

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

SHADOW MEN | REAL MAN. GOOD MAN. GOD'S MAN.

AARON BROCKETT | JUNE 9, 2024

Good to be with everybody today across all of our locations and anybody who may be joining us online. In fact, if you're joining us in this message series later in the week, we're just so glad that you decided to tune in.

And if you have a Bible or a device with a Bible on it, go ahead and meet me in two passages of Scripture that we're going to walk through together. The first is found in Ecclesiastes, chapter 6. That's about half way through your Old Testament. And then the second passage is Romans, chapter 5. That's in the New Testament. So those are the two passages we're going to walk through together today.

Before we get rolling, next weekend is Father's Day, so I just want to encourage you to be back for Father's Day. I know how this works. I've been around long enough to know that on Mother's Day typically we go to Moms and we say, "What do you want to do?" They say, "I want to go to church and then brunch."

If we go to Dads and we say, "What do you want to do on Father's Day?" "I want to sleep in and play golf." I understand how that kind of works. But I want to encourage you to come back on Father's Day because we have a special guest speaker.

A guy by the name Pastor Cam Huxford from Savannah, Georgia is going to be with us. And Cam has been faithfully leading his church for over four decades. He's going to be retiring from that role in ministry in September of this year.

We just need to celebrate that because we hear a lot of examples of leaders who crash and burn, but Cam is finishing the race well. And airplanes that land safely rarely make the news. So, we just need to champion and celebrate that.

Cam has so much sage wisdom and counsel. He has been one of the voices that has mentored and pastored me from a distance over the past decade. So, I'm going to be here next weekend to introduce him and I'm going to be sitting on the front row taking notes because I know that Cam's going to have a word for us. And I want to invite you back to hear it.

We are in week number two of a series we started last week. So, if you're just now joining us, if you didn't catch the message last week, you need to go back and get that



message because, really it was laying the framework out for where we are headed in this series.

And if you don't know any of the content of what we are talking about, if you didn't get last week's message, but you know what the subject is, you hear the title of this series, Real Man, Good Man, God's Man but you don't know anything else, I'm just going to go out on a limb and say that perhaps that title or the subject of this series has sparked some questions.

Or, maybe it has even evoked some sort of emotional response within you. Maybe it's confused you, angered you, or triggered you. And I would say that if it has done any of that, that's precisely why we need to talk about this.

See, while this series is about men, it is not exclusively or explicitly for men. And here's the big reason why. You all know this. You just need to be reminded. Men and women are not silos. We're connected. Our lives overlap. The way that we think and behave and talk affects the other. So, we cannot talk about one without the other.

And the primary recipients of a series like this should be women and children and society and the church because there is a crisis of masculinity in our world today. At the root of the crisis is just simply this: Men don't know who they are and they don't know what they should be or if it's even allowed. And that word, unfortunately, becomes a trigger word for many because we've made the poor, sinful behavior of some men synonymous with the term masculine.

Before this series got started I had a handful of people who knew what it was about come up to me and say, "Man, are we really going to talk about that in church?" And I'm like, "Why wouldn't we? It's a Bible word."

In the creation account that we looked at last week we talked about God created them male and female. So, this crisis is impacting all of us, and particularly the generation of young men coming up behind us, with devastating consequences. And it will only further negatively impact women and children, society, and the mission of the church. I want to be so clear on this. There is such a thing as masculine strength. It may or it may not be what you would think or what comes to mind. And there is such a thing as feminine strength. One is not better than the other. The strengths of both manifest themselves in different ways. And this is key: both of the strengths image the character and likeness of God.

We oftentimes confuse what it means to be a man or a woman to what we might call gender stereotypes that are really curated by the cultural trends that we are in. And



cultural trends oftentimes code things male and female—it's not biblical, it's just reflected by cultural trends that change.

What are you talking about? Let me give you an example—100 years ago blue was associated with the feminine, and pink was associated with masculine. Did you know that? Some of you... I actually googled this yesterday because I knew as soon as I said it some of you would google it.

You take a Bible example. You take a guy by the name of David who was a masculine King. He was a warrior. He was a general. He also wrote music, played the harp, and danced around half naked with his buddies while praising God. You've got a feminine figure like Deborah who was a warrior leader who led Israel into battle.

So, what's feminine and what's masculine? Well, both strengths manifest the image and the glory of God. Here's the tragic thing. When we follow the secular or the moralistic script, we turn the genders against one another or we make gender roles a competition and both lose.

Last week we looked at God's original design that both would image Him. And in the creation account we find the plural pronoun them mentioned over and over again. God created them male and female. God created and gave them dominion over all of His creation. And here's what that meant. Men and women were intended to rule and to reign alongside one another and alongside of God over His creation. We were royalty, man. Kings and queens. So, what happened? Well, we said this last week. Satan tempted us not with an enticing piece of fruit, Satan tempted us by getting us to focus on the one thing we didn't have and to overlook all of the things that we did have.

God placed the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the middle of the garden (not in the back) where we walked through all of the abundance of what God had already given us. And we focused on the one thing that we didn't have over the things that we did. And we're still doing it today. We do it every day in our lives and we do it with the genders. As a result, we lost our throne.

Now, as we said last week, the virus invaded the software and now we are all broken images of what God intended. That's the bad news. But the good news has to be louder than the bad news. And here's the good news. When Jesus went to the cross and He entered into a grave and He defeated death and was resurrected.

That wasn't a cool party trick. When Jesus walked out of the grave, that was Him beginning to usher in the coming of His eternal kingdom. In other words, the redemption, the restoration of everything that has gone wrong.

So if you grew up in a church... If you have some sort of an idea that heaven is where you kind of float up out of your body onto the clouds and you wear a diaper and play a harp, you've got the wrong idea. It's not us going to heaven, it's heaven coming to us. The kingdom of God is the restoration of His good creation that has been shattered by sin.

This is what that means. If you've given your life to Jesus, you are saved not just from something, you were saved for something. Jesus has given you a mission and a calling and a purpose.

Have you noticed that most of society is running after two things? Identity and a sense of purpose. "I'm looking for an identity." So, we will search and search and search to find an identity in anything. An identity in our bank account. An identity in our career. An identity in sports. An identity in relationships. An identity in sexuality.

We were never meant to find our identity in those things. Those things are good things. They are never the center of our identity. We're all looking for a purpose. We're all looking for a mission. And when we don't have a purpose and a mission, then idle hands find themselves doing destructive things.

God has called you—not to be saved from something, to be saved for it, which means you joining Him in beginning to usher in His kingdom coming.

All of the topics that are so divisive in the world, if we don't realize that, if we're not reading off of the biblical script, if Christians are still reading off of the secular or the moral script, the church divides and it takes us off mission and gets men and women to turn on each other in the process. And the church has got to speak to this and it's got to model a way forward when the secular and the moral scripts have gone bankrupt. I want to be so clear, man. Masculine isn't any better than feminine and feminine isn't any better than masculine. That's just silly. When both are thriving and stepping into God's best for them, that's better.

Adam's apathy hurt Even and he just leaves her high and dry. Then his aggression hurt her even more. If you were here last week, I just said that the core sin of a man is that he ping pongs back and forth, oftentimes within the same day, between apathy and aggression. And when men abrogate their masculine responsibility—that's a better word for it, not superiority, responsibility—or they get aggressive with it, then women and children bear the burden and the pain of that.

And when women shame, emasculate, or cancel any form of masculinity, then men will respond to that. They will just get defensive, controlling, will shut down, or medicate. Just like anybody, men live up to or down to the expectations that are placed upon them.

Really, what I want to drive at today is: What does it mean to be a man? Most men, not all, most men have these three little destructive words said to them somewhere in their adolescents. And I think it was coming from the place of being well-meaning or whatever, but it really created a wound within us: Be a man.

And then there was no follow up. We didn't know what that meant. We weren't given a definition. It wasn't modeled for us. Here's the most important thing—we were never appropriately initiated into it. Now we can't blame our dads for all of that because, likely, they weren't initiated or given a model or a definition either.

The Bible has a term for that process. It's called generational sin. Just like all generational sin, it's this idea that the sins of the father affect the ongoing generations. So, because we didn't have a good example, we're like, "Okay, be a man," then we kind of filled in the blank and we thought that it meant something like this: stuff your feelings, turn off your emotions, don't be a sissy, don't cry—be a real man. So, we just kind of filled in the blank of whatever male model was in front of us.

Most of the time that was not a good model or behavior to pattern our lives after. As a result, maybe we ended up hurting other people or other women. And as to be expected, the result has been a very understandable but a misguided backlash against any form of masculinity, making the term nearly synonymous with the word toxic. In other words, cancelled for just being a man.

So, what we've got to do is we've got to get ourselves back to, "Okay, what was God's original intent for being a man?"

Last week we looked at 1 Kings, chapter 2, verse 2. David is on his death bed. He's giving a blessing to his son, Solomon, handing off his throne. And he says to his son: "Take courage and be a man." 1 Kings 2:2b (NLT)

And if you were here, I said that's awesome, what does that mean? We're just trying to fill in the blanks. But if we go to the very next verse, David actually explains to Solomon what he means. He says I want you to:

"Observe the requirements of the LORD your God, and follow all his ways." 1 Kings 2:3a (NLT)

Here's the word for that: maturity.

Now, clearly this verse applies to everyone regardless of gender. David is not contrasting man to a woman; he's contrasting mature to immature. So, he's encouraging his son, Solomon, to grow up into spiritual maturity.

We were made in the image of God. And then, I've used this analogy before, our identity, our soul, you as a person, if we were to equate that to a window pane or a mirror—sin is the rock that went hurtling through that and it shattered the image of God within us. Now, when you gave your life to Jesus (this should hopefully be reassuring to you, or maybe the Good News that would get you to cross that line), when you are saved, your conversion happens in an instant. It's a moment.

Most of us think, "Well, I've got to attend church for a while, I've got to know some stuff, I've got to clean my life up, I've got to graduate into salvation. No you don't. The only thing that you have to recognize is that you are a sinner and Jesus has saved you from your sins.

You've given your life to Him and the Holy Spirit enters into you and it says that at that moment the Holy Spirit seals your salvation. There is no probationary period, it's not like, "I'm kind of in. I'm kind of out." No, you are saved from day one.

And then, from that day forward, you are taking steps—this process is where you are being reformed. The shattered image of God is reformed into the image and likeness of God. The Bible word for that is discipleship.

That's what we running after, man. That you would give your life to Jesus. It doesn't matter what you've been through, what you've done, where you're from—Jesus, His grace covers over all. You cannot out sin the grace of God. Just go ahead and try. Some of you have. You can't. You can't do it.

If you give your life to Jesus... Now, here's the problem. We've got a lot of Christians who receive that and then they just became religious. Where it's just like, "Well, I'm just going to go to church when I can. Follow some rules. And pray to the big Man upstairs." There is no ongoing relationship. There is no being reimaged into the likeness of God. Or, we've got some Christians who said they gave their life to Jesus but they are still reading off of the secular script and it's called progressive Christianity.

So, you've got the secular script or the moralistic script which short circuits the biblical script and what it is that Jesus died for us to have.



I want you to understand the kind of church that you are in right now. We are unapologetically trying to grow as wide as we can. Why? Because people are hurting and hopeless and they need the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Now, we don't have this grandiose view of ourselves like we're the only church. By no means. There are all kinds of Bible teaching, Jesus centered churches all over our city that are trying to lead people to Jesus. We need everybody in the game doing the best that they can because the darkness in society is really dark.

But we're not just trying to grow wide; we're trying to go deep. I have zero interest in growing a big church of people who just come and consume a sermon or a religious good in service, but their lives are unchanged. I don't want to grow wide and shallow. I want to grow wide and just deep as we are wide.

Here's why.

I'll stop long enough to catch my breath and for you to clap.

So, here's why. We've done that thing where we... I don't think that anybody intentionally means to do this, but we just draw crowds and then we have a crisis like COVID happen and 30 percent of the people bail because they weren't disciples, they were just coming to watch something or consume something.

I want you to grow just as deep as we grow wide. And the word for that is discipleship—men and women who are serious about being reimaged into the character and likeness of God.

So, what does it mean to do that? Well, here's what we know about God. Among many other things, God is all powerful.

A term that we oftentimes associate, sometimes unfairly, with masculine because women can be all powerful as well. He's also compassionate and loving. Unfairly, we oftentimes label that to the feminine. But men can be compassionate and loving as well.

So, you take two brothers like Esau and Jacob in the Old Testament. I don't know if you are familiar with their story or not, but Esau was considered kind of like a man's man. He was an outdoorsman. He was a hunter. He was rough, hairy, and a favorite of his father. And then you've got his brother, Jacob, and the Bible describes him as a quiet, gentle one who preferred the indoors. Genesis 25:27 says that he was content to stay at home among the tents, which meant that he was a momma's boy.

There is nothing wrong with being a momma's boy. I'm a momma's boy. In fact, my mom lives in a different time zone and she watches me preach online before she goes to her church. So, "Hi, momma."

There is nothing wrong with any of that. Here's the thing. Scripture never presents Jacob as less masculine than Esau with those traits. In fact, just the opposite. God honored Jacob by making him a patriarch of the Hebrew nation, bestowing on him the name of Israel.

You go to the New Testament. In the New Testament, the gifts of the Spirit are not divided by gender. Prophecy and teaching are not masculine. Mercy and service are not feminine.

The greatest man who ever lived, Jesus Christ, describes Himself as gentle and humble in heart. Jesus was a gentle man who also overturned tables in the Temple. Jesus is the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God.

So, being a man is not all about power nor is it all about being tender, rather it's a combination of those things and the word for that is meek, which, I don't know about you, probably doesn't sound very exciting to you. The Bible says that the meek shall inherit the earth. And we badly misunderstand what meek means.

In fact, I think the Oxford Dictionary just royally butchers this. Here's the definition of meekness in the Oxford Dictionary, and if you notice, it says: the factored condition of being meek, submissiveness. Here's the example they give: All of his best friends make fun of him for his meekness.

No wonder we don't want men who desire to be meek because we equate meekness with being weak or timid and we don't want to be weak or timid or soft, we want to be strong and bold and sensitive.

But the actual meaning of the word meek is quite surprising. I want to show this to you. The word meek in English comes from the old Norse word, and I don't even know if I'll be able to fully pronounce it mjukr. I don't know. I don't know if it really matters. A fuller understanding of this word, we actually trace this to the Greek origins of it, it's the word praus. None of that is really all that relevant.

Here's what both of those words mean, and I think this is one of the best definitions of a godly man: strength under control. Strength that is submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.



In ancient Greece, war horses were trained to be meek. Strong and powerful yet under control and willing to submit.

And the answer to men who behave badly or have given in to their sinful patterns is not to shame all men; it is to call those men under the submission of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

A couple of months ago, many of you saw the eclipse. I don't know about you guys, but I drastically underestimated how cool the eclipse would be. Anybody with me? I was like, "I don't know, this would be kind of cool." It was so cool.

We were out in our back yard watching with our girls and I just was not prepared for it. I don't know what I was thinking. I'd seen pictures and images of it. I just wasn't prepared for it.

And as soon as the moon fully eclipsed the sun it was as if we were on some sort of multiverse or something. Everything just seemed different. There were these shadows that got cast. It was really eerie and creepy. And the temperature cooled a little bit. And it was like, "I know the sun is there, but it's blocked out from what I know the sun to be." I want to tell you that that's actually a pretty good description of the fall. We oftentimes blame the bad things that happen in this world on God, when God is there all along; it's just that Satan has eclipsed Him with the things that God never intended. As a result, we are all currently, right now, in the shadows and it is a shadow of what God intended. What God is asking is for redeemed men and women to begin to see things with kingdom lenses. The author of Ecclesiastes makes reference to this. It says: "There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind." Ecclesiastes 6:1 (ESV)

And you go on down to verse 12 and it says:

"For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?" Ecclesiastes 6:12 (ESV)

So you take a guy like Peter who was one of Jesus' most devoted disciples, part of Jesus' inner circle. Just look at what Peter got a chance to witness. Peter witnessed Jesus raise people from the dead, walk on water, cast out demons—he had court side seats to Jesus' transformation on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Yet, Peter, having all of those experiences denied Jesus three times. How could he do that after seeing so much light? Here's how. Satan positioned something between Peter and Jesus that distorted his vision. His fear eclipsed his faith and he faltered. And that's how it happens every time.



You go to the Old Testament with a guy named David. David, after all God had done for him and through him to defeat Goliath and hand him the kingdom... David had it all. He knew where those blessings came from. He was passionate about God's Word and will. And yet, here's where David made a mistake. David was a king who should have been in battle, on mission and purpose with his men. But he stayed back at home.

And David ends up seeing a woman bathing on a rooftop and all of the perspective that he had on God disappeared. All of his zeal and loyalty to God was blocked out by the one thing that he didn't have, even though he had everything else.

The light to his feet and the lamp to his path were put out by passion as the shadow of sin fell over his heart. And David allowed the light of God to be eclipsed by the shadow of lust.

And what Satan did against those two individuals, Satan is gunning to do to you and to me as well. In our pride we go, "Uh, that will never happen to me." And that's what everybody who has ever fallen has said.

Satan, right now, is trying to eclipse the goodness and the light of Jesus Christ in your life to where all you see are the shadows and you blame God and blame other people. Jesus would warn Peter of this in Luke 22. This is right before Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. He said:

"Simon, Simon," which is another name for Peter, "Satan has asked..."

That's a really interesting word there. If you know the Old Testament story of Job, where God and Satan kind of get into a bargaining conversation about the faith of Job, this sounds strikingly similar. He's like:

"Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. But I have pleaded in prayer," in other words, Jesus has prayed for us, John 17, "for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned..."

And that's what those words mean, repentance means to turn it doesn't just mean, "I'm sorry."

"...to me again," here's the key word, "strengthen your brothers." Luke 22:31-32 (NLT) Which means fighting against Satan is not something you can do alone. In fact, if he wants to gets you to falter he'll get you alone. He'll just isolate you.

And it's undoubted that right now we are facing an epidemic of lonely men. Are there lonely women? You bet there are. But there are men that... I would just venture to say that men and women both need relationships. It's just that women know how to do it better than us. And so we get isolate and alone.



One of the world's largest studies conducted by Harvard University followed a group of men around for almost 80 years—that's crazy—to find out what made them happy. Researchers discovered that the most important factor for male happiness and health was not: fame, wealth, social class, or professional achievement. Overwhelmingly, the key factor in male mental health—get this—is close, loving relationships. So, apparently men and women aren't that different after all.

Men are created for relationships; it's just that we struggle with them more. In fact, I would say, as a man and the men who I know, it's like some of the most fulfilling, rich friendships that I've made in my life are in my rearview mirror. It's was when I was in high school and college centered on sports or academics or the neighborhood. And then as we grew into men and we got careers and we got married and had kids and responsibilities we just didn't take the time to cultivate those relationships. Oh, man. We've got a lot of surface level friends, buddies we golf with, guys we talk sports with, and guys who are professional contacts but how many men are we getting really vulnerable with, taking off the mask and actually talking about the things that we are struggling with?

We've got a lot of isolated, lonely men who are in the shadows—shadow men is what I call them. The goodness and the character and the likeness of Jesus Christ have been blocked out of their lives.

So, here's what I would say to the men in our church who are feeling isolated and alone, I would say, "Man, you need to get into a group." But, I've been doing this too long to just know many of your reactions.

Some of you are stubborn, busy, proud, you've had a bad experience, you're a non-conformist. I get it. You are a man. If I say, "Get into a group," you're like, "Yeah, I ain't doing that."

So, how about this step? How about you do this?

If you were to invite a group of guys over to your house and say, "Hey, guys. Do you want to come over and sit in a circle so we can talk?" They are going, "No, thanks." But if you said, "Hey, man. You guys want to come over throw some burgers on the grill and we're going to sit around a fire pit and talk," I'm guessing everybody is going to say yes to that. I did this this last Friday night. I just texted, I don't know 10 or 12 guys. The youngest was 19 the oldest was in his mid-70s from various campuses. I said, "Hey, guys. You just want to come over and sit around the fire pit and talk. That was my vantage point. And I basically just asked one pointed question. They talked for the next three-and-a-half hours.



I would say this. This is my observation. As the sun went down and the darker the sky got, the brighter the flames, the more vulnerable the guys got.

Here's what I'm just wondering. If we just had groups of guys in our church who just start doing that, let that be your beginning place. You're like, "Oh, man. Rooted is too far." "I don't know if I could get into a group. I don't know if I can get locked into that. I'm so busy."

Well, okay. Just invite 10 to 12 guys over to your house, sit around the fire pit, have a pointed, directional, intentional conversation. And focus on being interested more than being interesting. Sit back and watch what happens.

This is adapted from a guy by the name of Scott Galloway, who I quoted last week. He says that if we want better men, we need to be better men. And we need to get involved in the lives of young men.

If you try to reverse-engineer where young men come off the tracks and end up alone, angry, addicted, aggressive, or arrested, it's the absence of a male role model. Get involved in the life of a young man. You don't have to be some icon; you just have to be interested more than you want to be interesting. Convince that young man that he matters, and his life has meaning.

I like how my friend, Matt Reagan puts it. He goes, "Whenever you walk into a room, don't just be a thermometer that sort of reflects the temperature in the room, be a thermostat that impacts the temperature in the room. Be a leader. Set the direction for that.

One of my favorite stories—John Tyson mentions this in his book that I recommended last week, he says that in 336 B.C., Alexander the Great had conquered the known world at the time. His empire stretched from Greece to Persia. Alexander the Great was a brilliant thinker and leader. His army was legendary. He was the most powerful man in the world at the time. Not someone you would take lightly.

He was on a world victory tour. He comes to the city of Corinth. And everyone who was anyone came out to celebrate and to meet him, except for one man, Diogenes of Sinope. He was kind of a controversial, kind of countercultural guy. He would later develop a philosophy that would turn into something, maybe you've heard of it, called Stoicism. Diogenes didn't bother to go downtown for the victory parade. He stayed at his house in the suburbs of Corinth and he was actually sun bathing.

Afterward, Alexander the Great was kind of wondering where Diogenes was. He really wanted to meet him but he didn't come.

So, Alexander gets into his motorcade and goes to Diogenes' house in the suburbs and walks into his back yard. And Diogenes doesn't bother to get up to greet him. Alexander walks over to him and they just kind of look at each other and don't say anything. Finally, Alexander asks if there is anything he can do for him.

I love that. The most powerful man in the world at the time asks Diogenes, "Hey, man. Is there anything I can do for you?" And here's what Diogenes says. He looks up and he goes, "Yeah, you can get out of my light."

I just love that so much. I probably like that too much. Here's what he was saying, "You are blocking my sun light and I need you to get out."

Now, go with me on this. What if we had a few bold men like that who instead of being victims or victimizing or blaming others in the shadows we tell who or whatever is standing in the light of Jesus Christ that it needs to move?

The thing that would move the needle in our church is if we had more men who would step out of the shadows and allow their hearts to be ignited by King Jesus.

It's not that women need that too, I'm saying that right now that's the thing that would move the needle because, statistically speaking, about 60 percent of people who serve faithfully in our church are female. I'm so grateful for them. And we need more. But if we had more men who would get in the game and begin to exercise their gifts and to serve others...

Already, right now, I hope you sense this, God is on the move in our world, in our country, in our city, and in our church. I have never seen God move in ways, in my lifetime, than He's moving right now.

Things are really, really bad and things are really, really good. The kingdom of God is stirring and I want to be a part of it—on the field with the jersey on, not in the grandstands. So, I'm inviting men to get out of the grandstands and onto the field so that you don't miss this moment.

If we had more men do that, I think that we would move the needle and blow the roof off of this place. And I've got statistics to prove it.

There are a number of statistics that show this. This is from The Leadership Journal. If children give their lives to Jesus, and we just know Kids' Ministry is so important, but if kids are the first in their family to give their lives to Jesus, that affects about 3.5 percent of the family. Maybe 3 percent of the family will follow their lead.



If the woman, or the wife in the family gives her life to Jesus. That has a big impact too—17 percent of the family will follow after and give their lives to Jesus. But, if a man or a dad gives his life to Jesus the stats just go through the roof—93 percent of the family will follow after.

Now, please don't misunderstand that stat. That doesn't mean that men are any better, it doesn't mean that men are superior, it means that there is a greater responsibility upon his shoulders.

Adam fumbled that. And, Satan knows this so here's what he'll do. He'll keep men in the shadows, shadow boxing against all of these things that are fighting against the identity that Jesus died for them to have.

We need men who will emerge out of the shadows and step into the light of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Son of God and He is the Savior of our sins, but we also fail to remember, He was a man. And He is a man worth following and imitating. Sometimes that's difficult for guys to do because the way that we've historically depicted Him is oftentimes effeminate but He was masculine in all of the best ways possible.

Jesus is not a brute. He also wasn't a wuss. Jesus was kind with people and aggressive toward unholy spirits. We often have a tendency to flip them. We get aggressive with people and we are overly accommodating to unholy spirits.

Jesus was a man women could trust. You just go through the gospels and you see Jesus' conversation with Mary Magdalene and Jesus' conversation with a woman at a well and Jesus' conversation with the woman caught in adultery.

One time Jesus is having lunch with a group of men who were reading off of the moralistic script, Pharisees, and a woman with a checkered past walks in. That would have been so intimidating for her to do.

Imagine being a woman in that culture. You've got a checkered past, you walk into a room full of men—and some of you ladies know what that's like, to feel unsafe—the Pharisees would have shamed her and judged her or worse. A group of unethical men would have taken advantage of her, but she walks in there because of Jesus. There was something about the way that Jesus presented Himself that made her feel like she would be received and safe. She dropped to His feet and she wept and she wet His feet with her tears and she dried them with her hair. And she anointed His feet with perfume.

Listen, man. That would be kind of awkward in any culture. That would have been really awkward in that culture. But there was something about Jesus that set her at ease. We need more men like Jesus—redeemed masculinity. The kind of masculinity that says, “I’m going to go first. I’m going to sacrifice. I’m going to protect and provide and care for, I’m going to fight for women, not with them. I’m going to fight the predators not become one. I’m going to fight against evil, not become evil.”

Last week we looked at Adam in the garden and what went down there where he’s apathetic. He’s there but he’s not there. He’s checked out. And Eve is going toe to toe with the serpent. Here’s what Adam should have done. Adam should have thrown himself between Eve and the serpent and the tree and said, “Over my dead body.” But he didn’t do that. We are left in a fallen world because of it.

Now, the first Adam oftentimes in the Scriptures they refer to, But did you know there is a second Adam? Do you know who the second Adam is? Jesus Christ. What the first Adam failed to do, Jesus stepped up and did. What the first Adam failed to do at that tree in the garden, the second Adam did at the tree at Golgotha.

So, that’s what brings us to Romans 5. I’m going to wrap up with this passage. I’m just going to read it over you. It says:

“Now Adam is a symbol,” he’s just “a representation of Christ, who was yet to come. But there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. “For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many,” men and women, “through this other man, Jesus Christ.

“And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins.

“For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:14b-17 (NLT) I just want you to know this. Your family tree may be jacked up, but what Jesus did on that tree at Golgotha means that He can change your family tree. And God is just looking for a few good men (and women) to step up and out of the shadows of the first Adam and into the light of Jesus Christ. He is our only solution to this dilemma and all dilemmas that we face. He is our redemption and our hope.

Men are not any better, smarter, stronger, or wiser. That is ridiculous. What man can do is they can go first. They can stand up and accept responsibility instead of blame. They

can stand up and say, "You know what? I'm going to follow Jesus. I'm going to stand up to honor women: cheer for, provide for, care for and protect."

And that's what I'm wondering. Across all of our locations, right now, if you're a man this doesn't mean that you've got it figured out, this doesn't mean that you don't have addictions to overcome, this doesn't mean that you don't have some shame in your life that you need to come clean from. This doesn't mean that you still have a long way to go to grow into the likeness of Jesus.

But if you're a man today and you're like, "You know what? Sign me up. I want to be a man. I want to stand up and out of the shadows." Just stand to your feet right now. Across all of our locations. We need men to stand to your feet and say, "I want to step into that."

Can we just cheer them on? Cheer on these men. Come on men. Get to your feet. That is no small task. I just want to pray over these men right now.

Father, I just thank You for their courage and the boldness to stand to their feet. I'm sure some of them feel like posers. Some of them are like, "Man, you have no idea the argument I got into with my wife and she's sitting next to me and she's seeing me stand. This is going to cause a conversation later today."

But I thank You that they were willing to stand to their feet. I thank You that this is, hopefully, a beginning spot where they can humble themselves, get vulnerable, and realize that they do not want to be in isolation any longer.

And that You might come to remove whatever it is that is eclipsing the light of Christ in their life. That as shadow men we would step out of that, whatever it is that is in our light, to move so that we can step into who You made us to be.

And, God, I pray that You would move the needle on the fire of our church, that godly men will get up and accept responsibility and move forward as they grow into the image and likeness of Jesus.

God, thank You for the women and the children in our church who are on this journey as well. And I pray that we would not let Satan divide what you meant to be untied. We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody says: Amen.

