

25-1207a Transcript

25-1207a - *Looking Low Enough - The God Who Hides in the Humble*, Tom Freed

Bible Readers: Mike Mathis and John Nousek

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Looking Low Enough

Scripture Readings

1st Reading (0:04 - 1:10): Mike Mathis

1 Corinthians 1:26-29: (0:04) The first scripture reading this morning is taken from 1 Corinthians 1, verses 26-29. (0:16) For ye see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. (0:28) But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise. (0:37) And God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty. (0:46) And the base things of the world and the things which are despised, God has chosen. (0:54) And the things which are not to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. (1:07) That completes the reading of the word. (1:10)

2nd Reading (1:15 - 2:03): John Nousek

Philippians 2:5-8: (1:15) Good morning. (1:16) This morning I have the pleasure of reading directly from the mind of God. (1:21) In Philippians chapter 2, verses 5-8. (1:26) God's word says, (1:29) Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (1:44) but emptied himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men, being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (2:03)

Transcript (0:04 - 20:29), Preacher: Tom Freed

(2:08) Good morning. (2:10) Good to see everybody. (2:12) It's my turn in the rotation to preach. (2:15) My sermon is called, Looking Low Enough, The God Who Hides in the Humble.

(2:22) Have you ever heard someone say, if God is real, why didn't he just show himself plainly? (2:29) Sure you've heard that before. (2:32) People say, hey, why doesn't God just make it obvious, make it obvious to everybody. (2:38) People look for God in the spectacular, in earthquakes, miracles, perfect lives, big churches, and eloquent preachers.

(2:50) We live in the age of telescopes that peer billions of light years into space. (2:57) Microscopes that map the secrets of a single cell. (3:01) Satellites that can read the license plate of our car from orbit.

(3:06) And yet with all this upward and outward and microscopic vision, we somehow manage to become the blindest generation that has ever walked the earth when it comes to seeing God. (3:19) And we have all these new discoveries that could point us to God. (3:24) And yet this generation can't find him.

(3:28) Why? (3:29) Because we're looking in the wrong places for him. (3:33) The Bible keeps telling us something that wounds our pride. (3:38) God deliberately hides himself in the lowly, the

forgotten, the weak, and the despised.

(3:46) There's an old saying that captures the heart of the gospel. (3:51) The reason modern man cannot see God is because he will not look low enough. (3:58) Today, let's allow scripture itself to show us where Jesus chooses to be found and what that means for his church.

(4:08) At the height of modern pride, modern humanity looks up. (4:14) We look up to skyscrapers and rockets. (4:17) To soaring stock indexes and influencers with millions of followers.

(4:25) To TED Talks that promise to unlock human potential. (4:30) You know, I watch a lot of stuff like that online and YouTube and stuff. (4:35) You know, there's a lot of content out there, a lot of content creators that a lot of people look up to.

(4:43) We look up to glowing screens filtered to show only the perfect moments. (4:49) You know, with Facebook and Instagram, all we see is a highlight reel of somebody's life. (4:53) The vacations, the new car, the house.

(4:58) Above all, we look up to self. (5:01) Our desires, feelings, identity, authenticity, and personal truth have become our north star. (5:11) You know, we look to us to decide what to do.

(5:16) In all this looking up, we have forgot the ancient truth, (5:21) whispered by the prophets, sung by the psalmist, and embodied by the Son of God himself. (5:27) God reveals himself in low places. (5:31) Not on the mountaintop of achievement, but in the valley of humiliation.

(5:37) Not in the palace, but in the stable. (5:40) Not in the thunder of power, but in the silence of surrender. (5:45) Isaiah foresaw it.

(5:49) The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, (5:52) and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, (5:56) and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. (6:01) We do not see God because our necks are stiff from looking up at ourselves. (6:07) You know, just like God called Israel a stiff-necked people.

(6:12) Whole generations of stiff-necked people that followed God. (6:19) Back then they understood what that means. (6:22) It's when an ox or a mule refuses to obey the farmer.

(6:26) It stiffens its neck against the yoke and refuses to turn left or right. (6:32) It doesn't obey the farmer, it just goes its own way. (6:35) How many of us are like that? (6:37) How many of us get stiff-necked, tell God, no, I'm doing it my way.

(6:43) I don't want to listen to your word. (6:45) You know, even as Christians we do that, let alone the non-Christians. (6:51) Let's look to the lowliness of Bethlehem.

(6:55) Consider the night everything changed. (6:59) Caesar Augustus sits on the throne of the world. (7:03) Parades strut through marble halls.

(7:06) Rome rules the nation. (7:08) And where is God born? (7:11) In a feeding trough. (7:13) In a stable that smells of manure and wet straw.

(7:17) You wouldn't think the king of the world would be born in such a lowly place. (7:23) He was surrounded by animals who did not know they were in the presence of their creator. (7:30) The angels could have announced his birth in temple courts.

(7:35) They could have split the sky over Jerusalem. (7:41) Instead they sang to a handful of shepherds. (7:45) Men so lowly they were not even allowed to testify in a court of Jewish law.

(7:53) Why? Because God will not be found by those who insist on looking high. (7:59) You know, he didn't go to the Pharisees and Sadducees. (8:04) He went to the low people.

(8:07) He hides himself in low places that only the lowly at heart can find him. (8:13) G.K. Chesterton observed that Stoics prided themselves on hiding their tears. (8:19) But Jesus never hid his.

(8:22) You remember the shortest verse in the Bible, Jesus wept. (8:27) Yet Jesus did hide something tremendous. (8:29) He hid his glory.

(8:32) He looked low enough to become one of us. (8:35) Lower still to become sin for us. (8:38) And lowest of all to become a curse for us hanging on a tree.

(8:42) Galatians 3.13 (8:46) Philippians 2.5-8 tells us (8:49) He emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. (8:54) He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death. (8:58) Even death on a cross.

(9:03) The king of glory stooped to wash dirty feet. (9:07) To be numbered with criminals and to lie lifeless in a borrowed tomb. (9:15) How much lower can one person go? (9:18) He went that low so that we might be saved.

(9:25) Jesus still hides himself in the least of these. (9:29) In Matthew 25.31-46 (9:33) Jesus describes the final judgment. (9:36) Notice carefully where he says he was and still is found.

(9:42) I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. (9:45) I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. (9:48) I was a stranger and you invited me in.

(9:51) I needed clothes and you clothed me. (9:54) I was sick and you looked after me. (9:57) I was in prison and you came to visit me.

(10:01) The righteous asked, Lord when do we see you like this? (10:05) And the king replied, truly I tell you. (10:08) Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did for me. (10:17) He did not say I was educated and you listened to me.

(10:21) He did not say I was successful and you followed me. (10:25) He said I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, in prison and you cared for me. (10:34) So every time you handed a cup of cold water to someone the world threw away.

(10:39) You handed it to Jesus himself. (10:42) Every time you visited the nursing home, nobody wants to smell, you visited Jesus. (10:48) Every time you wrote a prisoner or hugged the addict or fed the homeless man, everyone else steps over.

(10:56) You touched the body of Christ. (11:00) How many of us, you know, hopefully we don't do this as Christians, but the world (11:06) looks at a homeless person or a prisoner like they're, you know, basically complete garbage. (11:13) You know, we say go get a job or, you know, we refuse to help them out, give them money.

(11:22) You know, these are the people that Jesus went to. (11:26) So especially as Christians, we

shouldn't turn our nose up, you know, at people that are struggling or doing worse than us. (11:33) Because God says there'll be a time when you need help and he won't provide it.

(11:41) So that is where God is right now, hidden in the least of these, wanting to see if we'll look low enough. (11:50) The lowliness of Nazareth and the cross. (11:54) For 30 years the eternal word lived in a nowhere town whose very name provoked contempt.

(12:03) Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Nathaniel asked, John 1 46. (12:11) These people thought nothing good could come out of Nazareth where Jesus lived. (12:17) God's answer was to spend three decades there, hammering nails, sweeping sawdust, eating ordinary meals of ordinary sinners.

(12:27) In the lowest place of all, Golgotha, the place of the skull, a garbage heap outside the city gate, where Rome crucified its trash. (12:39) There, naked, mocking, bleeding, and gasping, the Holy One of God looked lower than any human being has ever looked. (12:49) We can picture how low Jesus looked as a common criminal, you know, who was beaten basically within an inch of his life, hanging on a cross.

(13:02) Modern man will not look there. We want a God of power, not weakness. (13:08) A God of success, not failure.

A God who lifts up, not one who goes down into the dust with us. (13:17) Hitler was quoted as saying, Jesus is the God of the weak, but I am the God of the strong. (13:25) This is one reason Israel rejected him.

They wanted a warrior king like David to lead them, not a lowly person like Jesus. (13:35) And many of us do too. We look up to people that are strong, powerful, world leaders, people who could play sports at a high level or fight.

(13:47) Or maybe a great soldier. But Jesus, He didn't come as any of that. He came as a lowly person.

(13:56) Somebody who had no money, who was homeless even. But the gospel reverses everything. (14:05) The way up is down.

The way to see God is to look low. (14:11) The Church of Christ is called to be the community that looks low. (14:16) Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 1, 26-29, (14:22) Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called.

(14:28) Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many were influential. (14:34) Not many were of noble birth.

(14:38) But God chose the foolish things of the world, the weak things, the lowly things, the despised things. (14:45) So that no one may boast before Him. (14:50) When Alexander Campbell and Martin Stone pleaded for simple New Testament Christianity, (14:57) they were not just arguing about instruments and baptismal formula.

(15:03) They were saying, let's go back to the kind of church Jesus actually built. (15:08) One that looks like a bunch of fishermen, tax collectors, and repentant sinners. (15:16) Not a country club, but for the respectable.

(15:21) That's kind of what we are here. (15:23) None of us are, you know, I would say anything great in the world's eyes. (15:30) None of us have great awards or won the Nobel Peace Prize or is in the government or is a celebrity.

(15:42) That's what the early church was. Common people. (15:45) Even people that were rejected and despised, they hated tax collectors.

(15:52) You know, even Simon was a zealot that wanted to overthrow the government. (15:59) That's what the early church was made of. (16:03) James 2, 1-9, rebukes the sin of partiality.

(16:07) Giving the best seats to the rich men with gold rings while telling the poor men in shabby clothes, (16:13) stand there or sit on the floor by my footstool. (16:18) Do we do that? Do we play favorites to somebody who looks like they're better off or has money or is better educated? (16:28) How do we treat somebody if a homeless person comes in here? (16:32) I mean, I think we would treat them and we have. (16:35) We've had people come in here like that and we treat them fairly.

(16:39) We have to make sure we do. (16:42) Treat the low just as good as the high if not better. (16:48) That is the exact opposite of looking low enough when you choose to uplift and treat somebody better off.

(16:58) Even the Lord's Supper is a weekly reminder. (17:03) Every Sunday we share a tiny piece of cracker and a sip of grape juice. (17:08) Hardly a feast for kings.

(17:11) Yet in that humble meal we meet the crucified and risen Lord. (17:17) If we can meet Him there, surely we can meet Him in ordinary broken people. (17:23) Practical ways to get up low enough.

(17:26) When we gently restore the fallen instead of shaming them. (17:30) Galatians 6, 1. (17:32) How often if somebody makes a mistake do we shame them? (17:37) Do we talk about them? (17:38) Do we beat them down even more instead of lifting them back up? (17:44) We baptize a teenager from a broken home. (17:48) The recovering addict.

(17:50) The divorced person. (17:51) The ex-convict without whisper of their judgment. (17:55) We make sure the widow on food stamps feels just as welcome as the elder with the big farm.

(18:02) We take the gospel first to the trailer park and nursing home. (18:07) In county jail instead of waiting for better prospects. (18:12) When we visit a brother and sister in the psych ward and keep loving them.

(18:18) When medicine makes them shake. (18:22) We refuse to measure spirituality by bank accounts, education or zip codes. (18:30) Are we doing this? Are we going to the lower people like Jesus did? (18:35) Are we waiting for better prospects? (18:37) You know, we have a great video deal tech and engagement project with Scott.

(18:44) We talked about building relationships. (18:47) You know, meeting people. (18:49) It's the best way, you know, to lead them to Christianity.

(18:53) But who are we going to? (18:55) We don't just have to go to our neighbor that, you know, has a great job and is well educated or, you know, colleges or great places. (19:04) We could also go to the lowly. (19:07) That's where Jesus went.

(19:10) That's who he preached to. (19:13) The promise for those who look low enough. (19:18) Jesus promised.

(19:20) Truly, I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. (19:27) Matthew 25, 40. (19:30) And because Jesus looked low enough to go to the cross, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him a name above every name.

(19:39) Philippians 2, 9. (19:42) One day, the one who made himself low will return in glory. (19:48) And every person who is due to serve the least will be lifted up with him. (19:57) The same Lord who looked low enough to die for us while we were still sinners is the one who meets us today in the watery grave of baptism, in the nursing home, in the jail cell, and in the food pantry.

(20:12) If you have never obeyed the gospel, just Jesus looked low enough for you. (20:19) Will you look low enough to come to him? (20:21) If you are a believer who has forgotten how to look low and need the prayers and restoration of the church, now is the time to come forward.