.

And that's where you find life.

You guys tracking with me?

That's repentance.

And that's what God is calling us to.

And that's what we drive at every weekend here because that's always the response.

It's simply to believe the gospel and walk towards God as he enables that in you.

You're like, I thought we were supposed to do a whole bunch of stuff for God and not do a bunch of bad stuff.

Listen, he's going to change your life, and your life's going to look radically different.

Exhibit A, I've been walking with Jesus for 31 years right now.

I should have probably been dead or in prison.

My life looks a lot different than it would have looked without Jesus.

He's going to do a whole bunch of stuff in and through you that look different.

But he's not calling you to primarily do stuff for him.

He's calling you to delight in him and depend upon his presence as you rest in the finished work of Jesus.

And then you know what happens?

Jesus does stuff in and through you, and you look different over time.

But this work, this response that we do is just to simply believe.

It's to repent and walk towards him.

And that's the final thing that I would say in this text.

I've already said it, is there's a day of judgment that is coming, and that judgment is based entirely on what we do with Jesus Christ, period.

That's all that the judgment is.

It's what has happened with Jesus in your life.

Are you covered by his righteousness and

which is only by grace and through faith, as I've explained, or are you standing before the judgment seat of God, resting on your own righteousness, which is not righteousness at all?

One way leads to eternal life, and the other way leads to eternal damnation, and the Bible is abundantly clear.

It is only, only through the finished work of Jesus that we have life in him.

So here's how I want to end our time.

The text that I actually went to first and I was like, oh, monotheism.

I want to preach this passage is the Shema from Deuteronomy chapter 6.

Shema, that word literally just means here.

And that's how it starts here.

So let me read this to you, but I'm going to read it in its fuller context because it's not just the Shema, but what we do with that and how we sit in that and how it encompasses our whole life.

And I want you to see some of the same themes in this.

So I think I've got the passage on the screens.

This is Deuteronomy chapter 6.

This is what it says.

Here's the Shema.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, say it with me, the Lord is one.

He's one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Guys, I love that so much.

God's not like, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

You better get busy doing stuff, serving me.

Because I'm God and you're not.

You better get after it.

You know what he does?

He calls you into love.

It's just a relationship of love and delight.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

You shall teach them diligently to your children.

You shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise.

Do you see the pervasive nature of this command to love God with everything?

And that's what we're called to.

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

So you're seeing these things when you're coming and when you're going.

And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you with great and good cities that you didn't build, houses full of good things that you didn't fill,

and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant.

You catching the theme?

And when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

It is the Lord your God you shall fear.

Him you shall serve, and by His name you shall swear war.

And here it is.

You shall not go after other small g gods.

The gods of the peoples who are around you.

For the Lord your God is in your midst.

He is a jealous God.

Lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.

God's a jealous God.

Jeff, that doesn't sound good.

That doesn't sound right.

Listen, it's good and it's right.

You know how it means God's a jealous God?

He doesn't mean anything from us.

God wants us because he loves us and it means he ain't gonna share you with other things.

Right?

That's beautiful.

God is calling every single one of us into himself today.

Not in a performative way,

where he needs us to do anything for him, but in a relationship of love and delight where you can look back at the Lord and understand that he is so utterly delighted in you because of the finished work of Jesus that you are then freed up to delight in his presence.

That's what it means for us to love the Lord, the one Lord, one God, our God, the only God for whom we were made.

Let's pray together.

Father, we are asking that you would do this work in us, God, because we can't do it ourselves, God.

We can't muster up faith.

We can't manufacture these things, God.

We are wholly dependent upon the working of your spirit and being showered with grace in this.

So, God, I'm asking.

I'm asking, God, that you would do

Do what only you can do this morning.

God, would you kick in doors?

Would you break down walls?

Would you shine the light of your love and grace and mercy on those dark areas of our hearts?

God, I pray for the conviction of sin.

I pray just like you were doing with me, roughing me up this morning, saying, Jeff, I think you have pervasive idols.

So you don't see them a lot of times around you because they're so...

embedded in your heart god would you do that for each of us and just show us as your as as your kindness it's your kindness that leads us to repentance paul says in romans lead us to repentance god that we might just fix our hearts upon you and have our hearts centered on you and just drink deeply of your grace for which we are so needy moment by moment god do that work in us for your glory

Exalt Christ.

Help us to just see him and run into his arms this morning.

Pray that you would do that, God.

In Jesus' name, amen.