

*Becoming The People of God: Renewing The Mind*

If you missed last week's teaching, I do encourage you to go back and listen to it. There's some stuff in there that we'll build off of in the subsequent weeks. We're spending three weeks on Romans 12:1-2. I'm breaking it down into three things that Paul wants for us. First was that we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, which we talked a lot about last week. This week, we're talking about what it means to not conform to the pattern of this world. Next week, we'll talk about what it means to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So that's the outline of these three weeks that we're spending together. But all of it is trying to come at our vision from another angle.

Our vision is: "We want to be transformed people, transforming the Peninsula." We believe that this is what God has called us to. To engage in formation at a level in which we become transformed. Therefore, in our goings out into the world around us throughout our weeks and our ordinary days, we are actually participating with God in transforming the peninsula around us. We'll look at a little more of that today. We'll dive into Paul's words, but first—let's talk about Barbie.

As of September 4, the summer blockbuster, *Barbie Land* has earned over 1.3 billion dollars at the global box office. That number has made writer and director Greta Gerwig the first woman to independently direct a film that brought in over 1 billion dollars. If you haven't seen the movie, I'll try to do the next minute without a few spoilers.

It depicts Barbie, as portrayed by Margot Robbie, waking up one day in Barbie Land, and her perfect ideal begins to fracture. You see that no longer is she walking around on tiptoes, but the existential crisis of her heels hitting the ground seems to depict greater issues at hand. You see this portrayal of the fragility of perfection, of this image in which Barbie lives, and her story begins to fall apart. Barbie begins to ask all sorts of questions. You see, Barbie is a movie that deals in narratives. It plays off large narratives of what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man. And the movie's success is how it wrestles with contrasting narratives. It speaks of the contrast, the tension of being male and female, to be gendered, and yet, surprisingly, it doesn't flinch at depicting the binary of male and female and their inherent contributions to the shared good.

It uses satire to expose the myths and narratives that we've come to believe, which have given shape to the society around it. But what's fascinating to me is the deepest narrative it's wrestling with, which is the human question of what it means to be human. What does it mean to live in this world?

I find that this rises to the surface at the climactic moment of the movie, which I won't spoil. But in the background of that movie is the new hit song from Billie Eilish titled "What Am I Made For?" As the credits roll

and the lights in the theater come on, which, by the way, having seen it at the movie theatre twice, no one in the audience gets up to leave because they're left asking that very question that Billie Eilish's melody sings, "What Am I Made For?"

To me, it's a movie that is the secular cry for our particular moment, longing for a narrative that makes sense of the world, longing for a story that makes sense of their own felt experience. Gerwig's Barbie is a brilliant, provocative portrayal of the conflict of narratives and the way that I would argue the secular story can't quite hold together all the tensions that we hold.

Philosopher and theologian Jamie K. A. Smith writes in his book *Imagining the Kingdom*, "We are narrative animals whose very orientation to the world is fundamentally shaped by stories." We make sense of life through stories. We make sense of all the different complexions and intensities of our lives through narratives.

Narratives are a collection of ideas, myths, and stories that we tell to help arrange human action, purpose, and meaning. In some way, we try to tell stories to hold that together. The sociologist Christian Smith, out of Notre Dame, in his book *Moral Believing Animals*, says,

**We in the modern world look down on our ancient ancestors, how they used to sit around the fire and tell stories of valor and strength and heroism, and we look at that as some primitive thing. Of course, we don't do that anymore. We've progressed to glowing rectangles that we sit around and look at. And here's stories to make sense of the world.**

Later on, as he contrasts the problem with postmodernism, which is a technical word, and essentially, what postmodernism is doing is trying to get rid of all meta-narratives. Meaning there is no overarching story. There's no story that could adhere to each and every one of us in here. The real story is the singular story within you. That's what it is in brief. The philosophers reading this will be a little frustrated with my description there. But that's what the postmodern world is doing. And Smith writes this in response to that. He says,

**Postmodern claims...cannot be taken seriously. We have no more dispensed with grand narratives than with the need for lungs to breathe with. We cannot live without stories, big stories finally, to tell us what is real and significant, to know who we are, where we are, what we are doing, and why. Christian Smith**

We live by stories and narratives. They're stories that tell of the truth of the universe that allow us to understand what it means to be human. And, as you're left walking out of the theater with the question of what

am I made for, playing through the speakers, this is where Gerwig fails. The story she tells comes back to the modern individual to write the story. Now for Barbie, she's left with this sense of, "I am the one who apparently can dictate what my narrative and my story is about."

But the problem is, what if that narrative is untrue? What if the story you tell yourself doesn't actually match reality? What if the story you think is true will give shape to your life? But what if it is inconsistent with the very truth of the universe? The narratives that we live and tell ourselves give shape to our lives. They deeply shape who we are. And so the question must be asked, "How do we know if the story is true?" How do we know the narratives and the truth of reality? This will, in turn, shape our lives, and so it behooves us to make sure we're telling and understanding a proper story.

I want to talk about three things in this message. I also want to give you an outline of how we're going to address some of the questions I just raised. So you can hold together all that I'm doing here. But first, I want to talk about the nature of conformity. What does it mean to conform to a pattern of this world? Second, I want to talk about the nature and the function of the mind. Remember, all of this is aimed at Paul's statement that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

So, even in this first sentence, we need to understand what the mind is and how does it operates within our lives. Lastly, I want to talk about the role of truth and lies in our formation. Conformity, the mind, and truth and lies.

I encourage you to memorize Romans 12:1-2. Some of you probably already have them memorized. They are some of those high points in scripture. If you've been around the church world, you have probably heard these verses before, and rightfully so. It's a profound couple of statements in which Paul is detailing everything he understands about what it means to be on this journey of formation. So, let's read this text, and then we'll unpack it a little. Romans 12:1-2.

**Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2**

Last week, we dealt with verse one, and I encourage you to go back and listen to it, but we're now in this second phase of Paul's understanding of spiritual formation. It's this idea of not being conformed to the pattern of this world. There are two words here we have to understand and be precise about if we're going to understand what Paul is after at this moment. The first word "conform" translates as "to be conformed to the pattern of." In Greek, that's all one word. So, it can get a little confusing. I actually think it's a pretty good translation, but we need to be a little technical as to what it is doing in Paul's thinking.

So the Greek word is *suschematizo*. What it means is to conform to or follow the pattern of. Now, you may hear the word scheme. So it's this

idea of schematic. And Paul says, do not be conformed to the schematic of this world. An example would be those Play-Doh toys when you were a kid where you took just a little bit of Play-Doh and put it in the middle, and then you shut it. You opened it up, and it had taken a different form; it was like a donkey or something on the inside. You put the Play-Doh in, smush it shut, and the Play-Doh is then conformed to the pattern of whatever the shape was. That's the imagery here. And Paul says there's a form, a schematic of the world in which your life is being squeezed into, pushed into the mold of, the shape of.

There is a story of the good life that this world is telling us, the Bay Area is telling us, that this is what it means to thrive and to succeed. As we go about our normal living in subtle ways, our lives are being formed into that schematic. It's interesting Paul is actually writing in what's called the middle or passive voice. And what that means is that it's something that is happening to you, not necessarily something you're actively doing. You can, in fact, actively shape yourself into the narrative of the world around you. But the imagery here is a little more that. The forming is happening to you less than you are going out and actively doing it.

So the point is, for most of us, we can think of our formation or the influence of the world as some dark monster hiding behind the bushes that is waiting to pounce on us. But Paul's vision of this is much more passive. Your formation by the story, the schematic, the narrative that the world is telling you is slowly, subtly happening beneath the surface, probably without us realizing it.

All formation is happening in such a way that you're absorbing the things around you, and they, in turn, are giving shape to your loves and your longings and who you are and who you are becoming. Paul's words here are to be careful, do not fall into that. Do not allow that to slowly shape you over time.

For us, and I've used this phrase before, it's all formation, all spiritual formation, is counter formation to the way the world is forming us. To be human is to be dynamic. You are constantly changing and forming. It isn't necessarily something you turn on and off, but rather, in every moment and every kind of waking moment, you are being shaped into a person. Therefore, our formation into the way of Jesus is a counter-formation to the way of the world. Paul says, do not be conformed to the pattern of this world.

The second word that's really important is the word "world." What I don't want you to think of is the material world that you imagine, like the earth. There's a different word for that in Greek that they could have used. The word Paul uses here is the word *aion*, which is this idea of the time or the age. I like the translation of a "present age." Do not be conformed to the pattern of this present age because it has to do a little bit more with the spirit of the age, the air of what's going on in the world around us. It's less the material world more the zeitgeist of the day. It's the spirit of the age in which Paul is concerned about.

Now, this is a really important term in Pauline theology. Paul views history through two different eras: this present age and the age to come. I've talked about this before, and it's important that we grasp this. But in Paul's understanding of the world, there are these two eras. This present

age is ruled and governed by sin, sickness, death, and brokenness. These are the things of a world that is wasting away.

We exist within this age here and now, but for Paul, the resurrection of Jesus and his proclamation that the kingdom of God has come has inaugurated the age to come. This is the Christian hope that we have that out on the horizon, the kingdom of God is breaking into this moment and coming ever closer.

What Jesus would say is it's here now. And this age, the age to come, isn't ruled by sin, sickness, death, and brokenness, but rather, by righteousness, health, life, shalom, and peace. This age is overlapping with the age to come. What it means to be a Christian is we have moved from finding our identity in this present age. And have transported our understanding of life in the world through the work of the Holy Spirit into the age to come.

Now, that's not a clean transition. It's clean in the sense that it's the work of Jesus who does that for us and enables us to move into that new age to come. But it's difficult and violent because our lives and our bodies exist in the present age. So, our formation has been towards this present age, not the age to come. And the role of discipleship is essentially moving from this age, that being the defining factor of our life, to the age to come, which will take some unlearning. It will take counter-formation. It will require that we distinguish between truth and lies.

We are able to name the very narratives and stories that have constituted our life and say, Okay, what does Jesus say? What is the true story and narrative about this world? And how do I allow that story to be the thing that shapes and forms me? Do not be conformed to the schematic of this present age. Paul is saying that your life is in that new one.

Think of all the New Testament language where Paul talks about crucifying the old life, or you died to yourself and were resurrected to new life. That's what he's talking about. This transition from the present age to the age to come.

Look back at Mark 1:14-15. "*After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God*" (Mark 1:14). Now that word "good news" is the word gospel. It's *euangelion*. So Jesus is proclaiming the Gospel of God. What we hear Jesus say next is the gospel. "*The time has come,*" he said. "*The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!*" (Mark 1:15). The gospel message is that Jesus is Lord. He has been incarnated on this earth and announced that the age to come, what Jesus calls the kingdom of God, is here in the very present.

Therefore, our response is to repent and believe, or transfer allegiance, put our faith in that which has come here. Now, the word repent is a great word. It deals with thinking. It deals with forgiveness; it deals with all this reorganizing, refocusing your life, but at its core, it's essentially saying the kingdom of God is here, and you have to reorganize everything in light of that reality.

That will require a confession of sin. That will require unlearning the ways we've been formed into this present age. It will probably require community in which we come along alongside one another to help us

understand our identity in the age to come, the kingdom of God. Jesus says to repent, for that age has come.

This is the good news. We no longer have to be ruled by the present age. There's a new way to live, a new way to be human. But our lives have been shaped not by the kingdom of God but by this present age. So how do we move them from that age to the next? It begins with yielding our life to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul would say in Romans 12 that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. Let's talk a little bit about this idea of the mind. What does Paul mean by this? Because it's a pretty big statement that we're to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. The first thing is transformation is possible. That's good news.

Second, it happens through the mind. Now, the mind is not the same thing as the brain. We have our modern reading of this idea of the mind. We think of it as the brain, but that's not the case. One person has defined the mind as directed attention. I like that because the mind, at least in Paul's understanding, is the reasoning faculty or the way we understand life around us. It's, in many ways, the thing that sets us apart from all other created things. We, as far as we can tell, are the only created beings who can think about our thinking.

Some of you are like, "That's why I get caught in these cycles of thinking about what I'm thinking about." But we can think about our thinking. So that's unique. A part of what it means to be human. And the beautiful thing about it is that it means we can reflect. We can hope. But we can also have fear, and we can have anxiety because we are thinking about our thinking.

And so the mind, this ability we have to help shape the neurons in our brain in such a way that it changes the very construction of who we are. That's a powerful tool that God has wired us with. And here's the point: your mind then, if this is all true, which I believe it absolutely is, your mind possesses the potential to be your greatest ally or your greatest enemy in the journey of spiritual formation.

Put differently, your mind is the place of your greatest freedom but also potentially the place of your greatest bondage. It is the place in which you can get trapped in negative, wrong, and false narratives. Where you can learn and consume and dwell on lies that you begin to live out as if they are true. But at the same time, your mind can set you free. You have the ability at some level, not entirely, but you have a lot of autonomy over what you think and dwell on.

You have the ability to direct your attention towards the good, not the evil. You have the ability to dwell on the truth, not lies. You have this great sense of freedom over your mind. You are an active participant in what you think about. We don't like to think that way because often, we're moving so fast that thoughts just fly into our minds, and we assume they're from nowhere. But that is more often a result of your mind doing what it's been trained to do, which is move fast, lose focus, and not be able to really direct your attention in any particular way.

Listen to the way Dallas Willard, a philosopher and theologian, writes in his book, *Renovation of the Heart*, which, by the way, these three weeks,

I'm essentially just ripping off a ton of his work, three chapters in that book that are brilliant. A lot of it should be put back on him. But he writes,

**The ultimate freedom we have as human beings is the power to select what we will allow or require our minds to dwell upon. We are not totally free in this respect. But we do have great freedom here, and even though 'dead in...trespasses and sins' (Ephesians 2:1), we still have the ability and responsibility to try to retain God in our knowledge—if only in an inadequate and halting manner. And those who do so will surely make progress toward him; for if we truly do seek God as best we can, he, who always knows what is really in our hearts, will certainly make himself known to us. Willard**

Willard is saying if you fix God in your mind, God will, in fact, reveal himself to you. And you have control. You have the ability to dwell on that which you do and don't. Of course, we've all interacted with loved ones with intrusive thoughts, bouts of depression, and seasons of mental unhealth where it feels like our minds are trapped. God has given us the grace of therapists, counselors, medication, and all these things to help liberate us from that bondage. But don't let it be that we think the mind is this monster of its own. We still can, in fact, dwell on and control some of what we think through. At times, we need help from others to do that, but you do have that freedom.

Willard's point, and what Paul is getting at by this transformation of the mind, is that it is in our minds that we first turn to God and, therefore, turn away from God. So, if we are to renew our minds, the mind is the place where we must begin to change. How do we begin to hold God before us? Paul says this is the whole journey. The whole thing is the renewal of your mind. But here's the hard part, and I really believe, is that we are not changed by thinking alone, but rather by living or, as Jesus would say in John 8, we'll look at in a little bit that we hold to the teachings of Jesus.

So it isn't just thinking. It's a whole-body experience, which is why attending a community like this or small groups, discipleship, or accountability with one another, stepping into those sorts of relationships, are part of the way we are formed. He says, but you cannot think your way into Christ likeness, but yet the mind is often the very first step we take towards that.

So we live in a world that's kind of over-emphasized information, which is a product of the modern world. We think if we just read a book, then we'll know it and live all the things. Have you ever read about dieting, and your diet didn't really change? Because we're not like that. We can't just know information and then change. It takes a whole life reorientation. For you to read about dieting is one thing, but for you to remove all the bread and sugars in your house is another. That is when change begins. It's that partnership of both those things.

Your mind has the potential to be your greatest ally in your spiritual formation. But it can also be your greatest enemy. So, how do we know what to fill our minds with? How do we know what should be the center

point, that which we dwell on in our minds? Well, this is where we need to talk about the nature of truth and of lies. Next week, we'll talk a lot more about the very pragmatics of how we renew our minds, but we're not quite there yet.

So, what is truth? This is a question that's been asked all the way from the ancient philosophers to those in the modern world to anyone from Pontius Pilot to Michel Foucault to Jacques Derrida. All ask this question. What is truth? This is the very question that all of us, through every generation, have asked. I want to offer three humble thoughts on truth.

First, the truth is that which corresponds with reality. A thought or a statement is true, provided that it actually manifests itself in that reality. The chair you're sitting on holds you up; that is a true statement because you recognize that it's holding you up. It is happening. The truth is that which matches with reality. The reality is you're all sitting; no one has fallen out of their chair yet.

So, the true statement "Chairs hold people" corresponds with reality. Now, the alternate is also true. When we begin to think through what a lie is. If I believe that I can walk on water, I'm making a truth claim that water will sustain me. Reality hits me when I take that first step, and I'm not Jesus or Peter. So I'm now dropping through the water. That statement, "I can walk on water," does not match reality. It does not correspond with reality. This is why when Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," we as Christians have a story of understanding that all of reality corresponds to who Jesus is.

This is Paul in Colossians when he says that the image of the invisible son is holding all of creation together. Jesus is that which sustains creation because Jesus is truth. He is that which matches reality. So, as Christians, we understand if we want to understand truth, we have an answer for that. We go to Jesus, and we understand what is true about the world because Jesus is the truth.

This leads to the second point that we have to understand about truth. Truth is not made true by its verification. Okay, this is important. It's a little nuanced. But truth is not made true by its verification, meaning this. Just because you can't verify something doesn't make it true or untrue. Truth just is. For example, I recently moved into a new place. That necessitates hanging a bunch of stuff on walls. I fully admit I am not a handyman.

But I was hanging a TV on the wall, and you have to do a few things first. You have to understand the truth to do that. You have to know if there is a stud there or is there, not a stud there? The reality is there are studs in that wall; whether or not I can find them, the studs are there. Turns out I can't quite find them right away, but they are there. I do not make that stud appear by finding it. The stud is there. Truth is not made true by its verification. It's important to get this nuance because, in the modern world, we tend to think of truth as only that which you can verify, but that's simply not the nature of what to have. Truth works. Truth just is. Truth is there, which leads to the third point I want to make on truth.

Truth is unchanged by belief, desire, tradition and/or will. No matter how much I believed and desired for there to be a stud right there, it



was not. It was not there on the other side of the drywall. No matter how much I longed for it to be, I could believe really hard that it was there; it does not make that true. Truth is unyielding to belief, desire, tradition, and or will. Truth just is. No matter how hard we think about it and want things to be true, the reality is, truth just is. And therefore, if we are to flourish as humans, we have to come to understand the truth and organize our life around it.

This is why when Jesus says, *I am the way, the truth, and the life*, we have an opportunity to share with the world a story about truth. A story about what it means to be human. A story about what it means to be a child of God, created in the image of God with dignity, who's loved by their creator and is not hated, that their identity isn't marked by their sin in their past, but rather by the redemption in the work of Jesus.

We have a story of truth to share. We have a story to answer Billie Eilish's melody of "What am I Made For." We have a story to offer. We have truth to share with the world that brings about life. It's not a weapon to yield, but rather, it's something in which we help bring the good gospel news to, that the present age is passing away and the age to come that's ruled by love and righteousness and goodness, that this world is breaking into the present.

And listen, church; we get to share that gospel. We get to say, "Let me tell you about the goodness your heart is longing for." It's not a weapon to yield. It's a reality to step into, to love, to embrace.

And here's the important part: if truth is reality, that means lies are unreality. Lies are contrary to that which corresponds with reality. What is unique about the mind that we can think about our thinking is that we can hold both reality and unreality in our heads at the exact same time. This is the way God has wired us because this is what allows us to hope.

What is hope? Hope is looking out over the horizon. It's something that hasn't happened yet, and imagining what it could be and holding that there. That's hope. It's holding unreality in our heads that we believe this is what is out there to come. Then, that allows us to move towards that future.

What is fear? Fear is essentially the opposite. It's looking out over the horizon, looking at unreality and being trapped by that, by the possibility of what could come, or anxiety, or tension, all those things are unreality that we can hold in our head with reality. And so this becomes the greatest ally or the greatest enemy to our formation, the fact that you can hold truth and lies in your head at the same time. At times, we often hold that lie about who we are, about what others think of us, about what God thinks of us in such a way that we begin to live that lie out.

Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world. Because what if the pattern of this world, what if the schematic isn't built on truth? What if it's built on a lie? Or based on human's best intentions to try to make sense of the world, which is a little more where I land. I don't think it's a nefarious pursuit. Often, the world is just struggling to figure out what it means to be human. And in their best intentions, they build a life off of a lie. God is saying that there's a different way. We can tell that story

of truth because this is how we navigate the world. We navigate the world through these understandings of what is truth, what life is, and what it means to be human.

Here is a simple example. In not too long, you are all going to walk out of this room and hop in your car, and if you're like me, you're going to plug your phone in, and the map will come up. You'll input how to get to your home, even though you know how to get there. You're going to do it anyway because it's satisfying to follow the little blue line. In that moment, we trust that the map matches reality. For me, when I hit home, it's created now a map of how I navigate Foster City and all those things that are going to take me out to Highway 92. I'm going to go west on 92, and then at that point, I'm going to hop on 280 North, and that's going to take me to Millbrae.

What happens if that map is wrong? What if that map, when I click home, actually sends me to 280 South? I'm going to spend a lovely afternoon in San Jose, not in Millbrae, at my house, because that map doesn't match reality. And no matter how much I believe that map will take me home if it's wrong, it won't change. The map is wrong.

What happens when we do this with identity? When you have a mental map of what it means to exist in this world, and what if it's wrong? What if you have a truth that you want to believe about the world, that you are so certain this is who I am and what I mean? And what if that's filled with shame, guilt, and anxiety? What if that map is wrong? Well, it will, in turn, give shape to a life built on lies. It will enslave you to bondage.

I remember early in my ministry career, one of the mental maps I had to work through that was wrong was I had for whatever reason, some small "t" trauma as a child or hurt through growing up with friends and all those sorts of things that our mind has to go into these places to protect itself, which is a good instinct of the way God's created us, but it can in turn create mental maps that are built on the wrong thing.

Well, I remember just four or five years ago, working with a therapist and community, talking through some of these sorts of things because I had this mental map that I was a burden to anyone I was around. And in that mental map, I was giving shape to my life. It was giving shape to my community. It was causing me to be reserved and to hold back.

I had picked up this lie that my presence with others was a burden, and it was enslaving me. It was putting me in bondage. It was holding me back from deep relationships. It made it difficult for me to connect with others because I just didn't want to be a problem for them. So, I slowly was enslaved by this mental map of who I am and how I've been created. That, in turn, was impacting my life. It's driving me to darkness, and shadows, holding things in, not really living authentically, not opening up my life to others. But that was a lie.

Through time, I began to learn what the truth is, that I am not inherently a burden, and people actually genuinely care. I can interact with them, talk with them, and share my life with them, and that's an okay thing because that's what it means to be human.

It's the way we've been created for community to be around others. You see, it is the truth of Jesus and what he has said about me to re-architect that mental map in my mind to bring about freedom. Church, what if you have these mental maps that are bent in the wrong direction? What if you are living from a space in which you are not living in a way that corresponds with reality? What does it look like when we have false mental maps of our identity, sexuality, finances, family planning, friends, community, and workplace? What does it mean to exist? What if all of these narratives are wrong? Well, I would suggest you're slowly being enslaved by these things.

Jesus is inviting you to a different way. He's inviting you to imagine what it could look like to live aligned with the truth of who you are and how God has created you to be. See, this will take nothing less than the renewing of your mind where we find out and dig out these sorts of narratives.

Because here's the thing: when I was enslaved to that lie, I didn't know it. It wasn't like I told myself over and over that lie. It took work. It took healing. It took a conviction of the Holy Spirit to highlight the ways in which my life had gone off track. But in fact, there is freedom in that. Listen to this text from John 8. This is Jesus, and it's this beautiful text in which he's talking about the role of truth in lies, and the devil's role as the father of lies, and how deception is the native tongue of Satan himself. In John 8:31, Jesus says, *"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"* Is it any surprise that Jesus came, and his job was a teacher? He's come to teach truth to help us understand and navigate the world in such a way that our internal beliefs match with reality. We're not trying to change truth because that is unchangeable, but rather, we're bringing our life into alignment with reality.

Jesus is a truth-teller. He has come to bring truth. He's come to bring a new way to live in this world. He's come to bring the forgiveness of sins, the healing of your soul, the work in which you need to deal with the lies that have given shape to your life and who you are. And he's offering a different way. The bottom line, church, is that most of us often live from a wrong map of reality. We have come to embody lies. We believe things about ourselves that simply aren't true. Whether they've been told to us by others or whether we have just naturally embodied those things, we are living lies.

We worship idols that the world has to offer and believe that they bring the good life, but those things are a lie. The world around us will often give a picture of what the good life is, but those things are not truth.

Jesus is the way and truth and the life. I leave you with this question. What are the lies that you're believing? What are the things that you've come to believe at your core that are ingrained in your body, maybe

things you can't even see, that you are buying into and allowing those to shape who you are?

Jesus, in my favorite verse of his, says, *"The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But I have come that they may have life, and life to the fullest"* (John 10:10). Do you trust that? Do you trust that the way of Jesus is life and life to the fullest? Do you believe that? Because your belief will manifest when you bump up against these lies. And when Jesus convicts you, when the Holy Spirit works in you and exposes those things, you then have the choice. Do I believe Jesus is the truth? Will I listen to the ones who have the words that bring life and life to the full? Or do I enslave myself to the bondage of sin and lies? That's the question before us.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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