

This is my garage door opener and I can always count on it to close my garage. As long as I click it, it closes my garage. I'm the type of personality that as I drive just outside of my house, I think to myself, Did I close the garage?

And then I circle back and look? But as long as I clicked it, I can count on it to close my garage. On the other hand, though, it seems like it's only about 80% of the time that I can count on it to open my garage.

Like I click it and it doesn't work. And so then I take my visor down and there's two buttons on it. I don't know which one actually opens my garage, but I hold each of them for like lengths of seconds.

They don't open my garage and then, like, I'll take it off and and try everything. And then eventually I just have to get out of my car and go to the front door, which isn't a huge problem. Right.

And then open my garage from the inside. I have a theory that it could have to do with that lock button that's on the inside garage door opener that has no indication whether it's pushed or not. You never know if it's locked or not, but there is a button that says lock.

But again, not a huge deal. Right? Especially if it's like a sunny day. And it wasn't a particularly stressful day and I'm not running late to anything else. Like, I just get out of my car, go to the front door, open the garage, pull the car in.

No big deal. But if it has been a little bit of a stressful day or if I'm running late to something else, or if it's cold outside, or if there's 90 mile an hour winds that are blowing everything away, this thing can actually take whatever I'm feeling that day and kind of escalate that emotion, right?

Escalate that frustration. And so I tell you this for two reasons today. Number one is somebody in this room has to know how to fix this problem. Right. Same reason I would tell all my medical concerns to a nurse when I meet them.

I'm looking for some free advice today. If anybody has it, I'd be happy to receive it. And the second reason that I tell you this today, the real reason I would say the real reason, but there's a first reason is kind of real to you.

The second reason I tell this is to ask the question, have you ever thought you could count on something that you actually have not been able to count on? Have you ever thought you could count on something that you have not been able to count on?

Right. Because we all know if we think we can count on something, whether it be big or small, if it's something small, like a garage door opener or something much bigger in life, if we think we can count on it and we actually can't, it starts to throw all areas of our lives into kind of a

different

scramble. But on the other hand, if we think we can count on something and it does hold steady, well, that can actually help stabilize a lot of areas of our lives. More on that in just a minute. We're going to be basing this news series off of the assumption that most of us want to love the people

around us, that like whether it be your spouse at home or your kids or your parents or people at work or even strangers at the grocery store, whatever it may be. We're basing this new series on the assumption that all of us want to be more loving to those people around us.

Right. And I think that's pretty true, and especially if you consider yourself a Christian. One of the things that Jesus tells us is the two most important things we can do are loved the Lord, our God, with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbor as ourselves.

So that's even more important to love the people around us. But if we all want that on the inside, and if Jesus tells us that's important, why is it that so many days we would look back on our day and be like, I didn't do too great of a job at that, right?

Like I had I had a frustration and I took it out on somebody else at work or I was way less present with my family than I wanted to be. Like, if I had to rank how well I loved other people today, I would say I didn't do super hot.

Right. And so Pastor Jason has designed this whole series and it's over a little over a month called Good Soil, to look at the things that are like kind of our foundational pieces of life that if we get those right, they can help overflow into a into loving others better and being good for other people.

And so. And so it's kind of like buttons on a shirt. Like if you button the first two buttons on your shirt in the wrong hole and keep going from there, your whole shirt is going to be crooked by the time you're done.

But if you can get those first two buttons right, everything else kind of falls in place from there. And so the big idea for today is to be good for others. We first need to put our trust in something that is trustworthy.

To be good for others. We first need to put our trust in something that is trust worthy. And so in week one of this series called Good Soil, we're going to be looking at our relationship with God first.

If you have a Bible, turn with me to John. One one. If you don't have one, we'll have the words on the screen. This. John is written by John the disciple. Some people call him John the Evangelist. And we're going to look at the first few paragraphs that he wrote to his whole gospel.

He was one of Jesus's disciples, so he saw Jesus face to face. He writes from that perspective and this is the preface or the prologue to the story that he would tell, which is a great the greatest story ever told.

And he chose the words that he said very carefully. He was very poetic. And a lot of these words are actually pretty well known now. So picking up in John one one. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God.

He was with God in the beginning. Whoever begins their their writing within the beginning has a pretty high view of themselves, or either a pretty high view of themselves or a pretty high view of the subject that they're going to be talking about.

Right. One of the two. And in this case, it's clear that John thought a lot of who he was writing about, he was writing about the very God. And he wanted that to be known, that he was writing about no one less than the very God.

And it's kind of mysterious that he uses that word, the word. Right. Is he talking about the Bible? He's not talking about the Bible because the Bible wasn't even a book yet. He's actually he doesn't know it. But what he's documenting about Jesus, his life would be chosen to be included in the Bible.

But he's not referencing the Bible because that's not there yet. So why does he say the word he is? One reason is he's referencing the Torah, which is our first five books of the Bible now. But Genesis starts with in the beginning as well.

So he wanted to make reference to the fact that this person he was talking about was the same God who created everything. And second was this idea that kind of like how we have thoughts that are actually verbalized as words for the first time, God would have actual words.

We'd actually be able to see and hear God in a whole new way. And so Jesus or John wants to make it crystal clear that Jesus is very much God and he's very much a human being. Picking up in verse three, John says Through him, all things were made.

Without him, nothing was made that has been made in him was life. And that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness. And the darkness has not over. Come in. We shift John's words, his poetic words shifts.

Here he was talking about past things like. Right. He was saying in the beginning was the word or he was saying through him all things were made. But in verse five, he shifts from talking about the past to talking about the present.

When he says The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. Some

versions would say the light shines on in the darkness, signifying what we celebrated last Sunday, right? That Jesus rose from the dead and is alive again.

And that is a permanent thing to celebrate. But even then, it seems by all outward appearances that darkness had one. When Jesus died on the cross, it felt like darkness had won. And even now, at times it feels like darkness has won or darkness is winning, right?

And if darkness could do it, that its darkness that shines on. Not light that shines on. Ten days ago after Kara Powell shared that she was struck by new data highlighting that four in ten US teens report that they feel feel persistently sad or hopeless.

Adam Hamilton, the senior pastor at Church of the Resurrection down in Kansas City, ran a commercial leading up to Easter on social media and on TV. And in it, he was looking at the camera and he said, 87% of Americans feel like we have moved from crisis to crisis over the past 24 months.

84% of Americans feel like they are anxious about what is happening in Ukraine and that it might spill over into a much larger conflict. 73% of Americans feel overwhelmed by everything that is happening in the world today. But then he closes his commercial, looking at the camera with these words, he says, But let me tell you this

. Easter is coming. And he said, one writer said Easter means the worst, saying is never the last thing and that there is always hope. And so, although it sometimes feels like darkness is winning, it hasn't light. One past tense and light is still winning today.

Present tense in the present. Light continues to win. Light will always be the fact that Jesus rose again from the dead. Picking up in verse six. There was a man sent from God whose name was Sean. So now we have John, the author, the disciple John, talking about John the Baptist.

The only thing more confusing would be a pastor. John, we're giving today's sermon. So there was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light so that through him all might believe he himself was not the light.

He came only as a witness to the light. I think this highlights one of the dangers for everyone who carries the Christian mission. Whether you're a rise leader or a fusion leader or discovery zone leader or host team member or life group leader or a worship leader or a pastor.

One of the dangers that can come to everybody who helps carry the mission of Jesus forward is to think too highly of ourselves as though we were the point. Right? And if that's the first danger, the second danger is to take too little of ourselves.

But I love how John the Baptist puts there. I love how John puts us here when he says he himself was not the light. He came only as a witness to the light and just as witnesses. And a

courtroom exists to point at the subject at hand and talk about the subject at hand.

Disciples of Jesus exist to the point of the subject at hand. John says next, the true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. Some versions would say the true light that gives light to every human being was coming into the world.

John wanted to make it clear that this God, Jesus wasn't for just some chosen people. He was for everyone. And for some reason, religious people today have this thing where we think that God must love us. Like this certain group of people.

We draw a circle and we always include ourselves in the circle and we say, God must love these people, but not these people. But just in case, you're one of those religious people that thinks God only loves a certain group of people, these aren't my words.

These are John's words. And John saw Jesus face to face. And he said, the true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

He came into that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. And although we weren't there, I have a feeling if we were, we would have been just like these people that when light was in our face, we turned our backs and chose darkness instead.

But there is hope picking up in verse 12. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision.

Or of a husband's will, but born of God. And here we're given probably John's point of his entire writing in the gospel. These two verses sum up why he thought this was important to write down the life of Jesus.

He wanted to invite everyone who read this to place their trust in and give themselves to the person of Jesus. And we learn in this paragraph that even this welcoming trust is nothing to do with the inner work that we do ourselves.

It's the gracious gift of the giver. Picks up, saying the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only son whom came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

We're potty training our daughter, our two year old daughter right now. And every time I'm sitting on the side of the bathtub and she's sitting, uh, waiting to go potty, if I'm wearing shorts, she sees my knee, which has just a real little scratch on it.

And she's always like, You have an owie, daddy. And then she'll say, like, You need lotion,

daddy, or all these things. And John. Wants to emphasize that the God who created everything. Who's divine, who some people thought was too great to do this, came down into human flesh.

He got dirty in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. And this human ministry of God meant a great deal to John. He wanted to make that really clear. Some versions would translate these verses into and God moved into the neighborhood.

Which sets this. This is the only thing in my mind that matches the wonder of what we celebrated last week. Right. The wonder of the fact that Jesus died and was resurrected can only be matched like by the wonder that God chose to come down into the flesh.

The fancy word for that is incarnation. It sets a great example for us, too, probably best described by a guy named Paul when he says in your relationships with one another. Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who being in very nature, God did not consider equality with God, something to be used to His own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made and human likeness. John picks up talking about John the Baptist here by saying John testified concerning him. He cried out saying, this is the one I spoke about when I said he who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me

. Somehow John the Baptist knew that this seeming follower of his Jesus was actually his predecessor and his superior. And would have a much more significant ministry than John the Baptist ever did. And so just in case you aren't with me still here, these are the last words I'm going to read.

The last words that John closes his opening paragraphs with. He closes the Prolog with these words. Out of his fullness. We have all received grace in place of grace already given for the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God. But the one and only son who is himself, God, and is in closest relationship with the Father has made him known. And John got to meet him. And you can sense the thrill that John's already writing about in the John is going to write the next 25 or 30 pages out of

a thrill that he got to come face to face with this God. That is at the first time known on this level. The state capitol in downtown Lincoln is 400 feet tall, and on top of it is a sewer.

You probably see it regularly when you drive and you see the capital. You see the sewer. The Sower on the top of the state capitol is 19 and a half feet tall, and it's wearing shorts that are rolled up and it's wearing shirt sleeves that are rolled up and it's actually barefoot up there.

Did you know that? Like, I didn't know that I've lived here my whole life, but the sower is actually

barefoot on top of the Capitol downtown. Another somewhere in London has a building similar to this or a structure similar to this that has a statue up on top.

And they found that visitors would come and they'd be interested in the statue, but they really couldn't see it because it was so high up. And so they built an exact replica of the statue directly below it so that visitors could see close up what the statue was like.

It'd be like us doing that with the so we're taking it down so we could see it in a way that we've never seen it before, even though we've seen it all the time. If we live here in Lincoln.

That's what God did for the first time here. He came down to a whole new level close up. And so if you had to sum up what John was trying to say in his prolog in the opening paragraphs, you could say that he wanted the readers to know that this was truly God in the flesh, that this

was true divine God. In the Prolog. He wants us to know that God is no longer relating to just a chosen group of people. God is here to shine His light to everyone. And it sets up the goal of his entire writing, which is to move people to place their trust in and give themselves to the person

of Jesus. So the question that we must answer today is where are we placing our trust? Because we all know having our trust in things that are not trustworthy can shake us when those things fall through. But in the same way, if we trust something that is trustworthy, it can stabilize us and help us go further because

of who we put our trust in. As you leave church today across the parking lot and across the field, you'll notice a building. You probably have noticed it before. It's called Emmanuel Yankee Hill Village, or it used to be called Clark Cherry.

It's a senior living facility just across our parking lot. You can see it right outside the front doors. And every Thursday they have a chapel service over there for the residents, Thursdays at 4:00. And Pastor Jason gets a chance to preach at those services about once a month.

He was just there a few days ago sharing with them. And about twice a year, I get the opportunity to go over to some of our students who have expressed a desire to go into ministry one day. Pastor Jason shares his sermon time with them so that they can share the message that day.

And and every time I go, I'm always struck by the time of singing. Just like here they have a time of singing, but it looks a lot different. One of the residents gets up onto the piano and they they start the song and all of the residents turn to a page in their hymn book, and then they

just sing the song together. There's really no vocal leader. Whoever in the crowd behind you or beside you wants to sing the loudest, sings the loudest in the room really just carries a tune. It's a lot different than it is here, right where we kind of sing Quiet Enough that we hope the person

in front of us

doesn't hear us. Like this is just being carried by these people, all of whom have like two or three times as much life experiences as I have. Right. And one of the songs in the hymn book is the song.

It is well with my soul. Maybe you're familiar with it. It's sung frequently at funerals. The author of that song is a man named Horatio Spafford, and he wrote it in 1873, almost 150 years ago. He wrote that song, and it continues to be sung today.

And Horatio Spafford was a successful lawyer. He was a property investor, and he was an elder at his Presbyterian church. And him and his wife, Anna, had four daughters, and the family decided to go on a family vacation to Europe.

And at the last minute, Horatio had to stay back. And so Anna took the four girls and they traveled across the Atlantic on the S.S. Villa Davor. And on November 21st, 1873, the liner that they were on was rammed by another vessel and sank within minutes.

Members of the other vessel, which was also at risk of sinking, picked up an unconscious floating on a spa. But the four girls had all drowned. Fortunately, a cargo sailing ship came by and was able to pick up the survivors.

Both ships and Anna sailed to Wales and when she was there she sent a telegram back to Horatio and she said, Saved alone. And so Horatio immediately left Chicago, headed to Wales on his own liner, and as he was sailing across the ocean, the captain of his ship invited him down to his cabin and he said, This

is about the spot where the accident occurred, where your four, four girls were lost. And that's where Horatio wrote The hand is well with my soul, which almost seems like only a terrible father could say, right? How could you say that when you've lost your girls, you've lost seemingly everything you haven't.

It will be days until you're even together with your wife again. You're alone. But you can tell if you read the lyrics that Horatio is is deeply hurting. He says things like When trials come, or he refers to his helplessness state, where he says, When my when sorrows like sea billows roll like when my sorrows are so

big, they're like those huge waves. Like, you can tell he's hurting. One of the verses says those say Satan shit buffet, which means Satan should throw punches. The trials should come, which they they do come. Let this blessed assurance control the Christ disregarded my helpless state and has shed His own blood for my soul.

It's clear that Horatio is hurting, but it's also clear that he is being strengthened. He's being

strengthened by the one in whom he has placed his trust. Having faith in Jesus doesn't mean that all of a sudden everything is magically going to work out.

It doesn't mean that all of a sudden you have some new strength of your own. There's nothing we can boast about. But it does mean that you will have someone who is always, always there, strong beneath you to catch you when you need to support you, when you need, and when the environment around you is hard.

Turns out that even in this time of loss, Horatio would write words that would help so many people and be good for so many others in their times of losses. Because Horatio rested on. And trusted that. God came down into the flesh, into human flesh, to shed his own blood for our souls.

Let's bury. God. Thank you. Thank you for being someone who is always there at times that we don't have someone who is always there. Thank you for sending yourself down, for becoming flesh, for giving your blood to us.

God. When times are hard, I just pray that we can remember what we celebrated last Sunday here in this space. You gave your all to us. You came down into the flesh that you died. You gave your blood.

You resurrected again. God help us place our trust there when we want to place it in other places. Help us point to that. Let's put our trust there. Thank you. If there's any crisis.