

The Reality: Lord, I need mercy!

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[0 : 0 0] Father God, we thank you that your word is a living word from a living God. We thank you that even though this passage was written so many years ago, thousands of years ago, and yet it preaches to us, it speaks to our condition.

And we ask of you, O Lord, won't you soften our hearts that we may hear from you, that we may hear, O Lord, your very life-giving word, for we are so in much need of it.

May the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to you, O Lord. May you give us ears to hear and give us faith to receive your grace.

We ask this, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, as I mentioned, I don't usually preach in English, so pardon me if the parlance is not exactly my natural cadence.

But I usually preach in Mandarin, and we began this Chinese church plant maybe two years ago, a bit two years ago, I mean like in the first week of 2023.

[1 : 0 9] And there's something, I think, about doing ministry in another language. You actually learn things. And this is something that I learned actually in the first year, because we had a visitor who was from an English church background, and she came to me after the service because she had a concern.

And the concern was this. The concern is, I take issue with the way that you guys were praying. And to my surprise, the way that she took issue with the way that we were praying was because of a particular phrasing of how we prayed.

Because I'm not sure if you are familiar with Chinese, but there's actually a word that we employ in prayer that we say, and literally, when you translate it back to English, it means to beg, which is quite different when you pray in English and say, I ask of you, which is kind of, in Chinese, it can sound like wen.

And she was objecting to the fact that we used the word, but in a sense, I think that that word comes quite close to Jonah's prayer here, where it says in verse 2, I believe, where it says that you listened to my cry.

Now, I do not know how you often think about prayer, maybe you do not think of prayer as literally pleading with God, or begging for his mercy.

[2 : 3 2] Well, I do not want to knock on this visitor too much. There's really a sense in which I identify with a struggle. Because if you give me a choice, left to myself, I would rather, really, to be asking and not begging.

We are all familiar with the stereotype of men, isn't it? Before GPS was actually invented, that what men love to do, when they are lost, they do not actually ask for directions.

They would rather spend time figuring out the map, or figure it out by themselves, rather to ask for directions. And I wonder why is it that we find it so hard to ask, to really ask for help.

And I would suggest that the reason that we actually struggle to ask for help, really, is because asking for help is very damaging to our ego. It's very damaging to our sense of self-sufficiency.

And so, our struggle to ask for help, I don't know if you do struggle to ask for help, but I suggest that our struggle to ask for help is very much connected to our self-understanding of where we are, or what our problem is, of our condition.

[3 : 42] Because we are drawn, isn't it, to saying such as, God helps those who help themselves. By the way, that is not in the Bible. And we are attracted, isn't it, to these so-called life hacks.

That, you know, how to be healthy, you know, how to attain, how to do that through certain exercises, how to manage or gain health, wealth, for example, tips on investments and savings, how to win friends and gain influences, et cetera, et cetera.

But no matter which life hack that you are actually drawn to, and I am fairly sure that you are if I were to simply just check your TikTok and your YouTube feeds, right?

All of these kind of helps really assume two things. The first thing they assume is that the problem that we face, whether it is health, wealth, or popularity, is actually not such a big problem.

It's something that we can do about it. And B, we, hence, possess the resources to deal with the problem. We can improve our lives if we just simply work on it.

[4 : 52] And these life hacks simply appeal to our sense of self-sufficiency. It makes us feel good about ourselves because we can do something to help ourselves. But the Bible's message, as we're going to see today, is often very contrary to our natural ways of thinking.

We are so much, we are confronted this morning, actually, by this passage because it helps us to realize that the real problem that we have, that we all face, right, in a sense, the real help and solution that we need is the problem is so deep.

And hence, the solution that we need is absolutely radical. Now, as we have read the scripture, if you listen to the scriptures being read just now, we have realized what is happening over there.

That Jonah, he fell into the sea. He was swallowed by the fish, right? He was begging for help in an extremely difficult situation. What he needed is literally resurrection from the dead.

He needed resurrection mercy. And that, I would like to suggest to you, is a picture of our life. That we all need to realize that we have this same severe need.

[6 : 05] A need that's so severe, just like how cancer patients, if you realize, why is it so severe of the sickness that they face? Because the options they have is simply just narrowing down.

And our options are so severe, are so limited, that it's literally down to only one. That the life-giving God is our only option. In other words, this passage is wanting us to come to terms with the severity of our problem.

A problem that only God can answer. And this problem, this solution, is literally resurrection from the dead. And this implies something really simple.

That today, if there's anything you want to take away from today's message, is that you and I, we all need God's mercy. And we need His resurrection mercy.

Which means that we all need to completely rely upon Him. And hence, we need to ask, plead, and beg if we must. But the good news is that God is most willing to bestow that mercy to us.

[7 : 18] And so in order for us to see this, we are going to consider today's message passage from two vantage points. The two vantage points. You can actually see in the outline that's given to you in the bulletin sheet that you have.

Which is that we are going to see, first of all, that we have this severe need. That sin simply only lead us to dead ends. And because of this, we actually need God's surpassing mercy.

Which is nothing less than literally resurrection from the dead. And really, we are just examining two sides of the same coin. We'll be spending a little bit more time on the first vantage point.

But really, we are looking at the two sides of the same coin. And let's just dive into it. So the first thing we need to really realize is that we have a severe need. We have a real need. The reality is that all of our lives, all of us sitting here, our lives are currently literally leading to a dead end.

The quote of a movie I just recently watched, once you're born, the literal second that you're born, you came into this world, a countdown timer has been put on you and me.

[8 : 30] And our tendency to worsen the situation, our tendency to idolatry, our tendency to self-sufficiency, our tendency to be independent of who God is, who is the only life-giving God, and our tendency to be independent of Him is just like how you separate the fan from the power source.

It can turn on for a while, but it's only a matter of time before it stops turning. We are doomed to dead ends. Now Jonah 2, chapter 2, occurs in the middle of a story.

I'm sure you've heard last week, yet God has called Jonah to preach to Nineveh, and Nineveh would be a capital city of Assyria. Now Jonah refused to go to Nineveh, and he went in the exact opposite direction.

And what's the result of that? God went after Jonah. He even caused a storm to chase after him, and the storm is so severe that it can only be stopped by Jonah falling into the sea.

God provided a huge fish, huge fish, as we have seen in chapter 1, verse 17, to swallow Jonah, where he spent three days and three nights in the belly of the fish.

[9 : 44] And a large part of today's scripture is the prayer that actually Jonah made in the fish. And so we are now going to come to make some observations on the prayer now, and how this prayer actually tells us about this severe need that we all have.

Now you must realize, of course, that this prayer that we are reading over here is actually not the first prayer that Jonah made. In fact, it is a second prayer.

It is a prayer of thanksgiving. He referred to it in an earlier prayer that he made. We can see this in how he referenced to an earlier prayer in chapter 2, verse 7.

Now if your Bible will open before you, it's easier for you to follow what I'm trying to do. And we can glance down at verse 2, and this is what it says here in chapter 2, verse 2. In my distress, I called to the Lord, and he answered me.

Past tense. I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead, I called for help, and you listened to my cry.

[10 : 50] Notice that. It is all in the past tense. He's reading something that he has done in the past, probably in the split second, or not much far from that when he fell into the sea.

And again, verse 7, he talked about this prayer, this previous prayer again. He said, In my distress, I called to the Lord, and he answered me. Oh, sorry.

I'm sorry. Verse 7. When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, my Lord. And he said, I remembered. That's actually been the past tense. All this shows that there was actually this previous prayer.

A prayer that was made in crisis, in severe need, in a desperation call for help. A cry for mercy. A cry for salvation.

And if that's actually a previous prayer, a previous cry, then the question, of course, we should be asking is, what was Jonah being saved from? What was the mercy that was bestowed to Jonah?

[11 : 51] Well, it's a mercy. It's resurrection mercy. Because it's a mercy that saved him from death. And we see this from verse 2. Because verse 2, it says there, from the deep in the realm of the dead, I called for help and you listened to my cry.

Now, the word realm of the dead there, the Hebrew word is shield. And whenever that is actually used in the Psalms, it's referring to the realm of the dead.

It's not quite hell per se, but Jonah is certainly experiencing a close shave with death itself. And so, this resurrection mercy saved him from death.

And I want to suggest to you that this suggests, this will demonstrate our severe need that we have in common with Jonah. For if you look at the time of death that Jonah was facing, it's not merely the cessation of life, but was actually the suffocating of life.

It's a suffocating kind of death. Why do I say that? Because if you look at verse 5 and 6, right, especially verse, yeah, verse 5 and 6, it says that, the engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me, and the sea, and the seaweed was wrapped around my head to the roots of the mountains I sank down, the earth beneath barred me in forever.

[13 : 22] Now, that's kind of a politic justice for Jonah, if you like. Because, what exactly is killing him over here? He's talking about the sea, the waters, the seaweed, and the depths.

But you think about chapter 1, when Jonah, without any sense of self-awareness, right, how does he introduce himself? He says, I'm a Hebrew, I'm a worshipper of Yahweh, I'm the one, and Yahweh is the one who has made the sea and the dry land.

And guess what? Even though he thought he worshipped this God who created the sea and the dry land, he thought that he could run away from God. He could run away from God by ship, on sea, on the waters.

He thought he can hide from God. He can hide from God by going downward, by going down to Joppa, by going down to the bottom of the deck of the ship. He thought he can hide from God.

He thought he can run away from God. And now what God is saying is, now, Jonah, you think he can run away from me by the seas? You think he can hide away from me by going down and down and down?

[14 : 33] Well, I'm going to show you. You have not gone down deep enough. You have not gone into the waters enough. The very thing that you are trusting in to run away from me, to hide away from me, the waters, the downward hiding, is the very thing that's going to cause your death.

And it's a suffocating kind of death. The waters will literally surround you. The seaweed will wrap around your head. You'll choke and you'll go down to the depths, even to beneath the earth, so to speak.

And this is the very thing. The very things you trust in are the very things that are going to be choking the life out of you. Now, having said that, now this severe need that Jonah have, I'll try to show you, is literally his sin.

His running away from God, his imagined ways of hiding from God by waters and by going down, is literally a dead end. And I think that this is a picture of our life.

Jonah has acted this parable of the human condition out for us. Because how has he actually ended up here? How has he ended up here?

[15 : 56] He was running away from God himself. He thought that he could escape God's plans. God wants him to go to Nineveh. He ends up going to, in the opposite direction.

And that's what the Bible calls sin. Because you see, sin, my friends, is not just simply certain behaviours, you know, like lying, throwing a tantrum.

Of course, these could be sin in themselves. But sin begins far, far deeper in our hearts. Sin begins when we actually reject God's plans and we make our own plans instead of God's plans.

And by extension, when you reject God's plans, you reject God's help. In fact, there's something that's very twisted about sin. Because sin causes us not to be able to see our own condition rightly.

Right? Because sin attempts sometimes to separate God's plan from God's help. But back to the analogy of the cancer patient. Do you think that it can be possible for the patient to simply want the help of the doctor without actually following the doctor's orders?

[17 : 14] That's sheer foolishness. That's not actually taking into the real condition that we are in. And yet, that's what Jonah was in. Because even the pagan sailors in chapter 1, they would be crying to God for help.

They worshipped God at the end. But in chapter 1, this so-called prophet of God, Jonah, he did not even say a single word to God until chapter 2 for us.

Because so, sin really is not just at the behavioural level. Sin, in the end really, is a matter of our independence. We want to be independent of God.

We want to be self-sufficient. and so, we refuse his plans and by extension, we refuse his help. And this corresponds very much in the way that Jesus would speak about our life in the Sermon on the Mount.

Of course, you remember that in the Sermon on the Mount, he says that there are two ways to live. There's one way that leads to life and yet, it is a narrow gate.

[18 : 28] There's a way that leads to destruction. Yet, the way looks broad. And here's how I understand Jesus' imagery of these two ways. That the way that leads to life, even though it's narrow at the beginning, it becomes broader as it goes because it's life-giving.

But the way that leads to destruction, the way that leads to death, although it's broad at first, it narrows upon you. And this is what's happening to Jonah.

Because by trusting in something other than God himself, like the waters that Jonah wants to ride away from God, and the deeps where he wants to hide away from God, the waters and the deeps are the very causes of Jonah's suffocating death.

As it were, the way is narrowing upon Jonah himself. and so perhaps, you do take some pride in your independence.

You do take some pride as you're sitting here this morning about how you're able to take care of yourself. Or maybe you do even take some pride in your ability to take care of others.

[19 : 41] Because that's what self-sufficiency can do for you. And which is why some of you, literally, you have trouble asking for others for help, whether at work or at home.

But how is that working for you in the long run? And I guess this problem that we face is best illustrated with ageing.

Now, what is ageing? I know I'm aware that some of us here are young. I think on a scale I am younger a little bit than some of you, but I'm older by a little bit than some of you.

But the myth of the youth is this, isn't it? Is that we imagine that we are invincible. We imagine that we will never die. But that is not true.

That is not true. Because why is ageing? Ageing is but dying. And what is that? Ageing is the process of dying where we lose our powers, we lose our ability.

[20 : 50] What we can do in the past, whether it's walking, memorizing, or seeing, these are the abilities that are taken away from us. And if you observe some elderly folks, they struggle immensely, isn't it, when their bodily functions are taken away.

they actually need help in being assisted to be bathed, but they reject it. Because while their bodily functions are taken from them, their dignity has not been taken from them.

Or their pride has not been taken from them. And why is that the case? Because they have depended on themselves their entire lives. And independence is the only thing that they know, and hence they find it hard to ask for help, and they find it hard actually to receive help.

And so, this is a pro tip for all of us. If you actually want to be a pleasant old person to be with, we all need to learn what it means to be helped.

We all need to learn what it means to receive help. Because otherwise we become the proverbial cranky old person who is very difficult to be helped. Because you see, even if self-sufficiency can be a relatively good thing, when it's made absolute, it is something that closes in on you.

[22 : 22] Because aging is something that's inevitable. It will happen to all of us. It is the countdown timer that we all face with. And this extends, of course, beyond our health.

wealth. Because those who depend on your wealth will find that your ability to create wealth will one day crumble. Or you begin to worry that your children, your descendants, are not able to manage it well.

Self-sufficiency, my friends, is a dead end. You may pride yourself on your intelligence or your ability, but one day will come when you will lose your ability. Either due to things out of your control, or due to Parkinson's or Alzheimer's, and self-sufficiency.

And that is what, refusing God's help and plan, that is a dead end. And that's what Jonah found. And this is a plight that's been with us ever since Adam and Eve sinned against God.

And what's more, as we have seen, not only do we actually observe how self-sufficiency is a dead end, God has ensured that it is so. come with me to look at verse 3.

[23 : 35] Because when verse 3, when Jonah said, you hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swore around me, all your waves and your breakers swept over me.

What is Jonah doing there? He's recognizing that God is the one who's behind all of this. It is God who hurled him into the depths. It is God whose breakers and waves swept over him.

Now Jonah is not shifting blame to God. Now it's difficult, I would say, to get into the psyche of Jonah entirely, but in this second prayer of Jonah, in this chapter 2 prayer of Jonah, he's beginning to recognize that his attempts to run his own life is a dead end.

And God has ensured that those who run their own lives in this way will meet a dead end. And as some of you who are thinking, who are sitting here thinking, oh surely this is actually fear mongering business that Christians always engage in.

You're trying to frighten us in the Christianity because you offer eternal life and you talk about death all the time. And some of you might be thinking, well if God is so deemed for self-sufficiency to be a dead end, how is this God a loving God?

[24 : 50] Well, to those of you who think that I'm being a fear mongerer, I'd like to ask you instead then, how are you coping with this inevitability of death? And furthermore, why is it that when you lose your loved ones and you see how they suffer, you are filled with grief and pain?

Now the only thing that can answer that is this, is that in our heart of hearts when we grieve and pain over death and suffering, we know that death is unnatural, it's not meant to be.

And the only thing in this world, my friends, that can really explain this fact that death is not to be, that suffering is not to be, is the Bible. Because the Bible tells us that death has come into this world because of sin, because of our tendency, because of our self-sufficiency, because of our refusal of God's plan and His help.

And furthermore, if there's really no God but death, that is exceedingly bad news, because we have no way out. And so for those of us, we're just being real, we're not being fear-mongers.

And for those of us who think that God is unkind to ensure that all who live their lives in such a way, in such a self-sufficient way reach a dead end, I think that's actually good news.

[26 : 12] Because if He's able to ensure that our sin will reach a dead end, He's surely able to save us from this destruction.

He's the only one who's able to save us. And hence, you see, if you do not see that your need is severe, you do not see that you actually need this surpassing mercy.

If you do not see that your life is a dead end, you do not actually see how you really are in need of God's plans and God's help. The path of destruction seems broad but will narrow upon you.

But the good news is, as we now turn to look at, is that while God is the one who ensured the dead ends of sin, He's the only one who can bestow upon us, and He's willing to bestow upon us this surpassing mercy that we all need.

Now how? How do we begin to receive this surpassing mercy from God? Well, we're going to see that we need a kind of faith. We need a kind of faith that's going to forsake our self-dependency, our self-sufficiency, our idolatry, and to trust in God's resurrection power.

[27 : 27] In other words, because we see our severe need, we see a futility, we see the futility of our self-sufficiency, and we recognize that God's salvation must be complete, must be comprehensive.

It must be nothing less than life from the dead. And how do we see this? Come with me to verse 4. It says here, I have been, I said, I have been banished from your sight, yet I'll look again towards your holy temple.

Isn't that Jonah's logic? Because he has been saying, I have been banished from your sight, and who's banishing him? It is God. But I say, because it is you who are ensuring my dead end, because you're ensuring my dead end of my sin, because then you, God, are my only hope, yet I will look towards, again, towards your holy temple.

And I want to suggest that this mercy to not only save Jonah from death, but through death. It is a faith in God's resurrection mercy.

Now, what's the basis for Jonah's faith in this case? Well, we can actually look at verse 8. How does he have this faith to cry out to God, to have this assurance that I will actually see your holy temple?

[28 : 43] Because verse 8 says here, those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. Now, we need to ask this question, why does Jonah mention worthless idols?

And in this context, the worthless idols, in contrast with the Lord, with Yahweh, to whom Jonah is praying, forms part of his faith here.

Worthless idols are incapable of resurrection mercy. Only the living God is able to do that. Now, how shall I put this to you?

Because the surpassing mercy of God invites us to put our faith in him that rejects idolatry and to believe in the resurrection from the dead.

Because you see, self-sufficiency is a person who rejects God's plan and rejects God's help and is in fact an idolater.

[29 : 48] It's someone who clings to worthless idols. Verse 9, it says, tells us here, salvation comes from the Lord. That is, God must be a saviour from beginning to the end.

And all these other idols are at best partial saviours. They are at best pretend saviours. Because you see, self-sufficiency is a myth.

There's no one who is truly self-sufficient. Because the person who refuses God's help and plans is someone who is trusting in another one. He's trusting in another thing.

He's trusting in an idol. It could be money. It could be wealth. It could be your career. It could be your family. It could be your health. But whatever you're trusting in apart from God himself alone, you are an idolater.

You see, and how do idols behave? You can see how idols behave by looking at most religions. Because in a final analysis, when you have an idol in your life, the idol will have a transactional relationship with you.

[31 : 00] Because every idolatrous system is about making enough offering in order to exchange for the desired outcome.

Whether it's incense or whether it's money. And this applies not only to those visible idols, to Topekong or whoever it is, but to our hard idols as well.

Because, you see, for example, if you do actually make an idol of your career, your career will tell you that you need to sacrifice time and energy that's taken from your family and to give it to me.

And I promise that I'll give it to you, whatever you really want. Whether it's dignity or your face or your, basically, your sense of self-identity before others.

You may think, for example, that achieving independence, you can achieve that through financial means. There's no one who is really self-sufficient. You think you can achieve self-sufficiency through financial means.

[32 : 07] Because having more resources means that you don't have to depend on others. Now, but look at it. Seriously, money have its limits. Money can pay for tuition teachers.

Surely. I admit that. But money cannot make your children obedient and hardworking. Furthermore, money is something that you need to maintain with your own strength and offering, just like any other idols.

We offer time, energy, etc. in order to get money. And we have this transactional relationship with our hard idols, just like any idol. So whoever depends on God, on anything else apart from God, that is, you'll find this to be true, that you are in a transactional relationship.

Whether it's health or relationships or any other thing that you're depending on apart from God himself. It's about tit for tat. You need to put in the effort. You'll only be blessed if you're hardworking.

You'll only be blessed if you're putting enough effort. But a transactional relationship, my friends, is not a surpassing mercy that gives you resurrection from the dead.

[33 : 23] Because what is resurrection from the dead? If I'm dead to begin with, I have nothing to offer. There's nothing I can offer to God himself. But the living God, his mercy must come to me just as life giving to me as I'm giving life to a dead person.

There cannot be any transaction. And you can actually see this further from verse 8. Because it says here that those who cling to worthless idols, they turn from God's love for them.

Now that word love over there is a Hebrew word. It's a good word to remember. It's a Hebrew word, hesed. Because that word doesn't mean a mere sentiment. It's not just mere emotion.

It just doesn't mean that God's feel lovey-dovey towards us. That's not what it means. When you read that love over there, you should think of this. You should think of a husband and wife as they exchange vows.

Perhaps in this room, you have seen that before. They exchange marital vows. You know? They say to each other, whether it's in sickness or in health, whether it's poverty or in riches, I will love you.

[34 : 25] It is actually a kind of a covenant love. It's a kind of a covenant love. It is not a transactional love. It's just a kind of love that God has given to Abraham.

Because God promised, isn't it, to Abraham to give his land to Abraham himself. But if you read the Bible, you know that Abraham has died. He has died without getting any piece of the land that God has promised to him.

How is he going to get it? Well, God surely will fulfill that promise by giving him resurrection. And that is why Jesus, in his answer to Sadducees, will say that God must be a God of the living and the dead.

If God is to be a God of resurrection mercy, he must be a God of covenant love. We cannot actually transact with God. We can only come to him and plead with him and beg of him.

But we have, my friends, a much greater reason for us to trust in God's resurrection mercy than even Jonah himself.

[35 : 31] Jonah perhaps has Abraham to look to, but we have one that is greater than Abraham. We have one that is greater than Jonah himself. There's this Hebrew who came a few hundred years after Jonah, a true worshipper of Yahweh.

Now, Jonah is so-called prophet, but he refused God's plan and his help. But this Hebrew, we know, he depended on God his entire life. Even when his parents could not find him at a playground when he was 12 years old, this Hebrew was found.

Where was he found? He was found in God's temple. And his answer to his parents was, Why were you searching for me? He asked, Didn't you know that I had to be in my father's house?

And later, when he was grown up, he said to his own disciples, My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

You see, Jesus did not merely accept God's plan. He did not merely accept God's help. It was as basic to him as food itself. And the unbelieving generation asked him, asked this Hebrew, asked Jesus to perform a sign of miracle to prove who he is, his response was amazing.

[36 : 49] You can see that in Matthew chapter 12, verse 39 to 40. He says, None will be given to this generation except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

For as Jonah was in the three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Jonah was unwilling in some sense, but reluctantly until he was forced by circumstances to be thrown into the sea. But this one who is greater than Jonah himself willingly went to the cross.

And isn't it strange, if you look at Jesus' life, as someone who walked on the path of life, surely, seemed to have this path narrowed upon himself, even to the point of death, even death on a cross.

But didn't he even do so, so that he can actually fulfill the very words of Jonah himself? It is actually debatable among scholars whether Jonah really died when he was swallowed by the fish.

[37 : 54] But let's be sure, there is no debate here. Because the one who has been banished from God's sight is the one who cried out on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And the same one who cried out, who experienced God's forsakenness, is the same one who not only looked towards God's holy temple, he himself actually became God's holy temple.

So, the one, the only one who is entitled to live forever, he chose to die and rise again, so that we all who trust in him, we can receive his resurrection mercy.

And hence, my friends, we have a greater basis than Jonah to say the very words in verse 4 here, to say, I have been banished from your sight.

I'm in the deeps. I'm in severe need. But I will surely look towards your holy temple, because your holy temple has come for me. And through him, through his death and resurrection, I shall surely look upon God's face.

[39 : 07] So, as we close, my friends, what is the path that you will take this morning? Is it the path of trusting in Jesus to receive his resurrection mercy?

Or is it a path of self-sufficiency that leads to death? And so, I'd like to actually close with some exhortations for all of us.

First of all, how have you ever reckoned with your true need? Is Jesus a saviour from beginning to the end?

Is Jesus a certain kind of saviour that saves us from certain death? Or is he merely an appendage to your lifestyle?

Is Jesus only something you go to, or someone you go to on Sunday mornings, but you forget for the rest of the week? That is, when you actually begin to recognize that what you really need is resurrection mercy, this surely has tremendous implications for how we live our lives.

[40 : 17] Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. And the degree that you cling to your idols, whether it's money, health, family, relationships, career, is a degree that you need to come to terms, my friends, with our severe need for resurrection mercy.

And the second thing is this, the faith in resurrection mercy implies that our prayer lives should be changed. Our prayer lives can be crying out to God himself.

I do not know whether you struggle with prayer life. I struggle with my prayer life. And I was praying to God this morning, because the reason I was struggling, I struggle with prayer, is because I do not see my true need.

I do not see my true need. I see prayer as more of a chore, rather than a need. I do not see prayer as if I have greater need than food itself.

And when we think of prayers as such, we are still thinking of prayer as a transaction with God. It's as if we push the right buttons, if we say the right things, we'll get what we need. Rather than we see ourselves as the position of an infant, crying out to our Father.

[41 : 36] We are as helpless, even more helpless than an infant, because we are literally dead apart from Christ. But we cry out to Him, Lord, we need You. We need You.

And maybe for some of you, you are still thinking, I'm not repenting enough. I'm not holy enough. I'm not whatever enough, fill in the blanks. And hence, I cannot pray.

If this logic is still something that traps you, you see, you are still not getting it. You are still not getting God's love. You are still not getting how God's love is hazard. You are still not getting how you have this severe need.

You are dead apart from Him. You need Him. And therefore, you need to pray. And you can cry out to Him in prayer.

And He will surely listen to you. And this passage, of all passages, should change the way we conceive of the relationship between repentance and prayer.

[42 : 37] Because as I mentioned, Jonah has come to this point in this story because of his sin. But the amazing thing about this prayer, my friends, in chapter 2, is that if you look at it closely, Jonah has not actually confessed a sin.

He has not actually done it either directly or even completely. But God already has heard His prayer in His mercy. In fact, when He actually quit, you know, say in verse 8, those who cling to worthless idols, there's a sense of superiority, isn't it?

As He even said those words. He still despises the pagan sailors in chapter 1. Well, that's not to say that God is not working repentance in Jonah. God desires repentance in us.

But you see, it's a process. As we turn to God, as we turn from sin and turn to God, God works repentance in us as He comes to Him. He's not waiting for us to complete repentance before we come to Him.

That's wrong thinking. Because if that's the case, we are left again to ourselves. We are left again to our self-sufficiency. And finally, I'd like to have just a quick word with those of us who are maybe in suffering.

[43 : 52] Resurrection mercy is the only thing that can help you when you are in suffering. For all suffering reminds us that we are under the valley of the shadow of death.

Whether it is our suffering involving the loss of wealth, health, or relationships, all these losses reminds us of death itself. But if we find resurrected Jesus in Him and we find resurrection mercy, then what you'll realize is this.

God does not promise to save us from suffering. He doesn't promise to save us from death, but He will save us through death. And that is why many times, suffering is the way that our self-sufficiency can be healed.

I recommend you to think about the words that's found in Hebrews 5, verse 7 to 9. Because we'll go to Hebrews 5, 7 to 9. You'll find there something pretty amazing.

It says there that during His life on earth, Jesus offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries. Even Jesus cried out to God with cries and tears to the one who can save Him from death.

[45 : 06] That's the literal words. Jesus prayed with cries and tears to the one who can save Him from death. And it said there in Hebrews that He was heard. But how on earth was Jesus heard?

Well, Jesus was heard because Jesus wasn't saved from death. He was saved through death. And He saved others through death. And sandoz He was, He learned obedience from what He suffered.

Even the Son of God learned obedience, learned dependence on God through what He suffered. And therefore, when we encounter great difficulties in our life, my friends, we can actually know that we have a Son of God who has encountered them even before we did.

There are really two ways before us. the way that seems broad, the way that leads to death, leads to destruction, the way of refusing God's help and plan, the way that will close in on you.

There's a literal dead end. But there's another way that God has given to us, which is to come. He has come. God Himself has come to live and die and rose again for you and I that through His resurrection mercy, we shall receive life one day.

[46 : 24] Because He has come not only to lead us through the valley of the shadow of death, He Himself went through death Himself. So hence, can I plead with you to reject the worthless idols and to cling to Him who alone can bestow to us resurrection mercy.

Can I invite you to close your eyes as you think about what God is speaking to us and can respond to Him in prayer. Amen. Father God, we thank You that You have given us Your Word and those who heed Your Word's warnings will receive life itself.

For we see the marvelous grace that Jesus has done for us. that He has come, lived, and died, and rose again for us. That we may, in this life, not only have salvation from death, but salvation through death, and indeed, we can receive in Him resurrection mercy.

Help us to see what it means in our daily life. That we may turn from the idols we so long to cling to. That we may see that only You are the one who can give us hope.

And we ask this, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.