

Escaping the Snare of Compare

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[0 : 00] Well, if you have a Bible, we are going to be in the Gospel of John this evening, John chapter 3. If you would turn there with me, please. The title of this evening is Escaping the Snare of Compare, and you'll see why I've called it that as we get into this passage.

As we get underway, I want to introduce you to three people. I want you to listen to their little stories, and I want you to tell me, what do these three people have in common with one another? Okay. We'll start off with Arthur.

Arthur is the kind of guy that you would want working for you. He is hardworking. He is meticulous in all that he does. He's reliable. He knows the business inside out, having worked there for many years. However, Arthur struggles.

He feels unappreciated by his managers. He's especially troubled by the fact that there are new recruits into the business, and they seem to get all the praise. They're celebrated for their contributions while he just seems to live in the shadows.

It doesn't seem fair. Second person is Bethany. Bethany is one of those super moms, I like to call them. They manage to juggle having children, a job, all the household responsibilities that they have to take care of, as well as being a taxi driver, getting multiple children to all the different places they need to be at the same time and not being late.

[1 : 14] My mother-in-law is like this. These people do really exist. And yet, Bethany, she feels it's just stressful, stressful, stressful. She looks at other moms, other families, and she thinks they make it look so easy.

And she worries, I'm not good enough. I'm not doing enough for my family. Then there's Charlie. Charlie is a tech genius. If something goes wrong with your computer, call Charlie. They'll fix it for you. They'll probably tell you, turn it off and on again, and that'll fix it.

Her Charlie being constantly connected to multiple platforms, social media-wise, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, you name it, Charlie's connected to it. And being exposed to that never-ending feed of other people's happy lives, happy stories, happy meals, just leaves Charlie feeling empty and inadequate.

Here's our three people, Arthur, Bethany, Charlie. What do you think they have in common? Well, they're all struggling with this thing, comparison. I like this picture.

I typed into Google Images, comparison, and this is what came up. I suspect the vast majority of us here this evening know something of the problem of comparisons in our lives. That's where we try to measure our identity and self-worth against how we're doing in comparison to how other people around us are doing.

[2 : 30] I have to confess to you this evening, I know this problem really well. I have a lot of experience with comparisons. Unfortunately, when you start playing the game of comparisons, you very rarely end up winning.

And even when you do win, it's short-lived. Because you will be left anxious, you'll be left looking over your shoulder, just waiting for the next person to come along who is in some way better than you, some way more competent than you, somehow more popular than you.

There's no way to win in the game of comparisons. What are we to do? If you recognize yourself in any of these three people, in what I just said there, what are we to do if we wrestle with this problem of comparisons?

Well, this evening, I think that John the Baptist is going to help us deal with this common struggle. Just as a little bit of context, in curbers, we've been working our way through John's gospel so far. This was a message that I was sharing two weeks ago.

At this time in Jesus' ministry, we're approaching what's called the year of popularity. This is the year whenever Jesus is doing really well. Everyone is flocking to see and hear Jesus. He is at the height of his ministry, if you like.

[3 : 35] But Jesus' rising stardom results in John the Baptist's becoming eclipsed. The question is, how will John and his disciples cope that as Jesus becomes greater and greater and greater, they become less and less and less?

Let's find out. Let's read the passage. Let's read verses 22 to 26 to get us started. Now, a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew for purification.

And they, that's John's disciples, came to John and said to him, Rabbi, he who is with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, look, he is baptizing and all are going out to him.

I wonder, did you hear in that passage, did you hear what John the Baptist's disciples said, how they are struggling with comparison? He is baptizing. That's our job.

And everybody's going to him. These guys, these are struggling. They're struggling. You hear the turmoil in their hearts in the words that they speak. John the Baptist's disciples' words here, I think, will help us to diagnose the problem of comparisons.

[5 : 12] I've got three quick thoughts to help us just diagnose this problem. And maybe it's helpful to think of comparison like a weed that grows in the soil of our hearts. And this weed of comparison, it often is rooted in pride.

Just put yourself in John the Baptist's disciples' shoes for a moment. John the Baptist appeared in the scene after 400 years of silence from heaven. Suddenly, he appears saying, the long-awaited Messiah is coming.

He's coming imminently. He's coming now. Get ready. Overnight, John the Baptist becomes a celebrity. Everybody is talking about him. In today's terms, if he had lived today, if he had ministered today, the TV camera crews would be following him everywhere he goes to report on his latest baptism crusade.

Thousands throughout the nation would be following him on Twitter, reading his every tweet. His book of collected sermons would reach the number one place in the Amazon bestseller list.

And I just imagine how it would feel if you were one of John the Baptist's hand-picked disciples. Just imagine if he picked you to be on his team. You see, the John the Baptist's disciples, they had this privilege of living life in the spotlight, on the national stage.

[6 : 20] They were at the center of all the attention. It was an exhilarating feeling for them.

However, all that began to change. The day whenever John met Jesus at the River Jordan.

Whenever John points to Jesus and says, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Because suddenly in that moment, the spotlight that John and his disciples have bathed in, that spotlight begins to shift and move over to Jesus and his disciples.

Why do John's disciples struggle with that so much? It's because their pride has been wounded and hurt by this. They feel the loss of their significance and their status.

As Jesus becomes more, they become less. And they don't like it. There's even a little hint of resentment here towards Jesus.

Because they won't even use his name. Did you hear, did you see how they will only use the pronoun he? All are going over to him. I wonder if you've ever felt that way.

[7 : 26] I know I have. Personally, in the past when I have seen my struggles with comparisons, I have tried to massage them a bit. I've tried to say, oh, these are my fears, my insecurities coming through.

I've tried to say this is a case of poor me. Have pity and compassion on poor, insecure, fearful me. Rather than wanting to actually admit that actually this is bad me.

This is something which I need to actually repent of rather than just simply excuse. But then fortunately, I have a friend who is able to say the things that most people don't say. You maybe have these people in your life.

And he came along to me one day and said, David, did you realize that your insecurities are actually just thwarted pride? Whew, that was hard, but it was true. So often our insecurities are evidence of thwarted pride.

That feeling, that little thing that we say to ourselves, that these people don't treat me. These people don't think of me the way that I know I ought to be treated. The way I know people should think of me.

[8 : 26] That's thwarted pride. And so often our insecurities come from that place. And so I have to confess to you this evening that a major reason why I compare myself with other people, for good or for ill, is because at heart I am a proud man.

And here's a piercing insight from C.S. Lewis about that kind of pride. He says, pride is essentially competitive. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man.

We say that people are proud of being rich or clever or good looking. But they are not. They are proud of being richer or cleverer or better looking than others.

If everyone else became equally rich or clever or good looking, there would be nothing to be proud about. It is the comparison that makes you proud. The pleasure of being above the rest.

C.S. Lewis is right, I think. So often our struggles of comparison begin here in the place of selfish pride. Then this weed of comparison, it grows.

[9 : 35] Grows into particular sins. Sins of envy and jealousy. And there is a subtle difference between these two sins. Let me paint it out for you. The sin of envy.

That is when you see someone who seems to be better than you in some way or someone who has an advantage over you in some way. And you wish that they didn't have it and you had it instead. That's envy.

I don't want them to have that. I want it instead. Jealousy, however, is a little bit different. It's related, but it's a little bit different. Jealousy is when you see someone and you become afraid that that person is going to become my rival.

That that person is going to become equal to me or superior to me in some way. So here are two sins that grow out of our comparisons and our pride. Jerry Bridges calls them respectable sins. Vices which he says we all too readily tolerate and excuse even in our Christian lives. And he's helpful the way he draws aside. He points out that we tend to compare ourselves with people who are similar to us in things that are significant to us.

[10 : 41] For example, take the example of a keen amateur sports person. Maybe we have some like that here this evening. Someone who plays for the local club, whether it's rugby or football or hockey or whatever it is.

This person is unlikely to struggle with comparing themselves with someone in the top league. Someone who's out there playing for their nation. They're probably not going to struggle too much because they're just so far apart.

They might do the same sport, but they are leagues apart. However, when someone else joins their local team and this person suddenly is more popular and this person seems to be more skillful than they are.

That's when they're going to start to struggle with comparisons because that team and their place in that team, that is significant to them. This is too close for home. And so the game of comparisons begin.

The sins of envy begin. Oh, I wish they didn't have that skill. I wish I had it instead. Oh, I'm afraid that this person is going to become my rival, that they are going to become equal to me.

[11 : 40] Everyone's going to love them as much as they love me. In fact, that people are going to love him more than they love me. The sins of envy and jealousy start here. And it's interesting that Jerry Bridges says this because that's precisely what's happening here with John's disciples.

Now that their ministry is overlapping with Jesus's ministry. You see, people used to come to John, the Baptist disciples, to be baptized. That was significant to them.

And now Jesus's disciples, they're the ones that people go to to be baptized. And that hurts. Jesus's disciples are now their rivals.

And they wish that the success now being enjoyed by Jesus's disciples was theirs instead. You see, John's disciples, they're struggling with these sins of envy and jealousy. They're becoming consumed by what Shakespeare called the green-eyed monster.

You read Othello? You watched Othello ever? It's an incredible play. I can't believe I'm saying that from school. Fifth year at school in English. It's about the only thing that ever went into my head in English. I remember Othello and this particular phrase really striking home with me.

[12 : 47] It's actually the villainy Iago who says it. Beware of jealousy. Beware the green-eyed monster that mocks the meat upon which it doth feed.

Right, Shakespeare. You see, these sins of envy and jealousy, they will gnaw away at you from the inside. They will twist you. They will brew venom inside of you that will just make you bitter against anyone and everyone who is a threat to you.

These are dangerous, dangerous sins that grow out of our struggles with comparison. These are not things that we should tolerate and allow to fester in our lives because they will ruin us in various ways. They will steal our joy in the Lord and our happiness in him.

Well, this weed of comparison, it begins, it has its roots in pride. It grows into these sins of envy and jealousy. But one last wee thing is that this is the weed of comparison. It is fed, it is watered by a lie. You see, beneath our sins of jealousy and envy, there is always a lie that we are believing to be true. This is a lie that says that other people are happier than us because God has given them something which he has withheld from us.

[13:57] And that's not fair. There is this lie that God has not been good. He has given them something that we should have as well. God has been unfair. God has not been good.

This is the lie that goes all the way back to the garden. And this is the lie that so often we struggle with whenever we're struggling with comparisons. That God has deprived us of happiness. So that's the problem.

That is the snare of compare. If that's the snare, the question then is, well, what's the way to escape the snare of compare?

Let me suggest to you that the antidote to this poison is in the words of John the Baptist that this passage continues with. And John, very simply, he takes his disciples from looking around them and looking at themselves.

And he lifts up their eyes so they would look at the Lord and see themselves and see their circumstances in a whole new light. To help you remember what John says next, I've got an A, B and a C to escape the snare of compare.

[15:00] The first one, the A, is acknowledge that God is sovereign. This is what John begins saying in verse 27. John answered, a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.

Rather than entertain the lie that God has been unfair, that God has not been good to him and his disciples, John immediately begins to remind his disciples that they have a small but a significant part in God's great plans, his sovereign plans.

In essence, here he's saying when he says that no one can receive one thing unless it is given to him from heaven, he's saying that, guys, our ministry, our successes, that was a gift from God. And now Jesus and his disciples, their ministry, their successes, that's a gift from God.

We've all received gifts from God. None of us have been shortchanged here. None of us have been treated unfairly. God has been generous. God has been kind. God has used us at this time for his purposes.

And now these guys, God's using them sovereignly for the next stage of the plan. Let's rejoice and celebrate what God is doing. Let's not get hung up over the fact that he's using them rather than using us.

[16:05] In essence, I think that is what John is trying to get into his disciples' minds. Now, maybe you're thinking that's easy for John the Baptist to say, to acknowledge that God is sovereign in these things.

Maybe you're thinking to yourself, well, I'm not John the Baptist. My life, my ministry wasn't predicted hundreds of years in advance by the prophet Isaiah. I didn't have an angel announced to my parents that I was going to be born miraculously.

It's easy for John to know that he has a part in God's sovereign plans and you've got all that going for you. Nevertheless, I do want you to know this evening that you do have a part to play in God's sovereign plans.

When you look at your life, when you look at your natural talents, your spiritual gifts, your resources, your opportunities, your strengths, your weaknesses, all of these things, they are gifts to you from God.

Jesus, John says it here in verse 27, that you have nothing unless it is a gift that's come down from God. None of these things are accidental in your life. None of these things belong to you outright.

[17:04] All of these things are God's gifts to you, which he has given to you on loan to use for his glory, for his purposes. It's true not just for what you have.

It's also true for what the person sitting next to you has. They also have that on loan from God. It doesn't belong to them. It's not theirs. It is on loan to them from God to use for his glory.

Jerry Bridges, again, is very helpful. He says, we must remind ourselves that God determines what abilities we have, but also the degree of those abilities and the blessing he will bestow on their use. Does it ever annoy you whenever you and a friend or someone in church who is very much like you, they have, you both are good at similar things, just that they're better than you? They just seem to do it more easily, to have more success.

And it just annoys you like, why, why are they always so much better than me? That is also part of God's sovereign decision. In the Christian sphere, just think a month ago, Billy Graham went to glory.

[18:12] There is a man who dedicated his life to faithful evangelistic service. I think he preached in over 200 countries around the world in his time. I think he spoke to over 215 million people live and shared the gospel with them.

Incredible. I also know, I was at a wee church in Fife this morning preaching and I heard that a man called Donald Cormack had passed away. Some of you might know Donald.

Donald was in the Heralds, an evangelistic band that went around to the central parts of Scotland, I think in the 60s and 70s. Maybe I've got my times wrong, forgive me if you know better. Donald was on the BBC.

They were well known. They shared the gospel everywhere they went. And Donald on Thursday went home to glory. Donald was faithful all his life. Into his latter years, he was involved with us at Corroboros and various evangelistic work.

But Donald didn't preach to 215 million people. Donald didn't have the kind of success that Billy Graham had. But Donald was just as faithful as Billy Graham was in his life and his ministry and his integrity and his preaching.

[19:13] What did he make of that? Well, God is sovereign. God sovereignly gave Billy that ministry. God sovereignly gave Donald that ministry. And God has received both of them now home into glory and said, well done, my good and faithful servants.

Inherit the kingdom. Well done. So it can be for us. John the Baptist would counsel us, I think, to stop worrying about what other people have. To trust God simply with what he has gifted us and to use it for his glory.

Trusting and believing that our greatest good, our highest joy will be found in our relationship with God. Rather than in the gifts that God may give or may withhold from us individually.

That's what we have to believe. We have to acknowledge that God is sovereign in giving us gifts and talents and abilities and successes. That's A. Then B.

B is. Be who God has made you uniquely to be. I almost fear that I sound like some sort of self-help preacher. But forgive me. I don't mean to. But here we are.

[20:16] Verses 28 to 30. John continues. You yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ. But I have been sent before him. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom.

The friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase.

But I must decrease. I really wish I find it as easy as John the Baptist to get out the pom-poms and do it to celebrate when somebody is surpassing me and outshining me.

But in these verses I think John gives us an insight into the secret of his contentment. The secret of his security as a person. See John knows who he is and who he's not. John knows what he's been called to do and God knows what John knows what he's not been called to do.

If we start with the negative what John isn't. Negatively John reminds his disciples I am not the Christ. I am not the Messiah. Can't help but read those words and think about how I often read the newspaper in the morning and I begin to read about things happening in our country.

[21:25] Things in the world. And I begin to despair. I care about these things. I feel them deeply. And then as I get myself riled up and like oh what are they thinking? What are they doing? I have to remind myself David you're not the Prime Minister.

There. To which I then can get on with my cornflakes and my cup of tea and be quite relaxed and happy that I'm not the Prime Minister. Because my goodness what a difficult and thankless task that is these days. I wonder if John the Baptist when he says to his disciples I'm not the Christ.

I'm not the Messiah. Whether he says it with a grin on his face. Knowing thank goodness I'm not the Messiah. You see John knows the scriptures. John knows what the job description for the Messiah is. It's atoning for sin.

Reconciling heaven and earth. Defeating evil and injustice. Bringing the nations back to God.

Sounds like hard work. Oh. It's enough to keep you lying awake at night.

But not John. Yes John is wrapped up in his what is it camel hair. He's been eating his locusts and honey all day. But no I think John sleeps well at night. I think he goes to bed and switches off like a light.

[22 : 26] Because John knows that he is not the Messiah. None of these things are his responsibility. John knows who he's not. I'm not the Christ. You know it's really futile to compare yourself with other people.

It's like comparing apples and oranges. They're both fruit but they're different. God likes apples apparently. That's why he made them. God likes oranges. That's why he made them. But you can't compare them.

They're just different. And God didn't make you like somebody else. He made you like you. He likes them like them. He likes you like you. And you're not them. Be who God has made you uniquely to be.

That's the negative side. But also there's a positive side in what John says. John goes on and he says that he is the friend of the bridegroom. You'd be forgiven for wondering why on earth has John jumped to talking about weddings?

Well in the Old Testament the relationship between God and Israel is often pictured as a relationship between a husband and a wife. Indeed a faithful husband and a faithless adulterous wife.

[23 : 29] Later in the New Testament the relationship of Jesus and his church is also pictured in the same way. And I think here there is a little throwaway reference to the divinity of Jesus. This is the identity of Jesus. He is God.

He's in that place. He's the groom. He's the husband. But John's point is not to make a point about Jesus' identity in this point. His main point is actually trying to correct his disciples for having forgotten that the wedding is Jesus' big day.

Not John's big day. Sometimes you hear stories about young women who are getting married and they receive this unfortunate label of being a bridezilla. Have you heard of that phrase?

Have you come across that? A bridezilla. She's just got a little bit carried away with all the preparations and has turned on her friends and got rather bossy. Well I want to introduce a new phrase to you this evening.

And it is a best manzilla. Now a best manzilla, it's new. I appreciate that. So let me paint the picture for you of what a best manzilla is like. He shows up to the wedding service and he upstages the bride and groom.

[24 : 30] He is wearing a neon yellow bright jumpsuit. That's what he's wearing. Totally upstages the bride in her lovely white dress. Then when it's reception time and the official photographs are being taken, he photobombs all the official pictures.

That means that he's jumping in the background. He's getting in the way. He's doing wee things behind people's heads. It's just an absolute mess. And then at the end of the reception, the best manzilla runs off with and kidnaps the bride.

Right. It's unthinkable. You're laughing because that's not the role of the best man. That sounds like the role of the worst man you could possibly imagine. And I think John wants us to know that he is not like a best manzilla.

John the Baptist knows his role in all of these things. He says, this is not my wedding. My job and my delight is to introduce the bride to her husband. I am here to witness God be married to his people.

And Jesus, the groom, he must increase. It's his day. And I'm just simply his best man to introduce the bride. He must increase. I must decrease.

[25 : 39] Verse 30. So that's the two sides of this. That there's the negative, I'm not the Messiah, but I am the best man at this wedding. For us, there's this danger that when we get consumed with comparing ourselves with others, that we waste our energy.

We waste our lives worrying about who we're not and who God's not made us to be. Again, Jerry Bridges puts it well. He says, we should realize that if we spend emotional energy on envy or jealousy, we lose sight of what God might uniquely do in our lives.

God made you the way he made you for a purpose. He has work for you to do that no one else can do. And when you worry about what other people are doing for him, you're not getting on with doing what he's given you to do.

That's a waste, a tragic waste. You are no accident. Rather, the Bible declares you are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do.

And so let me urge you this evening, worry less about what other people have been made to be and what other people have been called to do. And get on with being who God made you uniquely to be. Because that's no accident.

[26 : 52] That's his plan. So A, acknowledge that God is sovereign. B, be who God has made you uniquely to be. Then C, celebrate that God gives us everything in Christ.

This is the final six verses. This chapter ends with a series of comparisons. Ironic, but there are some comparisons in this passage. And John really here is trying to teach his disciples why it is that Jesus must increase and he and they must decrease.

I want to just run through these comparisons at lightning pace and really stick close to some real raw application for our lives. The first comparison is all about where Jesus comes from, verse 31. He who comes from above is above all. He who is off the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.

Here John's saying Jesus is from heaven. And I, John the Baptist, I am from earth. Simple comparison. Where they've come from. What I draw from this for application-wise for us is that whatever you have or don't have, when you have Jesus, you have someone, something which is greater than anything else you'll find in this world because he's from above.

[28 : 10] That's where he's come from. When you have him, you have something better than anything else in this world. Next comparison is to do with who Jesus is in verses 32 to 34.

John continues, There's a lot packed in there, but really all John is saying is that John, he himself, he's just a messenger from God.

But Jesus is the living word of God. He is the one who is uniquely filled with the spirit of God. And so what Jesus has to say about you, what Jesus thinks of you, that is more important than what anyone else says of you in this world.

More important than what anyone else thinks of you in this world. Jesus is the living word of God. What he says about you is what God says about you. There is no higher court. There is no higher authority. There is no higher opinion than what God has to say.

And what God has to say about you in Christ by his spirit. That's the most important thing about you. And thirdly, there's this next comparison to finish off the chapter, verses 35 to 36.

[29 : 26] The father loves the son and has given all things into his hand. Whoever believes in the son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the son shall not see life.

But the wrath of God remains on him. This comparison is all to do with what Jesus gives. The theology here is that when John says that the father has given all things into the son's hand, that is saying that the father has entrusted all the authority of his kingdom into the hands of Jesus, his son, his appointed ruler.

Jesus is, if you like, the judge. He is the one who will decide the final verdict on your life, whether it is eternal life in heaven, whether it is eternal destruction in hell.

Jesus is the one who is God's appointed judge. Life in his kingdom or life or death outside of his kingdom. And it's interesting here that John finishes with taking us to think about judicial things, things in God's courtroom.

Because when we start playing with comparisons, what we're doing is we're putting ourselves in the courtroom. We're putting ourselves on trial. And here's a phenomenally helpful insight from Tim Keller about this.

[30 : 38] He writes in his little book, The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness. The problem of self-esteem, whether it is high or low, is that every single day we are in the courtroom.

And everything we do is providing evidence for the prosecution or evidence for the defense. Some days we feel we are winning the trial. On other days we feel we are losing it.

Do you ever feel that way? No, I do. The code goes on. But the trial is over for the Christian. They are out of the courtroom because the ultimate verdict is in.

Jesus went into the courtroom. It was an unjust trial in a kangaroo court. He faced a trial that should be ours so that we do not have to face any more trials.

And so we simply need to ask God to accept us because of what Jesus has done. Then the only person whose opinion counts looks at me and he finds me more valuable than all the jewels in the earth.

[31 : 46] What does Jesus give? Jesus brings an end to the trial. Brings an end to your ordeal in court. You can find your ultimate security in Jesus because life and death, salvation or condemnation, eternity in heaven or hell, it doesn't hinge upon you.

It doesn't hinge upon your performance. It hinges entirely on Jesus and his performance for you on the cross. So I think the application here is quite simple.

It's quite simple, quite straightforward. Lord, we want to escape the snare of compare them. We need to stop worrying about the successes and the abilities that God has given to other people. But rather, we just need to celebrate that when we have Christ, we have received everything that we need. Anything that we could need now and forever. When you have Jesus, you have everything you need.

Therefore, we should celebrate. This celebration, I believe, is the antidote to the poison of comparison. So you go, there's an ABC from John the Baptist on how to escape the snare of compare, to acknowledge that God is sovereign, to be who God has made you uniquely to be, and to celebrate that when you have Christ, you have everything.

[33 : 00] Now, if you folks here at Brunsfield or anything like my folks at Corubbers, then they'll often say, well, that all sounds great, but what's the one thing? What's the one thing you want me to walk out of this place this evening with? And if I may, can I give you one thing, an old piece of advice tried and tested from an old dead friend up in Dundee, Robert Murray McShane, who would often counsel people in his church when they came to him struggling with things like this.

And he told them, for every look at self, take 10 looks at Christ. Can I challenge you this week to try that? That when you've caught yourself, when you find yourself starting to go to that place of, oh, they're better than me.

Oh, I'm better than them. Would you catch yourself? And for that look at self, would you start taking 10 looks at the Lord Jesus and who he is and all that he has done for you and all that you have in him?

You see, earlier we met Arthur at work, feeling out Sean by his younger colleagues. We met Bethany at home, feeling inadequate as a working mom. We met Charlie, who feels insecure by their consumption of social media.

And for each of them, for each of us here this evening, the antidote to the snare of compare. It's for every look at self to take 10 looks at Christ, to look more at him, that he might become greater.

[34 : 18] You would celebrate that he becomes greater and that you would become less in comparison. You're not threatened by the fact that Jesus becomes greater and you become less because whenever you have faith in the Lord Jesus, when you look to him and you have faith in him, you are united with him and his destiny.

You know all that he is and you receive the father's song that's sung over you, just as it was him at his baptism by John. Behold, you are my son. Dare I say, behold, you are my daughter with whom I'm well pleased.

May Jesus become greater in your life this week. Look to him and know the father sings his song of love over you. Let's pray. Father, there are so many songs that we hear in this world.

We turn on the radio and they're blasted at us. We walk down the street and we hear people walking past us with their music players on, loud. And we can hear the words and the music, the beat coming out.

We turn on televisions and we watch and we hear things and we see things. And yet we thank you that there is a voice that sounds above them all that tells us that we are your beloved children with whom you're well pleased in the Lord Jesus.

[35 : 33] We thank you that you've made each one of us uniquely, deliberately, intentionally. We thank you for your many gifts you've given us in our lives. Forgive us for the many times that we are not content with what you've given us and we'd much rather have what someone else seems to have.

Forgetting that they're probably looking at us thinking just the same thing. Father, I pray that you would deliver us from this snare of compare that causes us to waste our lives, to waste our emotional energies, to waste our time.

And instead that by looking to Jesus and enjoying the freedom that comes by your spirit, that we would be able to live our lives more fully for you, more usefully for your kingdom.

And for your name's sick this week, help us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.