

DOXA –unlocking glorious living.

We are unpacking seven core Christian beliefs: *God is one, The Bible is true, Mankind is helpless, The Cross is enough, Jesus is life, The Church is central, Eternity is real*

Our desire in this series DOXA is to go deeper than mental ascent or head knowledge.

The ROOT of the Greek word DOXA is to think. Consider. Imagine.

So yes, we're talking about belief. But not mere belief...

DOXA is a Greek word for glory. It means splendor, grandeur, honor. It is used to talk about the revealed presence of God.

The beliefs that take root in our lives better get to producing fruit in the WAY you live.

Tonight we ask the Q we're asking every week as a fill in the blank for each belief:

How does my belief that MANKIND IS HELPLESS inspire me to pursue a life that reveals God's glory to the world around me?

Palm Sunday weekend: **MATTHEW 21:1-10**

In Luke's account we read in **Luke 19:37**: *When he reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen.*

The Mount of Olives shows up multiple times in the Gospels, but it is only mentioned once in all of the Old Testament by name – **2 Samuel 15:30**

David walked up the road to the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went.

His head was covered and his feet were bare as a sign of mourning. And the people who were with him covered their heads and wept as they climbed the hill.

Absalom's story is ultimately one of rebellion as David's own son tried to take the throne through deceit. And he died trying. But even the son of David who would rightfully take the throne, Solomon, went off the rails. From that generation after generation of David's descendants took the throne but disobeyed God.

A main theme throughout first and second Samuel, first and second kings, first and second Chronicles --- who will finally suitably serve as the anointed King of Israel? In Chapter 7 of 2 Samuel we see a crucial text in the Bible, God's promise that one of David's descendants would establish a reign that would last forever. This promise of a Messianic figure from the line of David gets picked up and developed by the prophets. And they wrestle with the tension between the promise and the realization that most of his lineage and the kings that followed him were sinful disappointments.

It's no coincidence that the cry on Palm Sunday is - **"Praise God for the Son of David"**

When the blind man calls out to Jesus for healing what does he call him? "Son of David."

When the beggar cries out for attention what does he call him? "Son of David."

When the Canaanite woman cries out for Jesus to heal her daughter? "Son of David."

They are indirectly inquiring – “*Are you finally the son of David we’ve been waiting for?*”

Absalom is a microcosm and foreshadowing of the descendants of David who would take up the throne and fail.

But he’s also a microcosm and foreshadowing of why THE Son of David – Jesus – would come and die on the cross.

He’s a microcosm of mankind- in rebellion, due retribution and needing reconciliation, and ultimately helpless to earn or achieve it.

ABSALOM >>>> our need for CONFESSION

“King David longed to be reunited with his son, Absalom.”

The narrative of Absalom is about rebellion against a father. But not just his father. His king. Sin is rebellion. Not just a disagreement amongst loved ones, it’s rebellion against our King.

As he’s fleeing and his army being defeated his hair is caught in a tree...

As one commentator put it: *“he is helplessly suspended between life and death, between the sentence of a rebel and the value of a son, between the severity of a king and the yearning of a father.”*

Absalom is caught red-handed in rebellion and helplessly suspended.

And we too are *helpless*.

But let’s talk about what helpless isn’t...

Helpless is not speaking to a lack of agency. Helpless doesn’t mean helpless to obey, where we just embrace a fatalistic attitude and throw our hands up and excuse our bad habits and scripts as due to a sin nature.

It’s not about a lack of agency, but **it is** about the fact that no matter what we DO in our agency, it can’t bring us healing, it can’t bring us life found in reconciled relationship with God.

And helpless isn’t hopeless.

1 John 1:8-10 is a key verse I want to unpack alongside this story of Absalom’s rebellion:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

But how does this truth that is in us... this recognition and belief effect the way we live? How does it effect our witness?

Sin has become a dirty word in the church because it is so tied to condemnation.

Recognition of sin in scripture, the conviction that comes from sin... isn’t some condemnation. We see in 1 John 1 that it’s an invitation to confession.

We so often start with the fall of man without pointing to what we fell from...
LOVE and relationship with God our Father.

Think about Absalom's birth – David held his boy in his arms, this child carrying his own blood and DNA... and he looked at him in love.

Our relationship with God is the most central we could ever have.
Our relationships in life will all look different, but we're all created for relationship with God.
He creates us in his image. We're designed for relationship with Him.

And if God feels distant? He hasn't moved. You have. His love hasn't been shaken.
And his steadfast love and kindness leads us to **repentance**.

We often think of repentance as a one time thing.
But Jesus said unless you remain in God you can do nothing. You're still helpless.
This isn't some unhealthy fatalistic or defeatist stance,
it's the heart of humility that keeps us coming back to God again and again.

Confession is a word we've let the Catholics run with and we've all but let go of.
Confession as a word that comes from the roots meaning "together" and "to admit."
Confession is coming together with God and/or a brother or sister in Christ and admitting our brokenness.

Confession as "this is who I am" is easy and it might even score likes and validation.
But confession together with a brother or sister we walk in accountability with... saying this is where I'm broken and I need healing? That's hard.

Confession is powerful, because confession reminds us that while we develop and grow- we still fight sin. We are no longer slaves to sin. But we won't go undefeated. And losses can sow seeds of shame. Which is why we still need grace like the air we breathe.

And God graciously gives it... *"he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

David gives us a beautiful poetic picture of this in **Ps 32:1-5**

Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

For day and night your hand was heavy on me;

my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord."

And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found...

Do you confess your sins and find forgiveness regularly?
Psalm 32 shows us that to keep away from confession is to sap your strength.
David says to confess is to be blessed.

And he knows by experience.

David would write in Psalm 51, he came to realize –
‘A broken and contrite heart you will not despise.’

Imagine how David’s heart would have overflowed if Absalom had come to him, broken and contrite, asking for forgiveness!

If we had any doubt of David’s heart toward Absalom... we merely have to look at what he tells his soldiers as they go out to defeat his army and put down his rebellion:
“For my sake, deal gently with young Absalom.”

JOAB >>>> our need for RECONCILIATION
“For my sake, deal gently with young Absalom.”

Nothing Absalom had done merited being treated gently.
In a similar way grace is often defined as the unmerited favor of God.
Meaning it’s not earned. It’s not deserved.

Romans 5:8 – while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We’re saved by grace through faith at the cross, not by climbing some ladder of comeuppance that we’ve leaned against it. We’re all on level ground. Sinners in need of a savior.

How does this help me live a life that reveals God’s glory to the world around me?

Humility. A humility that changes the way I see and interact other people who need grace.
When I’m on my knees at the cross worshipping the one who saved me,
I don’t have the ability to look down at anyone else.

If you look down on anyone because of your faith in Christ, you’re doing it wrong.
Any sense of superiority and supremacy is misplaced.
Every “ism” (classism / sexism / racism) runs counter to the cross of Jesus Christ.

Again - Joab was acting with the concerns of the king in mind.
Joab saw the a rebel in active rebellion against the king. So he killed him.

Jesus’ non-violence during the Passion Week

Martin Luther King Jr.

“Remember always that the nonviolent movement seeks justice and reconciliation – not victory.”
The question I need to ask myself?
Am I out for justice and reconciliation, or to win some victory?

“How to destroy an atheist in 2 minutes.”

Like Joab out to end Absalom, I can think I’m acting on behalf of the King’s interest when I buy into the us vs. them, tit for tat, battle royale for our culture.

But what was the King’s interest?

“Deal gently with him.”

1 Peter 3:15

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

2 Timothy 2:25

“Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth”

God’s concern isn’t for us to defeat people. It’s to see repentance and reconciliation.

Call me crazy, but Jesus wasn’t sent to condemn the world, and I don’t think he needs me to make up for something he forgot to put on his to do list.

The question we should ask daily as we engage with our culture and the people within it...

Am I operating like Jesus or Joab – more concerned with victory than reconciliation?

Why did David want Absalom treated gently? Because he didn’t want him dead. He wanted to be reconciled to him. Killing Absalom wasn’t a victory for David. It was a loss he mourned bitterly as a father. His cry of mourning is: ***“If only I had died instead of you.”***

DAVID >>>>> our need for SUBSTITUTION

When I cut myself and have an open sore, puss is present. Puss is a collection of dead white blood cells that fought the infection so that you can live. Right in our own body and blood is a reminder of the blood of Jesus shed for us.

Sin is like a sickness and an affliction. And we need healing we’re helpless to find in ourselves.

This is where the idea of substitution comes in.

What we call: **Substitutionary Atonement.**

What David lamented: “that it could have been me instead of you” is exactly what God did for us

There are many analogies for what Jesus did at Easter used in scripture:

The analogy of the battlefield – he defeated the power of sin and death for us.

The analogy of the marketplace – a ransom and debt paid.

The analogy of exile – Jesus banished and crucified so we could be brought in

The analogy of the temple – Jesus the purifying sacrifice that let’s us step into God’s presence

The analogy of law and court – Jesus taking our punishment we were due

Common through all of the analogies?

Jesus is acting as our substitute to do what we were helpless to do for ourselves.

John 15:13: *“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”*

The act of giving one’s life to save another is the most compelling and stimulating storyline there is. It’s why books and cinema holds it up again and again

Too often our DOXA, our witness, our headline, and the storyline that the world receives has been sin and condemnation. And this reverses the magnetism of Jesus that saw the lost flock to him. But the true glory of the Gospel? Jesus for us. No greater love.

The Son of David died on a tree/cross so that we could become children of God.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- *Am I operating in the world like Joab, more consumed with winning than reconciliation?*
- *Where do I need to come to God in confession and repentance to receive grace again?*