

Rev. Billy Cerveny:

Pray with me. Father, we thank you for the gift of children. We thank you for that growing number that I see every week coming down that aisle. Thank you, Lord. I pray that you would open the eyes of our heart, that you would bring your word to life, that we would see you more clearly Jesus, that we would know you more deeply, and that it would be transformative. We thank you Jesus and pray this in your name. Amen. Have a seat. Good morning.

It is the sixth Sunday of Easter and for those of you that have children, it means it's the first Sunday of summer, which is the grand reminder of all those day camps you didn't book months ago. Remember you promised yourself you were going to do that and now you don't know how you're going to entertain your children. It's okay.

This is the time of year where Jacksonville turns into an easy-bake oven and we all wish we had a mountain house, but I like summer. Summer because there's a fluidity to it. Years ago when I was in the music business, I would spend my years traveling around to different cities, but during the summer months I would always go out and I would volunteer with a ministry called Young Life and I would go and I would be the resident artist, for lack of a better word, at these camps. And I used to go to this place called Frontier Ranch out in Buena Vista, Colorado. It was this gorgeous place. I met my wife there and I see the Lord moved and move in so many different profound ways.

And one year I was, it was probably the second or third week of the camp and every Monday or every Sunday night you would have four to six hundred campers arrive and they had their leaders that would come in and you'd have this meeting where all the the campers were playing around and you would have this meeting where all the leaders were would come together and say, "Hey, how you doing? They're from all over the country." And there was this one guy that was there and he was kind of standing off to the side. I didn't think much of it. He was kind of sat and kind of ate his snack listening and then the next day and the next morning I saw him at breakfast and we were all at breakfast and he was walking through the infield or the little area outside and he was by himself again and didn't think much of it. That night we were having another meeting and I see this same guy and he's sort of by himself. I think to myself, "That's odd."

So I grabbed one of the, you know, the leaders there and they grabbed the trip leader and they say, "Hey, who is that guy? Who is he with?"

And he said, "I don't know. We thought he was with you."

So we had this moment of existential horror where we realized there was some stranger that was wandering around camp. So we went over and he grabbed this person. We said, "Hey, excuse me sir. Can we talk to you?" And all of a sudden he looked crestfallen and he looked embarrassed and he got tears in his eyes and we said, "Who are you?"

And he said, "I'm sorry. My name's Bob." I don't remember what his name was. He goes, "I live in North Carolina and five days ago I lost my job and then three days ago my wife left me and she took my kids."

And then I got in my car and I didn't know where to go or where I could, who could, I could see or who I could talk to and I got in my car and I started driving and I and this is the only place I ever remember feeling loved.

So I drove all night and I was sleeping in my car and I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to inconvenience anybody but I just wanted to be around here again around something good.

I'll never forget the look on his face as the police put the handcuffs on him. I'm kidding. We didn't do that.

Has he hit the pavement? No.

I thought about that story a lot because it's beautiful and it's tragic at the same time. It's beautiful because it's this picture of a guy who encountered the gospel and people who knew Jesus in such a way that they touched this man's heart.

And that God knew that he was sowing the seeds of this his redemption that years from now when the cheese came off his cracker and he didn't know what to do in life that he had a reference point for the gospel and he drove there and he came to be near the Lord. But what was the tragic thing about me about that story to me because I don't know his life circumstances. I don't know what his marriage was like or his childhood was like or all the things that eclipsed that. But what was tragic about that to me is that the Jesus that he encountered at Frontier Ranch or at that camp stayed there. That it went and it didn't it didn't permeate his life. It didn't spill over the walls of that camp into his world and he couldn't see him.

And he became overwhelmed as it eclipsed and what happened is that camp became a uniquely holy place. And Jesus wasn't there in his life but this is almost as though Jesus lived in a cabin by the water slide up on this mountain. Right? In order to get God he had to get back to that place. This sort of bifurcated life where there was this holy place but then the rest of his life. You know I tell you that story because we do the same thing.

Maybe not quite as dramatic of this but we create what Martin Luther would call we create these sacred spaces and then these secular spaces. That we create this false division and we do it with places. We'll say like the church this sanctuary it's holy ground or camp weed it's holy ground or wherever you've been to a men's retreat it's holy ground. Now get what we're saying.

What we're saying in moments like that what we're saying is this is a place where we have routinely had profound encounters with God. We've seen him move. We've seen him change hearts and it's palpable and there's nothing wrong with that. But when we quarantine God into these quote unquote sacred spaces and we don't allow him into these secular spaces it becomes a problem. Because we don't just do it with physical locations we do it in our lives. We apply it to our work, our families, our leisure. There are things that we do that fall in the spiritual domain and then there's things that fall in the secular domain. We go to church we'll go to a bible study. I'll have my quiet time. I'll read the bible. I'll pray but then I go to work and I'm you know doing contracts or I'm installing you know drywall whatever it is you do.

So I have my spiritual life and I have my secular life.

Now the problem with that is it is that it doesn't work so well.

And we split our lives like that. First, if you're a Christian it fractures your sense of identity. You've got this spiritual you over here and then you've got the rest of your life you over here.

And you begin to feel divided and when you divide like that you feel fake in both worlds. You're not spiritual enough because you know you got all this stuff going on over here and when you're over here you're like man I just don't think about God at all. It doesn't really apply to the rest of the rhythms of my life.

And when we do that and we all do it we shrink Jesus.

We shrink him and Jesus he doesn't spill beyond the walls of the church.

He ends up living in a cabin somewhere.

And what happens there is not only we shrink Jesus but our struggles grow.

God's distant and parenting is hard. My old job isn't unfolding the way I think it should or some of my health isn't where it should be.

And Jesus seems to have no application of that and then all of a sudden we undermines our meaning and our sense of purpose and we begin to look around and we see certain people that and what they do in their life like those are the spiritual ones. Oh Charlie or Billy like they're priests they're the ones who do the spiritual acts of God. That's a spiritual thing. Me I just I'm a teacher I'm a mom.

How is that spiritually impactful?

What a way to just completely demean our own lives.

I tell you this is not true. We're reading our passage today Revelation 21 and 22. The book of Revelation it's awesome but it's probably one of the lesser read books in your Bible because it's kind of woo-woo. It's got a lot of like flying creatures with lots of eyeballs. It talks about all kinds of crazy stuff.

But what passage we're in now it talks about the end times where the new heavens and the new earth are coming down.

And Jesus has returned and he has he has vanquished evil and judgment has happened and the new heavens and new earth have descended from heaven and it says I'm behold I'm making all things new. I'm absorbing your stories and I'm making the sad things of this life come untrue. And then John the apostle who was writing this who's who was seeing these visions and writing the book of Revelation it says in chapter 21 verse 10 it says in the spirit the angel carried me to a great high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. So here's John and he's looking and he sees the holy city coming down. This is where we see the description of the streets of gold you know the pearly gates this is that passage.

And we notice here the city is coming out and it's coming down from God. Now that's significant because we're Christians and what that means is it's consistent with our salvation because as Christians we aren't called to climb some holy mountain with our good works. I'm not called to dig in and try to be as virtuous I can so I can finally cross the tape and make it into heaven.

We have a Savior Jesus who descended the mountain because I can't ascend it. And here's this picture in the ultimate salvation here comes Jesus once again in the holy city coming for his people for us for you for me once again. In verse 22 I saw no temple in the city for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the lamb the city had no need for a sun or moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it light and its lamp is the lamb. I don't want you to miss the power of this because the idea of separating the sacred and the secular that we didn't start we didn't invent that.

Creating these two categories this was something that the Jewish people used to do routinely it was every ritual and the Jewish in the Jewish law and canon was about dividing these sacred and secular things it was about keeping that which was clean and that which was unclean from touching keeping the holy separated from the holy this applied to the food you ate to the clothes you wore to the way you spoke to your bodies clean things and unclean things and they were so serious about it if you were you were clean and you even touched something that was unclean you became ceremonially unclean and that mattered because you couldn't go to the temple that way and the temple if there ever was an example of the division between sacred and secular things it was the temple or the tabernacle you what they call it in the desert what it was was this holy place that had three concentric areas and as you got closer to the center this temple or the tabernacle became a holier holier place in fact, it was so holy that only the one person one time of year wearing the right clothes after being purified in the right way bringing the right sacrifices could go into this place and encounter and offer the sacrifice before the ark of the covenant which represented the presence of god and if you did that incorrectly guess what it was the end of you the story after story of people in scripture doing that in improper ways and dying so we come to Revelation 21 and John stands up or standing on the mountain and he writes I did not see a temple the word here for temple that the greek is using the word is for holy of holies and what he's saying is the holiest of holies that place that no one could enter that place that was you would walk in with your your eyes bowed with when you would walk in after purification processes he's saying it was no more and it was replaced by Jesus the glorified Jesus unhidden unobstructed unveiled and he's shining now if you're a Jewish person and you live in the first century you have no category for this your mind is getting blown right now verse 22 or chapter 22 verse 3 says no longer will there be anything accursed they will see his face and on and his name will be on their foreheads what does this mean that Jesus is illuminating he is shining the light that permeates that covers but it also transforms there is nothing accursed there's nothing accursed all things on which the light falls become holy, especially god's people they are transformed to such a degree it is as though his name is written on their foreheads it says isn't that great what a picture of what we belong to what a picture of the baptisms that we have that we are marked as Christ's own forever what a picture of our identity so this is that glorious picture of what's coming for us what does that have to do with us now everything see when you read the gospels and you read the gospel story we just read you have this picture there's Jesus and he's performing these miracles and it's and it's happening and it's these profound moments and we're like what do you do in Jesus is he just doing a magic trick is he just proving who he is which he is but there's so much more the invalid lying by the pool there you think of the hemorrhaging woman that Jesus healed you think of gyru's daughter who died

you think of the leper that Jesus Jesus healed according to Jewish law those were all unclean unholy unsacred people and when Jesus came he reached out and he touched these unholy unclean unsacred things and they became clean what Jesus is doing in that moment he's not just breaking a social convention he's not just breaking religious protocol we talked about this last week a little bit but what Jesus is doing in that moment that he is reaching across he is tearing the fabric of this fallen world he is reaching into revelation 21 and 22 grabbing the realities of the new heavens and the new earth and he is dragging them forward the realities where the light permeates and transforms that makes unclean things clean that makes normal things holy things the hemorrhaging woman gyarus's daughter they will no longer be anything accursed they will see his face and his holy name will be on their foreheads unholy things are made holy do you know the most profound moment where we see Jesus dragging the realities of the new heavens and the new earth forward into our current reality that's where he makes unholy things holy it's your salvation in mind your salvation in mind Jesus's death his resurrection his ascension giving his spirit in acts chapter two that holy presence that we were talking about in the in this holy of holies it spills out that thing that was quarantined in the temple it spills out into the world to make unclean things clean and do you know where it spilled out into you into your heart into you this doesn't just put us in a different column though okay now we're clean things like in revelation is transformative first Corinthians 6:19 it says or do you not know that your body is the temple of the holy spirit within you whom you have from God God isn't hiding behind the altar he's not trapped in the prayer book he's not looking down from a balcony in heaven the spirit of god is within you and you are a temple of god and if you are the temple of god hear this this is really important there are no longer holy places you are a holy place you are the holy dwelling place of god you don't just go to church you are the church you and as a result, your life becomes a liturgical act everywhere you step becomes holy ground there is no sacred there is no secular Jesus is the lord of all things and you as his representative as the as the temple of god you are the mobile unit of this spirit it goes before you in you behind you around you it gets better first peter chapter two is because of this holy presence what does it say about you you're the temple of god but you're also a royal priesthood oh wait a second that was my job I thought that was Charlie's job no we we've been called to minister and word and sacrament and to do this but the truth of the scripture says that the priesthood of believers that's you the indwelling power and spirit of god now listen I don't always act like that

I don't always live in those realities I mean what about our failures or our moral failures so the way you lose your temper or the the things that you do and you don't tell anybody about yeah me too it's the scandal of grace right the god takes unclean things and makes him clean unholy things and makes him holy see the call the gospel in these moments is to open the eyes to that reality as we step into what we think is the mundanity of our lives and let our change our perspective let it change my heart so when we act and we live our call is let me digest this truth and when I act in a Christian service or when I love others when I do that I'm not trying to become something I'm not I'm teasing out the realities of what I already am do you see the difference when I'm trying to act when I'm trying to become something I'm not in god's eyes that's that's just motivated by shame if I can just get there lord I will finally be worthy of you that's not the gospel when he's saying this you're not worthy I am but I will come and I'll fill you with my spirit and you will become a holy thing you will become a worthy thing and we digest that truth it changes us so let me say this if you came to church this morning it's almost over but if you are the church it's just getting started we come here to fan the embers in your heart to get those flames going because when you leave here Jesus isn't standing at the door like he's a cracker barrel and saying y'all come

back now you hear he goes with you he's kept he he goes before you like I just said you are a temple of the living god and he's taking you on mission so when you step into your life as a homemaker or a lawyer or a carpenter or a real estate appraiser or whatever it is you do it changes the way we look at our call how do we bring the spirit of the living god to bear in those moments wow that's a good question isn't it what that's a really great question to wrestle with how do I bring what is already true of me to bear in my life telling the truth moving in love moving kindly see the more we let this sink in of who we are what happens is this you usually don't see it first other people see it around you as his name becomes written on your forehead and all of a sudden when you live in the realities of the gospel it becomes obvious that you live in the realities of the gospel and people are impacted by it some people love it some people don't some people for them it's the fragrance of life and some people it's the fragrance of death but that's not your job to determine who it is it's your job to live into the reality of that to to be set free and transform your life and to live as those who have the name of Jesus written in our forehead Jesus died and he came to make common things basic things holy things people like me people like you the transformer that we would be as Isaiah 61 says we would be a planting for the display of the lord's splendor that is a beautiful reality and that is a beautiful truth that we live under in Christ Jesus amen amen