Gospel of Glory: The 7 Metaphors

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, October 6, 2024
PASSAGES	John 6; John 8; John 10; John 11; John 14; John 15; Ezekiel 34; Psalm 80
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:00:00 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Seven times in John's Gospel Jesus reaches for a metaphor to say who he is. Matt took those seven as medicine for a specific ache — the frustration of faithful people who wanted more from the church than they have gotten. What you are longing for, he argued, is the vine. The branches are good, but they were never going to scratch that itch.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The frustration is real and it is not only "out there." Matt named his own prayer life, his own nerves in evangelism, and pastoral conversations he walks away from wishing he had done better.
- Christianity is unique because it is not a staircase you climb. Christ died for us while we counted ourselves his enemies — the broker is perfect because he is both God and man.
- Small groups, Bible studies, outreach, prayer ministries — these are branches, and they are genuinely good. But only the vine satisfies the deep longing underneath them.
- Each metaphor is also a Messiah claim. Bread recalls the manna and the prophet like Moses; the door and the cornerstone come out of Psalm 118; the shepherd comes out of Ezekiel 34.
- Ezekiel's shepherd oracle is a judgment on leaders who fed themselves, not on leaders who tried hard and fell short. Jesus steps into that indictment as the one who feeds the sheep.
- Israel was called a vine and went degenerate. Jesus calls himself the *true* vine — he fulfills what the nation was called to be, and you join it by abiding in him.

- None of this is an excuse for passivity. It is the removal of the weight: obey without carrying the world, and when you fail, his mercies are new in the morning.

▶ 1:15:24

It was, as Matt put it, “a bit of a pulpit situation” — a stripped-down morning after technical trouble. He opened with the congregational meeting, then made an aside worth keeping: to anyone watching online, move from passive observer to participant. The body benefits, but the chief beneficiary is you.

The frustration this message is for

▶ 1:17:48

Matt set the seven metaphors down inside a particular ache: “I think many of the faithful feel a frustration and a longing for more from the church.” Conspicuous failures among leaders that break your heart. Widespread incompetence in evangelism and preaching. The sense that we are doing a so-so job of discipling a nation.

▶ 1:19:50

He had raised confusion the week before, using a controversy over whether all religions are different languages describing the same thing. His answer, borrowed from Led Zeppelin: we cannot buy a staircase to heaven. Every other path taps a religious instinct to walk the straight and perfect way under your own power, and scripture does not say *most* have sinned (Romans 3:23). Christ, God the Son, died for us while we counted ourselves his enemies — which is why he is the perfect broker on heaven’s behalf, and why we lean on him completely rather than occasionally.

▶ 1:22:14

He refused to aim the complaint only outward. He still stress-sweats when he shares his faith. He is frustrated with his own prayer life — and told on himself with the story of a gap between meetings when he decided to pray over a Bach cello station, fell hard asleep, and woke to Disney princess music. He checked: the station had not been switched as a prank. Somewhere shortly after he nodded off, the algorithm had served up a song from *Sleeping Beauty*. “I know that the algorithms can glitch,” he said, “but to this day I wonder if the Lord was being funny.”

Jesus alone — not me, not you, not the church

▶ 1:25:07

So is the church finally getting its act together, the hope of the earth? Matt's habit is to answer that by rehearsing who Jesus is. Jesus is the hope of all the tribes and nations. Jesus alone is the bread of life — not a new lifestyle or pattern of behavior. The light of the world — not our good speakers. The gate and the good shepherd. The resurrection and the life and the way — "not my performance, not my prayer life." And Jesus is the vine, not the church.

▶ 1:26:28

That last one carried the weight of the morning. When people describe their disappointments with the church, Matt hears a hunger for the vine. "The branches are great — man, I love the branches. We have small groups, we have Bible studies, we have outreach programs, prayer ministries, ministry of the scriptures. But that deep longing you have cannot be satisfied by the branches. Only the vine." He blocked the lazy exit immediately: this is not permission to do nothing. "He's better at leading than I am at following" — so grow in prayer, remembering the Spirit intercedes perfectly; take on the burdens he assigns you, remembering his shoulders are the only ones broad enough for the world.

1. The bread of life

▶ 1:29:38

John, Matt noted, likes number games — he did it with the signs, and he does it here. Seven, the number of a finished week, of a complete thing.

> "It is not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven… I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."
>
> JOHN 6:32–35 ↗

Only God has immortality (1 Timothy 6:16), and yet Jesus says whoever feeds on this bread will live forever (John 6:51). It is a Messiah claim as much as an offer: Jewish expectation held that the manna miracle would return with God's anointed, and that a prophet like Moses would come. Multiply bread in front of that crowd and they will say: surely this is him.

2. The light of the world

▶ 1:31:37

In John 8:12 the Pharisees object that he is his own witness. Jesus does not soften it — as the unique Son he can bear witness about himself and be telling the truth, and the Father bears witness alongside

him (John 8:13–19). Matt ran the metaphor's roots: the word is a light to our path, the glory of God is the lamp of the New Jerusalem, and God led his people through the wilderness by a pillar of fire.

3. The door of the sheep

▶ 1:33:21

Whoever climbs into the fold another way is a thief; the sheep know the shepherd's voice and will not follow a stranger. When they miss it, Jesus says it plainly: "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:7–9). Matt heard deliberate echoes of a psalm the crowd would have known cold:

> "Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it… The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."
>
> PSALM 118:19–22 ↗

4. The good shepherd

▶ 1:36:32

> "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep… I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."
>
> JOHN 10:11–16 ↗

No one takes his life from him; he lays it down of his own accord and has authority to take it up again. There is hope in the Old Testament's shepherd language — Psalm 23:1, Psalm 78:52 — but Matt pressed the harder half.

▶ 1:38:54

When shepherd language is about kings and priests, it is usually indictment. Jeremiah 10:21 — "the shepherds are stupid" — is the ESV's wording, and Matt read it as written. Then Ezekiel, at length: the sheep scattered and eaten because there was no shepherd, and shepherds who fed themselves instead of the flock. God says he is against them, that he will judge between fat sheep and lean sheep, and then makes a promise:

> "And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them."
>
> EZEKIEL 34:23–24 ↗; SEE EZEKIEL 34:5–20 ↗

David was long dead. Someone in his line, then — someone like him. That is the room Jesus is standing in when he calls himself the good shepherd, and Matt wondered aloud whether Peter thought of that oracle later, and whether the crowd thought of it while Jesus was multiplying bread and telling them to eat his flesh.

5. The resurrection and the life

▶ 1:42:31

Martha says her brother will rise on the last day. Jesus moves the hope off a date and onto himself: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." Matt's gloss: we are not waiting on a naturalistic event called resurrection. We are longing for a person. He put a thought experiment to the room — the feasting halls of Valhalla, or a dark broom closet with the Lord? The room laughed and voted for the feast. Well, he said, now you have the question.

6. The way, the truth, and the life

▶ 1:44:26

"Let not your hearts be troubled." He goes to prepare a place, and comes again to take us to himself, "that where I am you may be also" — which Matt flagged as the actual point of heaven. Then John 14:6: no one comes to the Father except through him. "That's kind of gate-y and door-ish, isn't it." When Philip asks to be shown the Father, Jesus answers that seeing him is seeing the Father (John 14:8–9).

7. The true vine

▶ 1:45:59

> "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser… Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me."
>
> JOHN 15:1–4 ↗

Abiding is paired with obeying and with fruit, and it ends in joy made full (John 15:9–11). It is also the source of our unity, Matt said — not that I am plugged into you, but that we are both plugged into the same Lord. And it is one more Messiah claim. Israel was the vine: a choice vine turned degenerate; a vine brought out of Egypt whose walls were broken down, with the psalmist pleading for the man of God's right hand, the son of man made strong for himself; a luxuriant vine whose increasing fruit only bought more altars. That song was on their top-40 station, Matt said — they knew the words. Jesus is the genuine vine, not the degenerate one. He fulfills the calling the nation did not.

So what do you do Monday?

▶ 1:50:07

Matt brought it back to where he started. If you are grieved by how we are evangelizing, remember he is the Lord of the harvest. Give him the anxieties about this world.

▶ 1:51:34

"You as an individual who is not the Messiah — that role is already taken, and it's well cast. He's doing a good job. We might not be, but he's great." What is left to you is real and it is enough: learn his obedience, hear his voice, follow him, learn to pray — and if you fall asleep, as he does, try again. Share your faith without being the Lord of the harvest. We give our whole selves as living offerings to the one whose work is already finished.

▶ 1:52:49

He closed the loop on the excuse one last time. This is not a reason to do nothing. It is a reason not to burn out under a weight that was never assigned to you. "You think, oh, but I messed up so bad. He's probably seen that before. He'll receive you in mercy — that's why they're renewed every morning." Then the question he left the room with: what could you do this week to follow your Lord in obedience, with joy and rest in your heart?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Romans 3:23
- John 6:32–35
- 1 Timothy 6:16
- John 6:51
- John 8:12
- John 8:13–19
- John 10:7–9
- Psalm 118:19–22
- John 10:11–16
- Psalm 23:1
- Psalm 78:52
- Jeremiah 10:21
- Ezekiel 34:5–20
- Ezekiel 34:23–24
- John 11:25–26
- John 14:6
- John 14:8–9
- John 15:1–4
- John 15:9–11
- Jeremiah 2:21
- Psalm 80:8–17
- Hosea 10:1

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Where has your own frustration with the church been aimed lately — at leaders, at the culture, or at yourself? What has that frustration been doing to you?
2. Matt said the deep longing can only be satisfied by the vine, not the branches. Which branch have you been asking to do the vine's work?
3. Of the seven — bread, light, door, shepherd, resurrection, way, vine — which one do you most need Jesus to be for you right now, and why that one?
4. Ezekiel 34 puts the blame on shepherds who fed themselves. Where are you responsible for feeding someone, and how honestly are you doing it?
5. Matt ended by asking what you could do this week to follow the Lord in obedience with joy and rest rather than under the weight of the world. What is that one thing for you?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISay6q7WYtE&t=0s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.