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places. And if you'd have a Bible and would like to turn with a swan is from the fifth chapter of the book of Matthew will kind of get both of these maybe together before we read them. Matthew five. And the second one is from First Corinthians one, Matthew five, verse Corinthians one

00:42

we're going to begin reading at verse 33. of Matthew five. Jesus is speak again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, you shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord, what you have sworn. But I say to you, do not swear at all, either throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. And do not swear but your head, for you cannot make one hair wider blank. Now listen to the next line. Let what you say, be simply yes or no. Anything more than this comes from evil. That's astonishing. Let what you say be simply or know anything more than this comes from evil. Now let's turn to First Corinthians, and began at verse 18. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will throw it Where is the wise man? Whereas the sprays the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world, or sense in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it please God through the folly of what we preach, to save those who believe. Or Jews demand wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews, folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, or the foolishness of God is wiser than men. And the weakness of God is stronger than men. Let us pray.

03:24

Our Father, we want to know how to say simply, yes and no. But we faced so many contradictions, so many alternatives and options. And it's also confusing that sometimes we have despair of ever been able to find truth simply to say yes to

04:07

we recognize that if we could find such truth that it could give us so softly and so much confidence. If we could find it, we we just know that we could be strong and courageous.

04:32

So we're at nine that we can see it. We've tried our own way. Now help us to consider your way. And grant Oh, Father, each one of us a lot of wisdom and understanding that we'll be able to hear discriminating li

04:58

your word We ask these things in Jesus name, Amen. Now, tonight we're looking at the matter of decision, or really how to say yes or no and no. Because that's what decision boils down to, it's a matter of saying yes to certain things. And it's a matter of saying no to other things. And we are the only creatures who can really say that. We're the only ones who can really say called with the image of God, which enables us to make choices, simply out of our freedom, God is free. And since God is free, and we are made in His image, it follows that we are free, we have to say yes and no. And it was a great risk really involved, for God to create persons. Especially when he did not pre programmed the person so that he could do nothing but love him date persons of choice is risky business. Every time a child is born into a family, it is born as, as a free person. And every parent knows that there's always the possibility that the child one day reject them completely. But then that's the only way that real love operates. That's the nature of love. And I suppose it wouldn't be love. If it wasn't free. If it didn't have the power to say, you know, we would all be a Tom automatons, we will be robots. We would we would be pre programmed like the rabbit, or the fox or the bird or the fish. But we are we are we are persons. And that's what we're really struggling with. And sometimes we wish we weren't. I know a lot of people that wish they weren't persons and they ask all the time. Well, why were we made this way? You see, that's really a struggle with our own nature. No, nothing else. That's true questions like that. But we do. Because maybe, or maybe it's because or part of the reason may be that we don't like to make decisions, and then bear the responsibility for those decisions. And yet, that's, that's almost contradictory or paradoxical because a kid just can't wait to get old enough to make his own decisions. You know, and there he goes through a period in his life in which he says, I want to decide some of these things. I don't want to determine what I do. And I want to determine where I go. And I want to determine how my hair looks. And I want to determine what are and I want to determine who my friends are and ad infinitum. I want to make these decisions. But then pretty soon, when the weight of decision making falls upon us, and the subsequent responsibility for those decisions. Then it becomes a more we find ourselves wrestling and struggling with that. And when we say why did God make us so that we could be disobedient or so that we could do evil? You see, we are really saying I do not want to live with my own decision. I don't want to live with my own choices. I don't want that responsibility. I would like to have the freedom of doing anything i Please without bearing any responsibility. But there is no such thing as decisions made in freedom that do not carry responsibility. The very nature of decision itself inherently carries the idea of responsibility. Freedom is never free in the sense that it is irresponsible. The moment that that the free person becomes an irresponsible person, he is no longer a free person, he brings others in bondage. Maybe out of that, just to lay a really heavy one on is the paradox, perhaps the greatest paradox and the teachings of Jesus which says that the greatest freedom is the greatest slavery. Person is is half committed that he is half free. The only really free person the only totally free person is the person who is totally committed. Then all of this the schism and the tenant up on the inside that stood up in the mind and the heart. All of this has gone On, once the human being finds something, to go all out for, to be all out for once he finds a place to stand, once he finds an orientation for his life, that and Sam, to say yes to the things he should say yes to, and no to the things he should say no to, and be able to live with the following responsibility and consequences. And that's what we've really come together

tonight to discuss, say yes and no. Now the second fantasies that we read, give, what I believe the Bible teaches is the basis and the only base upon which human beings can say yes or no, and not having to, and fall into what Jesus called evil. And he says that, that this wisdom, this cross, He says, and the wisdom of God, and it is the power of God. Now, let's put a couple of other groups over here. He says, on the basis of the cross,

11:28

there are some people who say, it is poorly its parent. Then he says, there is another group, who does not say it is foolish, but who say really,

11:44

that is in the cross, that there is truth that there is power. And he says this group is the same group. And therefore, really, we're all pretty well, section out here tonight, this passage, really devices all of us. God says there is one group of us, whose perishing group is another group at the same age group. And the difference between the perishing and the save, is the way we look at and respond to the cross. Now, that's very arbitrary, isn't it? And you almost, we almost do not want to live with that kind of definiteness. Our age of relativity will hardly give us any room at all, for for definiteness. For confidence, and for certainty. We have bred a kind of mental atmosphere in this nation that produces sloppy thinking, and sloppy speeds, and sloppy values, pay more and sloppy love and sloppy family style. This could be described maybe as the age of man's greatest genius, but it could also as easily be described as the age of man's greatest sloppiness. Almost nobody knows it. No one knows anything for certain no one knows where he he is no one really knows where he's headed. No one speaks with real conviction. No one seems to know anything. And we're always reacting and really formed by all the things we react to and it started when we were still at home. We reacted to our parents and and some of us wound up with a whole different personality simply because of that constant tension with parents. We became rebellious, we became obstinate, we became powders. We develop a kind of emotional and mental attitude that is objectionable, that is not pleasing. That is not loving. We develop irritability, we'd have selfishness. We wanted to go our own way, simply because we reacted to the authority of parents. And then you go to school, and we react to that. And you go to college and you react to that. And you react to to the older people you react to the young people and we're always leave are born of reaction. They are they do not emerge from honest, intelligent human beings who will sit down and keep quiet have long enough questions about life. And to think through and to find some answers, and to test the answers, so that we can come up with some wisdom calm, we can come away with some confidence, some common sense uncertainty. And we have in the silence of our own hearts and lives,

15:31

we have found the way that we ought to live. There's a great verse in the book of Psalms, he still

15:39

and know that I am God. And so there is a tremendous need today for for us to sit down and to think through some things. Now, the Bible that has stood for 2000 year that that makes the claim of being the Word of God the maker of man is being rejected today out of reaction. I don't really find very

the word of God, the maker of man is being rejected today, out of reaction. I don't really find very many people who put down the Bible, who know her. Most of its critics know the least about. And that's never made very much sense, really. And it's almost as if we're afraid to really read it. That somehow, as long as we can stand back away from it and put it down. I was convinced that it's foolish, that it's silly, that it's medieval, that it's a museum piece, then we never have to turn a single page and read a word of it. We're free. And yet, if we did any other book on Earth nearly that way, people would say, well, you're immature, you're not well around that you're not, you're not really an honest pursuer of truth. The boss, that intelligent people have thoroughly convinced themselves, that they need to have no knowledge of it whatsoever. And yet, they know when they think about it, that no book has influenced the entire history of the West, quite to the degree that the Bible has. And so again, from the standpoint simply of knowing about my own heritage, I owe it to myself, to know something about the Bible. And then when I think beyond that, like ought to be even a little bit curious. Because there's not a book in the world, that against which there has been a more concerted effort century after century after century, to destroy. And yet everyone who's ever thrown a stone at it, everyone a copy in the fire, everyone who's ever spoken against it, all die. Their words vanish in the air with their death. And the Bible keeps right on living. I would just be curious. Now, with that kind of openness tonight, the Bible really says that the history of man has at its fork, a cross that the cross is the fork in the road, also is the fork in the road. And people who take one road are foolish, and are perishing. And people who take the other road have power and our say, Isn't that

19:01

blunt? That's blunt. So that, you know, whether your of how you view the cross. Now, I don't know if there's a person here who would accept that or not yet.

19:17

That's just almost too far removed from from the way we're accustomed to thinking. But let's just grant that maybe that's the truth of this one, one period of time in your life, just kind of grant that it's right. And let's see what he's really saying. Now, he comes along, and he says that the cross is the wisdom of God, the wisdom of God. How in the world could a crawl on which a man died? The wisdom is that the Is that the statement of a raving maniac? How can it be wisdom? He says that the cross is the power of God. How can a cross on which a man is dying be power? Do you know if I wrote the word death right here? Now we're looking at we're looking at it purely from common sense right now. If I wrote the word death, right there how much does the sum total of man's wisdom about death a mountain to? That is what nobody is a veteran and it's like the, it's like the, the young man who came back and visited the mother of the buddy that died on and she said, How did he die?

21:03

And the boys did like an image it's the only there are no professionals. When it comes to death we're all amateurs to deal with. We had to take a fatalistic view, it's gonna get us and there's nothing we can do about it.

21:31

I've set with scores now dying. On some die, we're fighting it every step of the way.

21:39

But it's got a mini him. I've seen others die with a smile. It got them to nobody is very smart. Around the body of a dying versus it all out

22:03

in depth, we have no power. Every power symbol that's known to man, wealthy and power. And his well. It bought him a hospital suite. My insurgent. But it didn't stay death. He was a man who spoke and other men jumped.

22:41

And he cried out and he resisted. But death wouldn't. He had no power at all over death. And so when the Bible comes along against that kind of history, against that kind of evidence, against that kind of situation, given the genius and the brilliance of man. It makes me jerked my head up. When God says, at the cross, the death of Jesus is the wisdom and the power. It just makes you stop. And take notice. Now we ask, in what way is to cross the wisdom and the power of God. move now to the cross for a few moments. And just look again at what the situation is. And tonight, we might want to say this by way of explanation. When describing what happened at Jesus death. We're not the only sermons I ever heard about the crucifixion of Christ. Were sermons that just painted word pictures. And so I could see some blood dripping, and I could hear the moaning and the groaning and all of that, and it all has its place. But it was a long time before anybody ever told me what the cross meant. And tonight we're going to try to look at that question. What does a cross mean? What does it mean in terms of, of the life of a human being? What happened? What happened that day that made it described as the wisdom and the power of God? What is it that made this particular man's death on a cross wisdom and power? Well, this particular man was Jesus. That makes a little difference a lot of times people in in asking for adults and signs and wonders and all these things will ask you know What is so distinctive about Jesus? Didn't other people commit, perform miracles? Well, then other people were another people, great teachers, for others. Yes. And haven't there been other resurrections? Yes. Then what makes sense for special? Five? To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.

25:39

That's what makes the difference. The Bible teaches that and Jesus Christ. Jesus said, When you have seen me, you have seen the Father in no other man.

25:54

Has that claim ever been made? Oh, Jesus, is God living. And it's God's working to do what? To bring about the who forgive the man to love the man. All of that is involved at the cross, only in Jesus Christ, only in his miracles and only in his death, and only in his resurrection was God present dealing with you and me, making the difference between the perishing and the save

26:41

in that cross. And so we go to it, and we try to figure it out.

26:51

And when we stand and I'd like for us now for a moment just to kind of go to the cross. As we go and stand there. What is there in this world?

27:04

That is the strongest thing. That man and no, that's the question I want us to ask. Because that's what we need. Listen, we need a strong arm. today. We need strength. We need the kind of strength that can visit us in the interior of our lives. And that can make us strong.

27:38

There are lots of pressures and there are lots of anxieties and everything indicates that more are on the way. And human being after being after human being is getting wiped down, he's getting trampled over, he's getting run down, he's getting beat he's getting he's getting beat down. And we've got more and more people who who are who are just giving up and more and more people who are living in complete apathy and who are who are totally uninvolved we've got more and more people who are stepping out and saying no to the whole business and who are just waiting for the moment in which they're going to make their way and hoping that somehow if anybody survives they will make we've given up believing that we have the right to decide and that we can decide. And so we're asking here, what is it? That's the strip or what is it? That's the deepest thing that could form the most solid foundation on which a man can base his life or what is it that we can trust

28:46

what is it that we can throw over be wiped down? That will never be destroyed? If I can't have a place to stand that is not subject to the destruction of all the things that are around me.

29:06

Then of course I'll be destroyed with all the things that are around me. I need a place to put my feet that time and change will never destroy I need a place to stand a place to be I need a place that strong What can a person thrive? That's the question alright first of all can the person trust Well, let's even begin before that. Can a person trust just the natural world? The Earth no some you hear people saying a lot of times you know what I want to do is just put my feet down on this guy. Oh, solid earth, you know, and somehow I feel like I can make it. Well, that semi good until an earthquake. And I don't know if you've ever experienced an earthquake or not, I never did experience a big one. But I've experienced a little big one. Everybody said it was little, but it was pretty big to me, shook me up

pretty fast. And I remember, I don't know how many have seen a really big meteor shower. But one morning, I had arisen about four o'clock. And unfortunately, I didn't even know that there were supposed to be one. Everybody else was trying to see it. And I didn't even know it was supposed to be and I was in the middle of it. But I was driving was still dark. And driving out there was Northeast Arkansas. And pretty soon, you know, there was a streak and then there was a streak and there was a streak and there was a streak and it was a streak streak streak streak. And you know, one or two or three or four is not bad.

30:58

But you know, when, when 50, stars streak, streak, it gets freaky pretty fast. And so it looked to me like the whole sky was just falling out.

31:14

And you even wonder at moments like that if one might be aimed at you. So I've gotten pulled over to the side of the road

31:22

and investigate that thing a little bit. And a truck driver pulled up. And he stopped and he crawled down out of that truck. And he said

31:40

and he and swallow. What do you what's happening? And I said, Well, I guess it's a meteor shower. But I really think that, that if Gabriel had blown the horn that oh boy wouldn't have been a bit surprised.

32:00

And I really don't know if I'd have been you know, we think that this whole world is pretty solid.

32:08

Until we're reminded through just natural calamity, of an earthquake that can just in a matter of moments, wiped down 1000s.

32:22

Maybe near us is is is you stood and you've seen where we're a little tiny funnel. That's just been and nothing stood just the enormity of its power, then you remember that that really the world is there's a little tiny spot in a enormous universe. And that in all the universe, the mileson, the millions that are

out there, that there's only one little tiny fan band around one little tiny planet called Earth that will support human life. At least that we know. And we know that if one of these little human beings, if it goes just a few miles in that direction. He just dies. He can't live. If it goes just a little bit under the skin down into the earth. Again, he makes the gaseous influences that do not enable him to live. We are all on a tiny, fragile band on the skin of a small planet Earth. And at the same ship. The place where a man lives is an extremely fragile place. And frankly, it helps me to know that the person who's supporting all of that loves me. Because he could just come in and just squeeze that over just a little bit. And we've had it but he likes us. And we learned that right here. We said the world is so it's so stable back when you with you and even if you'd been disappointed if you'd said well, you know, I had hoped that Jesus was was really, but you know all of us now. There he is. He's dying. And so I guess I'll just put my feet down on the scroll solid firmer. And about that time. The Bible says that when Jesus died, the earth began to shake, and the rocks and the hills around Jerusalem began to tremble. And it's as though rocks and hills That to us. There man. You can't trust me

35:11

the person looks around me thinks well, what else can I trust? And then he thinks, Well, maybe maybe I can trust religion you know, just be religious. That's the thing now just written Mr Celanese, that I perceive in all things you're too superstitious is I passed by and beheld your all your devotions, I passed an offer with inscription, to the unknown God, whom therefore you ignorantly worship Him to clarify on to you. Here it was a was a whole civilization and Paul proceed were very, very religious. But he says you are ignorant of the one thing that could save you. That's the message, he said that he'd come to bring a person first ologists trust religion, and then it began to look around for whether they could find and during that day, it would have been Judaism. And the temple that had stood for centuries. As he looks at it, deciding that he's going to trust the sample, he's going to trust religion, he's simply going to try suspicions of religion, then the veil in the temple is rent and Twain. It's torn apart. If it's done, though, the institutions of religion say you can't trust us. Late being religious, is not enough. So the guy is getting confused. And he says, Well, okay, so I can't trust the world. And that is the material order of things. And, and I can't trust simply a religion that's, that's there. And it's been there for a long walk. And I'll just trust myself. I'll just go my own way. And as he goes into his own head, he trusts himself to find his own way. He happens to remember and he looks up dying. And remember, that's the best man by any main standard who ever lived. And he's getting in the neck. You can't even trust yourself.

37:33

And he says, Oh, well, I guess maybe those things don't mean anything. And after all, we're going to all die anyway. And so really, what makes the difference? I'll just, I'll just trust it. We're all going to be wartime he thought, I'll just trust that. At least this will provide an escape at least that will provide a hiding place. Then people who had slept in graves appeared in Jerusalem even death can't be trusted. So unsafe

38:28

not hiding. What can you try? What's the strongest thing? You look up again. Maybe you hear a faint mumble as that emaciated figure on the roof close to hearing bother. For forgive them. For they know not what they do. Forgive

39:11

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Or for Romans five God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died was the ungodly. To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

39:40

What is the what is what's left? The world religion, death. None of these can fully be trusted. What's left? And finally is the man stands there his eyes wander back to the cross. It begins to comprehend the mystery. And now I'd like to read a passage. I want you to just to listen to this, don't try to follow just listen to it what shall we say to this? Who's against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all. Will he not also give us a Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus who died? Yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who bore us. Here's the key. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? No. The stress person famine, nakedness, peril, or sword? No. And all these things we are more than conquerors through him to love people more than conquerors. People more than conquerors in tribulation, in distress, in persecution, and famine, in nakedness in peril and so I may be naked but I'm cover. I may be hungry but I'm Kroger. No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through love. For I am sure that neither debt