

Let's Be Honest: The Religion of Good People

SERIES [Let's Be Honest / Comparative Religions](#)

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SPEAKER Phil EuBank

KEY Résumé vs. Relationship

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I. The Religion of Good People

A Well, good morning Menlo Church and welcome back. So glad that you are with us. you are enduring so well through a very long summer series uh where we are taking a look at a bunch of other different faiths and worldviews and trying to contrast them in a respectful way uh to what a a version of historic biblical Christianity looks like. And uh today's is going to be uh a pretty heavy one. Uh so I'm really glad you're here for it. I hope it's helpful to you. I've heard great stories from people uh where this series has opened up their minds or their hearts or even great conversations. And I think that today is going to be one of those. Uh it's also a little heavier than usual. And so I'm going to pray for us right as we get started. And if you've never been here before or never heard me speak, before I speak, I pray kneeling. And really, it's just a a reminder of the humbling reality for all of us that God loves us.

B That no matter what faith system you walked in with today, or maybe you you didn't walk in with any faith today, God loves you. He made you, and he longs for a relationship with you. So would you join me as I thank God for that? God, thank you so much. Thank you that uh I can know confidently, no matter what else is true, of anybody at any one of our campuses today or anyone watching online, that you really do love them. You really did make them and you really did die to provide a way back into a relationship that they were always made to have with you. Would you help that resonate even more than anything else that gets said today in the power of your son Jesus that we pray. Amen. Now, I want to start today uh by telling you about a funeral from a number of years ago. The young man's name was uh Justin and uh he had he was killed tragically and instantly in a motorcycle accident.

II. Justin's Funeral

A There's no warning and it was the kind of thing as a pastor that if you don't know the family, I didn't know the family. You get this phone call and it completely reorganizes your entire week. Uh for me actually it kind of changed my entire year. Uh trying to navigate and care for as many as we were trying to navigate and care for in that as I did the service and the ministry that followed after it. Uh I've done a lot of funerals over the years, but I've never forgotten Justin's funeral. I don't think I ever will. And uh here's what I've learned about doing funerals for young people. Uh when someone older dies after a life well-lived, people grieve.

B And that makes sense. They should absolutely do that. when someone young dies, especially when they die tragically without warning, um people actually do math. And that's kind of what I looked at across the room that day. There were more than 1500 people in the room for that service. And as I looked across this overwhelming feeling that I saw was just a lot of people doing this mental math because especially for people that haven't thought about this before, the death of someone young, it it takes the one subject that we have spent a lot of our time and energy trying to not think about and puts it front and center into our minds, front and center into our attention, even if it's just for the length of that service. Nobody in the building that day was only thinking about Justin. They were thinking some version of if this can happen to him then it can happen to me. Now I don't think that that math by the way is morbid. I think that a lot of times God uses that mental math that internal accounting as the beginning of wisdom.

C As a matter of fact uh the scriptures agree with that sentiment. There's a text in the Hebrew scriptures um that highlights the exact same reality in Ecclesiastes 7. And it says, "It is better for you to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. For this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart." In other words, it doesn't matter what else is true of your life, what you accomplish or what you don't accomplish, what your resume looks like today or what it will look like later. It doesn't matter what your investment account looks like. This is coming for all of us. God's not shaking his head at that. Understanding that, living in light of that is actually wisdom. And in that moment, life kind of switched the light switch on for everybody in that room, revealing something that we worked pretty hard to avoid. It was true for me, too. To be honest, I learned things that day standing over Justin's casket that I could have never learned anywhere else. And I want to walk you through some of those things today because they're both timely and timeless all at the same time. They still have impact for us today. It's a little different from the other weeks because the other weeks we've looked at religions that by and large have this like big category of frameworks, theological ideas that we can say this is how this group believes and this is how uh Christians historically have believed where we've compared and contrasted those. But this week we're talking about people who are agnostic uh people who are religiously disaffiliated.

D We're talking about the nuns, not the Catholic ones. That was last week. This is N O N. the religiously disaffiliated people who would say they're relig or they're spiritual but not religious. The people who are not sure about God but they're pretty sure about being good and they think they're good enough. This is less of like a doctrine that we hold up and it's more of like an outlook or posture that people sometimes hold in their life. And that day at Justin's funeral, there were a lot of people holding up some version of that framework, some version of that posture to say, I'm I'm trying to be as good as I can and I think that'll be good enough. So, let me take you there. But the first thing that I want to do is highlight what everybody said about Justin on that day. It was beautiful and I think it was really sincere and I'm grateful that I got to hear it even though I didn't know Justin and his life. But person after person would fight back tears as they got to that microphone or or people before or after who were writing out cards and they were saying some version of Justin was a really good listener and Justin really cared about people even from a young age and that he had this light in him that was infectious.

III. Real Love and One Difficult Word

A He made people feel seen. Justin had real and genuine goodness in his life that I don't want to minimize. And I think I think that's really important. But as we think about that as a part of our conversation, I want to bring somebody else into it because in Jesus life and ministry, somebody kind of like Justin met Jesus. He had a great resume. As a matter of fact, in Mark chapter 10, you may be familiar with the passage. This is the interaction. There's a man that says to Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

B And in some ways, this is the question we have been trying to answer for every worldview and religion all summer. What must I do to inherit eternal life? And this guy sometimes gets called the rich young ruler. Um, he's a really good guy. He's sincere. Jesus goes on to list all the different commandments, all the things that you're supposed to do according to the Jewish tradition in order to be right with God. And he's like, I do all that stuff. As a matter of fact, Jesus, I've done it since I was a kid. And we have no evidence that he was lying. This is a genuinely upright, decent, religious, admirable person. He is really impressive and so is his resume. Now, what I want you to watch what Jesus does because Jesus has something that he's going to have to tell him that's pretty hard. But before he says anything to him, he demonstrates something for him that I think you and I need to be ready to do to anyone in our life, regardless of what they believe.

C It says, "And Jesus looking at him, he hasn't said anything yet, loved him." Loved him. No matter what someone across from you thinks or believes, what they've accomplished or they've not accomplished, the heart of God that you would extend to that person is love. God is actually love. That's that's who he is. And Jesus looks at him and loves him. It's the first thing that I learned at Justin's funeral that somebody I didn't know, somebody that had admirable traits, somebody that this side of eternity I'll never get to know, that I could actually extend love to him because God did. You don't need to pretend that people can't do good even if they're not Christians or they don't have a faith that they've described. You don't have to hold back difficult ideas with the good ideas. Jesus actually held both of them at once. real love and a difficult word in the same breath as we're going to see in just a second. If you can't do that, by the way, if you can't carry grace and truth, if you always have to pick one in relationships, you are not living or loving like Jesus. It doesn't mean that we come double barrel with every conversation. But it means that in relationships, we are people of grace and truth. So that's the posture that I'm asking you to hold with me over our next few minutes together. We're going to love the good in people and we are going to be honest with those same good people here today. Watch Jesus do both.

D Cuz notice what Jesus says the very moment after this man calls Jesus good. Remember that. Jesus says this. Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. Now Jesus is not denying who he is, his identity. He's doing something like almost kind of surgical. He's trying to get this person to understand that there is a a fullest definition of this label that he's just indicated and that no one is fully good except God. Now, at a funeral, everybody's thinking about who's good and who's good enough. At a funeral, everybody is taking grades, but nobody has the rubric. Nobody's measuring that against one central idea. A lot of times people are just assuming that being a good person would land them on the right side of some invisible ledger for eternity that is kept by a god that most of us have not spoken to in years.

IV. Résumé, Meet Relationship

A Jesus doesn't say actually I'm sorry to break it to you but your resume is a little light in some areas. He doesn't say you lack this idea over here you should go follow the law over here. No following the entire law. Jesus challenges him like he often does to go above and beyond the law so that he can get to his heart. Says this, "You lack one thing. Go sell all that you have and give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me." Now, it's really easy to think about people who rebel against God from uh sort of living a life characterized by brokenness, sort of lentiousness, do whatever you want. Um, but people that rebel against God with religion, people that rebel against God with legalism, we're not used to that. See, for this rich young ruler, he was actually rebelling against the underlying thing that God ultimately wanted. The problem was never that his goodness was too small. The problem that was for him, that this goodness that he had was basically a way for him to avoid dealing with the deeper need that he didn't want to look at. his resume was not the door of access to the kingdom of God. Jesus was the door to his access to the kingdom of God. It still is that same reality. The passage tells us that he goes on to walk away sad because he had great possessions. And it turns out, it turns out he couldn't let go of his resume. It turns out that following all the rules actually had become the goal.

- B** But that's not the goal. Throughout the series, we've been looking at these metaphors and trying to identify what is the contrasting idea of a particular worldview or religion and Christianity. And today, the contrast is the difference between a resume and relationship. And this idea that I can have a whole bunch, I've accomplished, that I can stack up good deeds, that I can show this and present this to God. It is so easy for us to slip into that. Especially if you're not sure about God, especially if your system of faith is kind of fuzzy. You're like hedging your bets. Like I'm not really sure, but if I just live a good life, I bet that that will be enough. Now, let me tell you something that's that's kind of tough in a moment when you're doing a funeral as a pastor, especially with 1500 plus, especially young people, many of whom who had no faith. They always want the pastor to do something or say something.
- C** At every funeral, people want basically a guarantee. They want me to stand up to vocally and and verbally total the resume of that person's life to read the verdict of their life to hand it back to the crowd and say, "Hey everybody, Justin's in. Don't worry about it. Rest easy. Everybody can go home in comfort." I want you to know I actually kind of want to be able to give that to people. But that's not my job. That's God's job. And especially for somebody I don't know. Look, Justin's heart on his last day, in his last hour.
- D** It's something that I trust God with. I don't know all of his relationships. I don't know what all the conversations he had or or what God did to reach his heart in those final days. All of that belongs to God's judgment. And all of that belongs to God's timeline. I don't even have access to it. But the saving message of Jesus that is re that is this revealed reality that we've been talking about over and over again in this series. That's my actual job. And when I stand at a funeral like that, even if I don't know the person, I can tell you on either end of the ledger, wherever they are on that day, I can tell you what they want you to know is that salvation is available. That salvation is available by grace, God's undeserved favor through faith, being able to have belief in something you can't see yet.

E and in Christ, the finished work he did for you and me. That it's not earned, but it's given. That we're trusting in Jesus who died and rose again to reconcile us to God. That's my job at a funeral is to honor someone's life and then share the gospel. And there's one thing that really I think stuck with me during that funeral for Justin. this passage in the very first book of your Bible where Abraham is talking to God and really trying to kind of talk God down because God's about to bring judgment to a group of people and Abraham keeps narrowing the group of people. If there's this many righteous people, will you spare them?

F If there's this many people, right, righteous people, will you spare them? And uh he gets to the end of this argument with God and he says this. He says, "Shall not the judge of all earth do what is just?" Now Abraham, I want to be fair to him. is desperate and he's going exactly to the right place with his desperation. When you and I are desperate, God is the right destination for that desperation. But I would so much rather leave Justin in the hands of a judge who is more just and more capable and more loving and more gracious all at the same time than I ever can be. The verdict was never and is never mine to give. And it was never his to earn. It's not yours to earn.

V. What Is Good Enough for God?

- A** It rests with the one person in the universe who is qualified to issue it, to be gentle with it, to be loving with it, and to be just with it. Here's something that I have to always be careful of at a funeral, but I can say a little bit more directly here. If good is the only standard, if like being good enough in some vague way is the standard, then that room is like that is the most hopeless room in the world. Think about it. If good is the standard, then all 1,500 people are doing math with a different standard in their head. They can't finish the math they started. You'll never know what the passing score is. You'll never know if Justin cleared it. You'll never know if you can clear it. Good person faith, it sounds really comfortable. It sounds really helpful until you need it. And I'm not even just talking about eternity. I'm talking about in life when you come up against something really difficult, comfortable faith gets really quiet. It can't answer the question that you drove to the funeral asking. It can't answer the question of the pain that you're feeling.
- B** Ultimately, at a funeral like that, underneath all of it, you basically have people that are thinking this. They're thinking, "He was such a good person, but what's good enough for God?" Nobody at the funeral could tell you the answer to that question. Nobody at any funeral can answer this question from their own human moral behavior. We need something outside of ourselves to gain the answer to it. So where did we learn all this from? Because the idea that this is sort of just a cultural assumption is a relatively new problem.
- C** This deep unchecked confidence that good people are fine and that we get to be the ones who decide how good is good enough. It's everywhere. It's like this cultural water that we're just swimming in. We've gotten used to the temperature. No matter our zip code, no matter our profession, it's all around us. There's a sociologist named Christian Smith who studied a whole generation of young people to find out what they actually believed about God. And he came back with a phrase. You've heard me use this phrase before. It's less intimidating than it looks. He used the phrase moralistic therapeutic deism.

D Don't be intimidated. It really is easier than it looks. Basically, it means there is a God. That that God mostly wants you to be nice. that the point of life is to be happy and to feel good about yourself and that God will stay out of your way and if you have a problem that you can't solve on your own, you just kind of ask him to help in that moment only. And oh, by the way, good people generally go to heaven when they die. That underlying idea wasn't an out there problem. It was an in-ear problem. When Smith looked into where teenagers had discovered this, learned this, he found out that they learned it from us, from the adults in their lives, from parents, actually even from a lot of churches.

VI. The Quiet Teacher and the Loud Teacher

A Moralistic therapeutic deism is not the religion of the nuns, the religiously disaffiliated. It's actually the religion of lots of church kids. And it's this kind of quiet teacher that's swimming all over the place where we sort of try to blend the theology of the world and culture with what we're teaching from the Bible. But there's also a loud teacher. If that's the quiet teacher, there's a loud teacher that's helped shape a lot of what we think and believe in culture and what has become highly normative in our day. 20 years ago, the smartest, loudest voices in culture stood up and said that faith was a fairy tale and a decent person does not need God to be good. This group of people that flowed really after 9/11 and some of the deep cultural pain we flowed from it uh were called the new atheists.

B And the new atheist had this idea from within. There were four horsemen. Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Christopher Hitchens. Harris came onto the scene in 2004. Dawkins wrote a book called *The God Delusion* in 2006. They wrote bestsellers. They they went on speaking tours. They went to college campuses all around the country. The earliest versions of internet video streaming often were these clean, clear messages that sounded so confident. Religion is for the ignorant. grow up. Be good on your own. That is the wrong rallying cry of the new atheist movement. So, if you're sitting here and you're sure that you're basically good enough for God, let me tell you, I'm not calling you foolish. I'm just telling you where you learned it from. And you may not know any of those names or have read any of those books, but I'm guessing the professor that really influenced you did. I'm guessing the video you watched was influenced by some of these voices. They were the shest voices of my growing up years. and it sounded like a wake-up call to a church that really needed a wakeup call. It was just the wrong one.

C Now, if this was the whole picture of eternity, if the the picture of eternity was you don't need God, it's fine. Just be a good person on your own, then funerals like Justin's, they just end up being places where people recite what they actually believe about God and about life. And to go a little deeper, there's a reason that we are so sure that we get to hold this ruler ourselves in a world like this. Sometimes it gets called secular humanism. This loud teacher of the voices that got loud over the last couple of decades that there's no god that we have to answer to. Basically, what that does is it makes you the god of your own life. You get handed a ruler and you get to you get to determine what's good enough because who else would? And there's this underlying problem that gets created with that. You stop looking out to find the good, to find the answer, which has been basically the relative answer throughout all of human history, even if where we're looking is different. And we start looking in. You're like, well, what does that sound like? Well, it sounds like phrases like follow your heart.

D Live your truth. But the Bible says that our hearts are desperately wicked. The Bible says actually we need to look out in a broken world with brokenness characterized as a part of who we are. But here's the thing, like this idea of following your heart, live your truth, you can find the truth within, it feels like freedom until you actually need something from it. A good that I can make up for myself can never correct me. It can never save me. It can never pull me out of the ditch that I've gotten myself into. It can only ever agree with me. Author and pastor Tim Keller pointed out that if we worship a God who never disagrees with us, we don't worship the God of the Bible. We may just be worshiping ourselves. And I think we're doing a lot of that. Plenty of people would swear that they've opted out of religion entirely. They think they've refused every ladder, every system, every comparative thing we've been talking about, but the whole time without realizing it, they're standing on the shortest, most reasonable looking rung of a step ladder that there is, saying, "I think this is good enough."

VII. The Tide Turned

A I'm basically good and good people are basically fine. And if there is a God, I bet I'm fine with him, too. That is a religion. But watch what happens to all this confidence, if you just fast forward it a little bit, of secular humanism and the new atheists. The tide has begun to turn. The same thinkers who mocked faith have started circling back toward it. Jordan Peterson, Tom Holland, Douglas Murray, an agnostic defending the Christian story, all of a sudden like it was worth saving. And this wild one, Richard Dawkins, who wrote the book *The God Delusion*, one of the clearest voices in this movement, now calls himself a cultural Christian.

B He's standing on the shoulders of people that he was trying to trip just a couple of decades ago. And it's not just the famous few. We're seeing this over and over again in this country. Gen Z is now showing up to more weekends a month of faith gatherings than their parents and their grandparents. Right now, for the first time in 25 years of anybody tracking it, young men are out attending young women. Bible sales just hit a 21-year high. Across the ocean in England, things are even wilder. The uh attendance for church-going men went from 4% to 21% in just 6 years. The generation that everyone had written off is finding their way back.

C Now, I do want to be honest because that's the name of this series. This is not the whole picture. Well, all those things are true. The same generation that are posting those numbers and that growth, they are coming from some of the most religiously disaffiliated numbers we've ever seen. that if we look at the course of the last number of years, you see this dramatic change of the number of people who are religiously disaffiliated and you see Protestantism coming down, you see Catholicism coming down and we're starting to see these numbers go up a little bit and this number flatten out and we're hoping that we've hit sort of a new baseline. Uh but this is a serious thing. Both of these realities are true about what God's doing and what the weight of this is.

VIII. I Never Knew You

A But the numbers, they were never actually the point. Like being on the winning team, always being the numbers that are the highest and strongest was never the point. The truth is the point. It's about who made the cut to know Jesus and who didn't. That's the question we all ask when we come into these conversations. Who gets to go to heaven? And the answer may surprise you. Jesus, when he's talking about the final judgment, he tells us who doesn't make the cut. And you may be surprised by his answer. He says this, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven."

- B** On that day, many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness." Look at that. Who are these people? When we read a passage like this, it's pretty easy if you're a Christian to go, "Well, that's like those atheists. That's the agnostics. That's those pagans." You know, whatever tradition you grew up in, the obviously lost. It's not that group.
- C** Look at the stuff they're holding up as their resume. They prophesied in Jesus' name. They cast out demons in Jesus' name. They did mighty works in Jesus' name. These are not irreligious people. These are the most religious people. A room can fill all the way up with people whose arms are full of good works, but their hearts are strangers to God. These are, if we're honest, us if we're not careful. So before anybody in the room starts to look at Matthew 7 or this conversation and tries to use it as like a target for their agnostic family member, for the person who isn't sure in their life, look at the passage and where it's actually pointing. It's pointed at church people. It's pointed at people with the thickest spiritual resumes in the room.
- D** And I'm not going to pretend that I am foreign to this possibility. I've had seasons in my life where the work has stacked up higher and the relationship with Jesus that is the foundation of it feels thinner. Where I was doing an awful lot in Jesus' name, but not spending a whole lot of time with him. I've read this passage and at times felt the floor move underneath me to say, "Is the highest and best part of my life pursuing Jesus or working for Jesus?" So, we need to sit in this one. We can't just buzz by it. It's not a message about them. It's a message about us because it turns out good person religion, it has a Sunday morning edition and if we're not careful, we are the one who will live it. Now, I want you to catch exactly what Jesus says and exactly what he doesn't say. There are people who show up with arms full.

- E** They're doing all this stuff in the name of Jesus. Their resume is stacked, probably better than any of ours. And Jesus doesn't say, "Looks good to me." Or, "Here's a little bit more that you should do cuz you've come up short." He doesn't grade the resume at all. He says something unrelated to the resume. He says, "I never knew you." He rejects the premise. because it was never about their performance. It was about relationship. He doesn't say that you weren't good enough. He says, "I didn't know you." You can hand this man a flawless resume and stand there as a total stranger to the creator of the universe.
- F** You can do mighty works in his name and never actually be on speaking terms. The problem was never the amount of goodness for the people that we see in this passage. The problem was that they brought the wrong kind of goodness and they were incapable of bringing the right kind on their own. It was a resume when God has always wanted and still wants a relationship first. Goodness is a resume. The kingdom of God runs on relationship. And when you pursue relationship by grace through faith in Christ, the goodness that flows is not something that you have to take on you. It's something that comes out of you.

IX. The Moving Target

A You can spend a lifetime of perfecting the one while completely missing the other. Which means the good person, the kind agnostic, the the decent, religiously unaffiliated, the church volunteer with kind of this engine that's telling them they have to live up over and over and over again to a higher standard of moral perfection. They have the same two problems. Actually, the same two problems with this. The first are this moving target. We've already talked about the idea that when you and I are given the ruler, when you and I are allowed to set the standard, well, we are always the ones that get to decide where that ruler gets set. We we set the curve and we're amazing at making sure the person we're comparing ourselves to, we are always better than the people that we compare ourselves to. And so that's a huge problem. You will never measure yourself, not really, against someone who's so much better than you that you know you need a savior. And the second problem is that even if you do what Jesus ran into, somebody who maxes out all of their incredible moral obedience, it's the wrong conversation.

B Even if you've done it all, even if you've gotten across all of those hurdles, the problem is you can actually never know if it's enough. Even if you've maxed out, even if you got to the very top of the curve in your life or the life of the people around you, you're the kindest, most generous, most decent human being that anyone's ever met. The answer in Matthew 7 at the final judgment with Jesus is still, "I never knew you." Because the grade was never your moral perfection. It was his. Because building a relationship was never the point. Embracing a relationship that he died to provide was always the point. With a resume, you can never measure when you're done.

C Meanwhile, you were pursuing something with all that you had and missing how hard God has been pursuing you. Jesus didn't die so that we could perform well enough to know him. He died so that we wouldn't have to because we're incapable of doing it on our own. Don't skip past that. These are some scary words in the Bible. But when we look at what Jesus is offering on the flip side, it's actually so much better than that. A whole life of good. And at the end, instead of having a savior, you have a stranger.

X. Known by God

- A** But there is actually something so much better available to that. Just a couple books later, Jesus, he's talking about the kind of people that he knows. And he says, "I am the good shepherd." And he's calling back to a passage in the Hebrew scriptures. He says, "I know my own and my own know me." No performance language, no resume language. There's no bar you have to clear. It's entirely relational. You were not made so that you could be admired by God for your goodness. You were made to be known by good by God as you admire his goodness, his character, his love for you.
- B** The question of your life was never going to be, did you rack up enough good to impress a distant God? The question was always and will always be, will you let God, who already knows you more than you know yourself, know you as a friend instead of a stranger. That's the invitation of the good news of Jesus. The gospel. The gospel is not that bad people can finally become good enough. The gospel is that dead people can come all the way back to life because of Jesus. Jesus is not shopping for resumes on LinkedIn for the kingdom of heaven. I promise.
- C** He is not scared off by your gaps. He knows them. He wants relationship with you. Gaps and all. And when he finds you and you choose to trust him, the goodness that flows out of you is flowing out of you. You're not having to put it onto you. Now, to the very best person in the room, I bet you're doing some amazing stuff. And I don't want to minimize it, but your goodness, without realizing it, it can become an escape hatch from real relationships with people and with God because the one place that we never look for relationship, certainly with God, is in our goodness. We always search for hope and help and God maybe even in our failures and our addictions and our regrets and our wreckage. That's where everybody expects to need a savior.

- D** But the good person often times they never check their goodness for God. They assume it's all theirs and it becomes this wall between them and God. They already decided that they're fine. As a result, if that's you, you are actually maybe the kindest, most decent people that we know, but you're also the hardest to reach. And it's not because you're so far from God. It's because you're so close. cuz so much of your life looks like what it would look like if somebody knew God. But your arms are so full of good things and you're so tired of trying to perform them that you can't see that the access you need for the kingdom of heaven is none of those things. It's what Jesus has already done because good is never good enough. Not when God is holy.
- E** Some of you, you have spent your whole life building a resume for a God who has only ever wanted a relationship. You've been so good for so long and you're so exhausted because of it and you're you're not sure if it's enough, but you you can't stop. You can't change. Now, what would that mean about everything you've done up to this point, but you're holding the ruler? You're not noticing that the ruler keeps moving. I told you about Justin's funeral that I I never knew Justin. I didn't get to meet him. And I' I'd love to tell you about the the conversations that I got to have with him next to the bed in the hospital room. I'd love to tell you about the the times that we talked about faith or life, but I didn't get any of those. And if you're a pastor who steps in and does a funeral around a tragedy like that, that's a weird pain that you carry cuz you have this this kind of peace that you just have to trust that God is is making it all work in heaven, but I'll never know. I don't know what that looks like. I don't know what God did or didn't do. But here's the thing.

XI. You Still Have Today

A You're not Justin. You're still here. You still have the one thing that Justin doesn't have anymore. today. So stop doing the math of your own goodness for one more year, for one more month, for one more day, for one more minute. Your goodness will never be good enough. But a loving God is not looking for a thicker resume. He's looking for a relationship he already died to provide. And so for you, wherever you are today, whatever this looks like or means in your life, I hope that God will call you to himself. Whether you're a church person that's been hiding behind legalism or you're somebody that everything you could pursue, every pleasure, everything on the other side, you're chasing that, God wants relationship with both. And the answer is the cross. Would you pray with me?

XII. Closing Prayer

A God, there are some people here today that setting down their goodness as a means of knowing you. Setting down their goodness as the means of sort of hedging their bets regardless of who God is or what it looks like to know you forever. That feels like a deep sacrifice. And so God, I pray that you would show them your sacrifice, the work that you did on their behalf, the good news of the gospel that's been true and is still by the power of your spirit pursuing them. God, that you would give a sense of clarity to people go right now, God.

B That that if they would just believe in their heart that you are who you say you are, they would confess that they can't get there on their own. And that they would trust their life with you. That they would have an eternal life that starts right now. Not just quantitatively, not just forever, but qualitatively for good. A life that really does look and feel different even when it's not easier. Thanks for the hope that we have in you. I pray that you would shape people by it, that it wouldn't be hard to find, and that for some today, it would find them in Jesus name. Amen.