

Sermon Summary: It's easy to let your mistakes, your performance, or others' opinions determine how you see yourself. But your worth was never meant to be measured by what you do; it was established long before you ever had the chance to earn it. If you've been struggling with feeling like you're not enough, this message will remind you of the unchanging value God's placed on your life.

Sermon Highlights

- The God who breathed this universe into existence looks at us on our worst day and says, "You are worth the fine." That is the gospel.
- Worth, as it is proclaimed, is based on whoever is proclaiming its value.
- Our worth is:
 - Predetermined – we don't have to earn it
 - Priceless – we're invaluable to God
 - Permanent – nothing can take it away
- The world says you're only as valuable as your last performance.
- This perfect, holy, trinitarian God ascribed invaluable worth to us before anybody would have said we were worth anything.
- Before any of us breathed our first breath, our Heavenly Father said, "worth."
- He chose for us to be His treasure.
- God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit thinks you are so worth it that he didn't just save you. He actually adopted you as firstborns, as co-heirs.
- The God of the universe is saying, "You are mine. I didn't just save you. You're my kid."
- According to rabbinical law, you can disinherit a biological child, but you can't disinherit an adopted child. It's permanent.
- You're not a disappointment to Him. You're not an interruption to Him. He didn't save you because it's in His job description. He saved you because it was His good thinking to set His favor on you.

Scriptures

Psalms 139:1-16:

You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.

2 You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.

3 You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.

4 Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.

5 You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

7 Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?

8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
 if I settle on the far side of the sea,
 10 even there your hand will guide me,
 your right hand will hold me fast.
 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
 and the light become night around me,"
 12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;
 the night will shine like the day,
 for darkness is as light to you.
 13 For you created my inmost being;
 you knit me together in my mother's womb.
 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
 your works are wonderful,
 I know that full well.
 15 My frame was not hidden from you
 when I was made in the secret place,
 when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body;
 all the days ordained for me were written in your book
 before one of them came to be.

Isaiah 43:1-4: "But now, this is what the Lord says - he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel:
 "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers,
 they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned;
 the flames will not set you ablaze. 3 For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
 I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. 4 Since you are precious and honored in my sight,
 and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life.

Ephesians 1:3-6: 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms
 with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless
 in his sight. In love 5 he[b] predestined us for adoption to sonship[c] through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his
 pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Sermon Discussion

- LOVE Week is coming up soon! Share your favorite LOVE Week memories or an event you're excited to participate in this year.
- "The God who breathed this universe into existence looks at us on our worst day and says, 'You are worth the fine.' That is the gospel." When you're having a bad day or you've made a mistake, what's the first thing you're tempted to believe about yourself, and what truth from God can you replace it with?
- "Worth, as it is proclaimed, is based on whoever is proclaiming its value." Whose voice has the biggest influence on how you see your worth — God's, your own, or someone else's?
- "Our worth is predetermined, priceless, and permanent." Which of these three truths is hardest for you to believe right now, and how can you remind yourself of that truth this week?

- "The world says you're only as valuable as your last performance." In what area do you need to rest in God's acceptance instead of striving for approval this week?
- "The God of the universe is saying, 'You are mine. I didn't just save you. You're my kid.'" How does thinking of yourself as God's child — not just someone He saved — change the way you approach Him?
- Who in your life has helped you see yourself the way God sees you? (Bonus: send them a text and thank them!)

Prayer Prompt: "Father, thank You for not just saving us but adopting us into Your family and raising us up to be co-heirs with Jesus. When we're tempted to listen to a world that tries to define our worth, remind us that Your voice is the only one that matters, and You call us valuable. Help us walk in confidence this week, knowing our worth is predetermined, priceless, and permanent. In Jesus' name, amen."

AI generated sermon recap:

Overview: The service opened with worship centered on gratitude and thanksgiving to Jesus, followed by campus-wide announcements. Guest speaker Dr. Lisa Harper delivered a message on God-given worth and adoption into God's family, grounding her points in Scripture and historical context. The gathering concluded with corporate prayer, an invitation for those struggling to believe their worth, and a salvation prayer with many responding.

Key announcements and timelines

- YouthX (student camp): happening in two weeks in July; the church urged everyone to pray for students, believing it will be life-changing.
- Love Week: sign-ups are open now; events fill quickly each year. All are invited to serve—neighbors, friends, e-groups, families, and kids—regardless of campus or location.
- Pastoral update: gratitude expressed for allowing the Furtick family some time off this summer. Pastor Steven is out of the pulpit but is writing songs, traveling to preach, and "dreaming about preaching." He will return ready to lead. The church also celebrated the impactful summer lineup of guest speakers.
- Guest honor: Lisa Harper recently completed her doctorate at Dallas Theological Seminary; she was welcomed as "Dr. Lisa Harper."

Message theme: "You are worth the fine"

- Personal illustration: Lisa recounted a date years ago with an NFL offensive lineman from a team "that rhymes with 'Hilly.'" After a game in Atlanta, he chose to skip the team's charter flight and ride back to Nashville with her, telling his coach she was "worth the fine." Lisa used this as a lens for the gospel: God looks at us—on our best and worst days—and declares we are worth the cost.
- On "worth": Defined as the value/importance/usefulness of something; when used as a predicative adjective (e.g., "worth the fine"), it is subjective and determined by the one ascribing it. God, our Creator-Redeemer, has ascribed incomparable worth to us apart from our performance.
- Scriptural foundation: predetermined, priceless, permanent worth
- Predetermined worth (Psalm 139) - "You have searched me... you know me... you knit me together in my mother's womb... all the days ordained for me were written... before one of them came to be."
- Our worth precedes any accomplishment or merit; God determined our value before we drew breath.
- Priceless value (Isaiah 43:1-4) - God created, formed, redeemed, and called us by name; promises presence through waters, rivers, and fire. "Since you are precious and honored in my sight and because I love you... I give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life."

- Illustration: After viewing the UK and Scotland crown jewels (deemed “priceless”), Lisa noted that God values His people more than entire nations, not merely their treasures.

Permanent adoption (Ephesians 1:3–6)

- God chose us in Christ before creation and predestined us for adoption “in accordance with his pleasure” (Greek: *eudokia*, “good thinking” or “good pleasure”), emphasizing affection—not pity.
- Greco-Roman adoption context: Families typically adopted older adolescents/adults with proven potential; girls were rarely adopted because they held little financial value in that era. This underscores how radical it is that God adopts us as honored firstborn co-heirs.
- Historical example: Octavian was adopted by Julius Caesar at 18, later becoming Caesar Augustus; Roman coins proclaimed the emperor “son of god.” In contrast, at Jesus’ crucifixion a Roman centurion confessed Jesus as “Son of God,” subverting imperial claims.
- Early church and the vulnerable: In the ancient practice of *expositio* (abandoning infants), Christians became known for rescuing discarded babies, adopting them as sons and daughters. Architecture reflected this in features like the Italian *ruota dei trovatelli* (a rotating foundlings’ wheel) enabling anonymous infant drop-offs at churches.
- **Legal permanence: According to rabbinical law, a biological child could be disinherited, but an adopted child could not—mirroring the permanence of our adoption in Christ.**

Modern-day illustrations of grace and worth

- Recovery community outreach - Lisa has long volunteered with women in addiction recovery. Many gain entry-level roles (e.g., Chipotle’s willingness to hire those with federal offenses) and exhibit palpable gratitude for God’s grace.
- Thanksgiving initiative: A group prepared 172 takeout meals (goal was 150) to serve people experiencing homelessness in Nashville, aiming to share food and meaningful conversation.
- Memorable encounters: The first attempt misjudged a passerby; the last was with “Cricket,” a young man living outdoors. Two weeks later, Lisa found him again, told him God sees him and considers him “worth it.” He wept; she prayed Psalm 139 over him. He said he deeply needed the reminder of his worth; Lisa acknowledged she needed it too.

Prayer and response

- Corporate prayer: Gratitude for the freedom to worship and a plea for reawakened wonder at God’s love and presence.
- Invitation to the weary: Attendees raised their right hands and made a fist if believing they had God-given worth felt difficult; many responded.
- Salvation prayer: A pastor led the congregation in a call-and-response prayer to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior (forgiveness of sins; “my new beginning”), followed by a bold call to raise hands as an outward sign of an inward decision. The church celebrated those decisions.
- Closing reminder: It is no coincidence that attendees were present on a holiday weekend; God is at work in their lives.

Upcoming steps and actions

- Pray for students preparing for YouthX in two weeks.
- Sign up now for Love Week service opportunities (open to everyone across all campuses and locations); events fill quickly.
- Look forward to Pastor Steven’s return after summer; continue engaging with the summer teaching lineup.

Words from opening hymn:

- Till you breathe So breathe on me Let my life be yours I can't breathe out nothing else, I'm not gonna let go. You've done too much for me And I can't hold back my heart on my hallelujah You turned to my shoulder as I was lost in you.
- As I should be with your blood. And when you turn for me, I will never stop singing out. Thank you, we sing. Thank you for the wonders you've done and the ones that you're still gonna do.
- Thank you, singing it out. Thank you, thank you Jesus. Thank you. All my worship belongs to the one who has carried me through.
- Thank you, God. All my words aren't enough, but I'll keep showing up with each to thank you.

AI generated sermon transcript:

- Thave some great people in our house today. Lift your voice. You're grateful for all that you've done in your life this morning. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. We're grateful people in Jesus' name.
- We lift your name up in this place for a good act of life. And we invite you to this place. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. All right. Elevation. How are you doing? okay let us go into the house of the Lord and I know you feel this way too but that is how I felt when I was coming to church today my heart is so full to be here with everyone here about time and all of our campuses and online feel so great Summer is such an amazing time at Elevation, and we have so much to look forward to this month in July. How many of you are excited about YouthX? Are you going to YouthX?
- Wait with me if you're signed up and you're going. Be praying for our students as they get ready for camp in two weeks. Just be praying that God will really do a work in their lives. I'm believing that that week is going to be absolutely life-changing for so many of our kids. So make sure you're a prayer for that. And like I'm pretty sure your campus pastor said in all of our locations, are you signed up for Love Week yet? Okay, let me tell you, Love Week is one of the most amazing things we do as a church. And if you've never joined us, this is your year. It doesn't matter where you live. It doesn't matter what campus you go to. And I've got to tell you, these events, they fill up. And every year, people go on my Instagram and they message me. And they're like, I tried to sign up, but all the events are full.
- This is my warning to you. Sign up to serve today. Your neighbors, your friends, your e-group, your family, your kids. There's an opportunity for everyone. Okay? So those are some of the great things that we're looking forward to. And before I introduce our speaker today, I just want to say to everyone at Elevation, thank you so much for allowing our family to take some time off this summer.
- We are so grateful to be able to have that time. Pastor Steven, he's been out of the pulpit, but I promise you. His mind is never off of this ministry and this church. He is always thinking about you and about this church. And he has been writing some amazing songs. And he has been traveling to preach. And he told me yesterday that he dreams every night almost about preaching. Like he wakes up and he's been dreaming about preaching. So we know when he comes back, he's going to be ready to go. Amen? But in the meantime, have we not had some amazing friends and family in the bullpen this summer? So today is no exception.
- Today we get to hear from someone who takes time every July to come and bring a word to us. Lisa Harper is here with us today. You guys know Lisa. She is family. She's an author. She's a Bible teacher. She's a podcast host. She's a mom. She's also my friend. And she has prayed me through some amazing seasons and some hard seasons. She is a true spiritual aunt to my kids because she prays for them and she asks them about me. But the thing that I love most about Lisa is every single time that I am around her, I feel refreshed. And I want to go home and read my Bible for her. And you're gonna be so blessed to hear from her today.

- Now, really quick, before I welcome her to the stage, she might look a little bit different this year. She might look a little more studious because a couple of months ago, she completed her doctorate at Dallas Theological Seminary. So keep clapping. You want to be welcome, Dr. Lisa Harper to the stage.
- Please sit down, please sit down. Goodness gracious, if I had any estrogen left in my body, would have shot straight at at that point. I'd like to take just a moment, a moment of silence for those of you who are grieving the fact that Pastor Holly and Pastor Stephen are not preaching this morning. When I was here last summer, I got to go out and some people were being baptized. And so I was meeting people and I met a saint who had driven 30 hours. It wasn't a Volkswagen bus, but it could have been driven 30 hours because their whole family just wanted to come here Holly or Steven preach and I was just like I'm so sorry I'm so sorry.
- You have an old white woman from Nashville, Tennessee. He just I don't know what it is about elevation, but I always feel inclined to wear leather here. So there will be a lot of perspiration and squeaky going on in the next few moments but I. They could have anybody, y'all could have anybody from across the world would be honored to get to be in this house. And I'm not sure why other than your friendship and your grace, Chums, that I get to come every year. But this is the highlight of my daughters and I.
- We love, we claim you as cousins, even though some of you might think differently in a few moments. So we need to start with prayer. Reach out and touch that saint next to you. That's not rhetorical to touch him. Touch them appropriately, men, if you're sitting next to a woman. I've heard it said it's tea. Is that right? If she's cool, if she's hot, just be very, very careful. This is a Leviticus kind of prayer. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Thank you. I was so reminded last night of what a gift it is that we still exist under the common grace of free worship in this country. So. Lord, I pray that for all of us, the things that have become just road to us, getting to drive to church on Saturday or Sunday and not worried about hiding, not worried about being arrested.
- Oh, Lord, what a glorious gift it is that you allow us to come together to your house to bring you the first reason of our attention and our affection freely. Lord, forgive us when we are quick to complain and then we're slow to say. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you for two hundred and fifty dollars of freedom of worship. We are so grateful. We are so grateful. We are so grateful. And Lord, sometimes we are so dumb and so preoccupied. And so Lord, for those of us who've come into this house of faith and our minds are distracted or tired and our hearts are numb or just barely put one foot in front of the other. Lord, we pray through your spirit that you would give us eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts that would be pliant to understand at an even deeper level what it means to be your beloved sons and daughters.
- **Lord, we pray that you would re-amaze us this morning, just as Holly said, Pastor Stephen is being re-amazed as he has time to just marinate in the truth of who you are, who you call this to be. Lord, would you quicken us? Would you quicken us this morning, Lord? Would we leave this building just more than ever convinced of who you are as a perfect, totally transcendent God who chooses to be close to us and more than ever secure in the fact that on our worst days that you matter to me. You're beautiful to me. I still can't quite conceive of the fact that I was the joy. set before you as you walk to the cross. So Lord, I need your spirit to pierce the places in my heart that I agree with that man in Mark's gospel. I believe, but oh, King Jesus, help me in my belief. Do that for all of us this morning, Jesus, and we'll be careful to give you and you alone all the honor and all the glory and all the praise for what you do in this living room this morning. We love you, Jesus. We need you, Jesus. We ask these things by the perfect authority of your name. Amen and amen.**
- I thought with last night being so historic, I would start with a historic tale of my own, something that's very rare. And so I'm not going back 250 years. It wasn't quite that long ago, but I'm going to tell you about my last good date. It was quite some time ago, I came to Nashville, Tennessee from Florida to work for an athletic ministry called the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Graham, you know FCA. And so I ended up being set up with a lot of athletes because I had some friends who were the guys playing in the NFL, didn't have any World Cup guys friends back then, because they had cute legs and those little shorts. But anyway, sorry that was ungodly, y'all can strike that from the record. This is kind of Song of Solomon-esque, right? We can leave it.

- We can leave it. It's in the Bible. So anyway, one of my friends who worked for the NFL said, Lisa, I have got the perfect guy for you. He loves all the old dead theologians you love. He reads C.S. Lewis. He's a really good guy, really serious about his faith. He plays on the line. And when he said he plays on the line for an NFL team, he just had me at plays on the line because I'm not a small girl. And I really want to date or... possibly Mary, if you know someone between 55, I'll go younger, I'm 62, and death. Somebody who's bigger than me. You know, I just, sometimes I get set up with really tiny men, and I'm like, hi, I'm Lisa from the large planet. So I was like, he plays on the line, that means he's the biggest, so I was really excited. And so, I'm not gonna tell you his name, because you can Google him and, spoiler alert, he married someone else, but it was a good thing, just stay with me on the date. Are you still with me on the date?
- Okay, so we start talking on the phone. No Zoom, no FaceTime. All I had seen is him from the distance on ESPN. And I knew he was big, and I won't say the team he played for, but it's north of here. We started talking. He had a great voice. You know how voices are just, you go, I can just kind of sense a little bit of their heart because their voice is connected to their heart. And then after two weeks of courting, he called and said, Hey, Lisa, our team, right with Hilli, He said, our team, we're playing the Falcons. And I know Nashville's about four hours from Atlanta, but if you would be willing to drive to Atlanta, we could meet face-to-face. I'd love to meet you face-to-face. And I was like, well, that would be great. And so our meeting was a week away, so I went on a fast. And then I bought like a really cute new outfit. Are any of y'all, I'm 62, any women over 50?
- Okay, do y'all remember when like giant shoulder pads were in? So anyway, I bought this pink dress for feminine with like football player shoulder pads because it's so in back then. And I drive from Nashville to Atlanta. And we didn't have any Buc-ee's back then. I had to stop at a rest area to froth my hair. And I get to the stadium and he said, one of the other wives, an NFL player's wife, she'll meet you at will call to bring you up to the wives section. I was sitting in the wives section. Do y'all know any NFL wives? They are tiny, just tiny, tiny little women. They're beautiful, but so petite. And so this tiny girl came and met me and she takes me up to the wives section. We're up, I don't know, we're like on the 50-yard line, just a few rows up. And I come up, and all the other teenage girls were very kind to me, and I was the only brunette. And so I'm meeting all the tiny blondes. And then I look out on the field. The game hadn't started yet. I look out on the field, and there he is, my date. And he has his back to me. And I don't know how to say this in church, but those pants are awesome.
- And... I never until that point liked football pants, and suddenly I just loved those little pants on a big man. And so he turned around, and you know, like from here to where y'all are in the theater seats, I'm about that far away, he turned around, but y'all, it was like a love story. It's like, our eyes met, and I was like, I love him. And the game started, and he did really, really well. He made a couple of key blocks, and the team that rhymes with Hilly beat the Atlanta Falcons. Sorry if you're a Falcons fan. And then one of the teenage girls said, Hey, we'll just call him Bill. That's not his name. She said, Hey, Bill would like to see you before they fly back to Hilly.
- And so if you'll go with us, The team, that was back, I don't know if they still do this, but that was back in the day when all the players would shower and change into suits, not pajama pants, actual suits, and then they'd get on a charter bus and then they'd go to the airport, go on a charter flight, and go back to whatever town they were from. And so she said, he actually wants to see you, because now we've still been 50 yards separated. She said he wants to meet you face to face before he flies home, and I was like, okay. So I tried to stand with all the teeny tribes down to, it's like in the belly of the arena. And all of a sudden all the players start coming out. You know, they're just big guys and they all smell like polo. And they all start boarding the bus.
- And then here comes Bill. And he comes right, and I can't use you, you're a good product. He comes right up to me and he's like, right up to me, he goes, hey. And then he picks me up. He picks me off my feet. And I was like, this is, Like, this is glory. This is just glory. I expected Jesus to come through with a white horse. It was amazing. Looked at the E.T., picked me up. And then I don't remember what he said because I was in a coma. And then we talked for like three or four more minutes. And then they made the announcement. The bus is about to leave. Guys, you've got to get on the bus. We're going to the plane. And he goes just like this. He goes, wait right here. As if I was going to

leave. I'm like, I'll be here three months from now, just standing right here. It's all downhill from now. I was like, okay. And he goes, wait right here. He turns around, and the bus is right here. And an NFL coach, and y'all would know this NFL coach. He's dead now, but he was speaking. And so this NFL coach, he's standing on the stairs. Bill's right where you are, Chum. And Bill starts talking to the coach. Bill has his back to me. And the coach is facing me from the stairs. And he keeps kind of looking around Bill's shoulders. He'd be like. So I knew they were talking about me. They talked for like, I don't know, three minutes.

- **And then the doors of the bus shut. And Bill comes like this. I know, I know. And the bus is driving away, and guys are hanging out the windows, just ragging him, saying things like, she's already gone, you rat-a-tum, you hang on to the ball, bruh. I mean, they're just ragging him. He is completely oblivious to the teasing. Only has eyes for me. Comes up to me, I'll never forget what he said. He said, Lisa, I hope it's okay if you let me ride with you back to Nashville. I just told Coach, that I really wanted to spend this time driving back to Nashville, because that would give us four hours face-to-face to get to know each other. And I'll get a hotel in Nashville, then I'll take a commercial flight in the morning to go back home to Hilly. Because I told Coach, you're worth the fine. Whoa.**
- **You're worth the fine. Has anybody ever said that to you? Oh yes he did. Oh yes he did. We've just been singing about it. Oh yes he did. The God who breathed this universe into existence looks at us on our worst day when we're not singing Elevation songs, when you're saying something that's not in the Bible, in traffic, he looks at us even in that moment and says, you are worth the fine. That is the gospel. That is the gospel. And that man who barely knew me ascribed worth to me.**
- He said, you are worth the merciless teasing of my teammates. You are worth the lack of physical rest that I will experience driving with me through the night back to Nashville. You are worth a hefty monetary fine from my team in the NFL. You are worth So it costs him to subscribe worth to me. I have a definition for the word worth. You probably know this. Worth tells us the value, the importance and or the usefulness of something. However, when worth is used in a, uh, predicative used as a predictive eject at Jack adjective, didn't pay much for my doctor. When a genius has a predicative adjective, as in you're worth the fine, it is entirely subjective. That means worth, as it is proclaimed, is based on whoever is proclaiming its value. In the context of that football player, he decided I was worth the fine. In the oh-so-biased perspective of our Creator, Redeemer, He has ascribed worth to us, and He says our worth is predetermined.
- Turn to Psalm 139. You'll know this. Many of you, I hope, memorized this when you were kids. It's one of my favorite of the Psalms, all of the 150 Psalms, P-S-A-L-M-S, were originally written as Psalms, S-O-N-G-S. So this is like God's Spotify list, these 150 Psalms in the middle of the Bible. And this is how David starts this Psalm. "You have searched me, O Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise. You perceive my thoughts from afar. You have served my going out and my lying down. You are familiar with all my ways. before a word is on my tongue, you, O Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It blows my heart dry. It is too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise in the wings of the dawn, if I settle in the far side of the sea, even there, your hand will guide me. Your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, surely the darkness will heighten, and the light become night around me, even the darkness will not be dark to you. The night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. Listen to this. For you created my inmost being. You knit me together in my humble womb. I praise you because I am beautifully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body all the days. ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. In other words, our worth precedes any accomplishment or merit on our behalf."
- Long before your daddy had a wink in his eye, our creator-redeemer predetermined that he would subscribe priceless value to you. There's nothing we earn. We just sang that. But I think for most of us, we can sing it, we can say it. But to grasp in a world that says you're only as valuable as your last performance, in a world where we are

entirely judged by how we perform and how much we produce, it is really hard for us to wrap our dinky human minds around the concept that this perfect, holy, Trinitarian God ascribe invaluable worth to us before anybody would have said we were worth anything. We haven't done anything yet to be considered worthy, and yet David makes it clear before any of us breathed our first breath, our Heavenly Father said, worth.

- I'm ascribing worth to you. Flip forward to the book of Isaiah. I love Isaiah's prophecy. And Isaiah underscores this idea of predetermined worth and priceless value that God ascribes to us. Isaiah 43. But now this is what the Lord says. He who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, did you. Do not fear for I have redeemed you. I have summoned you by name. You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. When you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned. The flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead.
- Since you are precious and honored in my sight and because I love you, I give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. Nations. So that's God's scales. We just got back from two weeks in Europe. And while we were there, we were at the Tower of London where the jewels of London are kept. And then we went to where the jewels are kept, the crown jewels, in Scotland, in Edinburgh. And of course, you've got the guards with the fuzzy, key-tip black hats. We kept trying to make them laugh, and they wouldn't. They're guarding those jewels, the crown jewels of the UK. Those are priceless, estimated by historians to be priceless. But that's just the jewels of the country. That's not the land. That's not the gross national product.
- That's not everything that Scotland or England or Ireland, that's not everything. And God said, the entire nation, not just the jewels. I'm not just exchanging you for a Tiffany bracelet. You are more valuable to me than entire nations with all their wealth. right before I came out here, because I'm always a hot mess. Just looking for a blooper reel to begin. I was in the restroom trying to make my hair not look like roadkill on this humid day. And I thought, oh, I need some lotion. And I squirted the lotion in the bathroom and just it shot straight all over me. Just gobs of white on my pants, on my shirt, on this, on my arm and my watch.
- And I was like, you just can't take me anywhere. I mean, you just can't. I'm just a walking yahoo. And yet the God, the only true God, the God of the universe, transcendent, holy, Trinitarian, perfect, perfect in and of himself. He didn't even need relationship with us. He chose for us to be his treasure. He's perfectly sustained by fellowship with each other.
- **Augustine, one of my favorite old dead guys. I have a crush on him too. Augustine said, only the Christian God is a perfect community unto himself. Perfectly sustained, perfectly satisfied, and yet he chose for us to be his treasure. And he said, you're worth so much to me, I'll give entire nations in exchange for you. So our worth is, our worth is predetermined. It's not, there's no earning on our behalf. Our worth is priceless. We are invaluable from God's estimation.**
- And then if you'll head to the right to Ephesians, one of my favorite passages in all of the New Testament, our worth is permanent. Ephesians 1, beginning with verse 3, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ "who has blessed us in the heavenly realms "with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. And love he predestined for us, for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure, some translations say good pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves.
- Where it reads pleasure or good pleasure in your Bible, that comes from the Greek word eudokia, You involves good, and dokia is thinking. So in other words, when God set his affection on us, he didn't do it out of pity. Our salvation is mercy. Our adoption is affection.
- **So the king of all kings didn't look at us and go, oh, she's such a yahoo. She's old as dirt. She lost a little weight with the help of Manjaro, and now she's all crepey. She ain't got no man, that poor girl. Let's just let's love on her a little extra because she probably doesn't think she's worth it. That is not disposition of our Creator Redeemer. He looks at me when I've got lotion all over my leather pants and he says, isn't she beautiful?**

- It was my good thinking to adopt her. Now, even the word adoption in first century context, it's crazy that Paul uses it in our relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Because in this era, no parents would adopt an infant. There's too much risk in that. Parents in Greco-Roman culture only adopted an older adolescent or an adult. Why is that? I'm talking about in that passage. Why? Why do you think they would only adopt when he was older? Exactly. Because you had proven potential. They could see their GPA.
- They could see how hard they worked to Chick-fil-A after school. They could see this kid has promise. And by the way, girls are never adopted in this era of biblical history. Girls are not adopted because girls had no financial value other than producing an heir. And so baby girls are rejected. But there's a possibility, if you're a young man who has promise, that a couple will adopt you and say, we'll give him our name. We'll make him an heir.
- The most famous older adoptee from this era is Octavian. And I know most of y'all, like me, just examined your idols in high school history. But you remember, he's the very first Roman emperor. Do you remember who preceded Octavian? I know y'all did. Julius Caesar. So Julius Caesar was not the first emperor of Rome. He was a military hero. He was a dictator. He adopted his nephew. He adopted this kid named Octavian. In fact, he was a great nephew. At the age of 18. Because Octavian, he showed promise. And so Julius Caesar adopted Octavian and said, I will give you my name. And so after Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C., Octavian fought and became the very first emperor.
- He changed Rome from a republic to an empire. He became the very first Roman emperor. The Senate, that's kind of much like our Senate. This Senate may be not as much polarization. But anyway, their Senate said, we're going to name you Augustine. Augustus means one who is revered. And he said, I'm going to take my adopted dad's last name as my first, because I want to be attached to Julius Caesar's renown. So his name went from Octavian to Caesar Augustus. First emperor of Rome.
- Now we all think Caesar is a title. It was, it originated as a surname. And then he went a step further because the Roman Senate, because Julius Caesar was such a great leader, they named him. Dewey, we would say D-V in Latin, but they're Vs or pronounced as Ws if you're a redneck American. Dewey Phileas, son of God. So Octavian, because they had named Julius Caesar a god, that's what Octavian called himself. I am Caesar Augustus. I am Dewey Phileas. I am a son of God. A little bit arrogant, right?
- Do y'all remember the crucifixion account? There's a Roman Centurion and all he did was watch Jesus die. Wasn't in a Bible study, wasn't in a home group, didn't follow Jesus, wasn't Jewish. But he was there at the crucifixion. Y'all remember this story? In Mark's gospel, I think it's in chapter 15. He watches Jesus die. That's all he sees. He doesn't see him raise Lazarus from death back to life. He doesn't see him walk on water. Doesn't see him turn water into wine. All he watches is Jesus suffer. And when Jesus dies and says it is finished, that Roman centurion says, surely, surely he is Dewey Phileas. He is the son of God.
- Do you know the coins in his pocket at the time were inscribed to promote the Roman Caesar as the son of God? Y'all, the context in our Bibles drives me nuts when people say the Bible's boring. I'm like, oh, you're a lazy reader. This is so much better than Yellowstone. This is like epic. So it makes sense that Caesar Augustus Octavian was adopted because he had promise. He had potential. That makes sense. That was very uncommon.
- What was more common was this practice that they still practice, they just don't call it this, in my little girl's village in Haiti. It's expositio. Expositio. Comes from the Latin root, exponere, meaning to expose. What was most common in the era Paul was writing is expositio, which meant if you had a little girl, and you already had one, so you didn't need a spade, or if you had a son who was born deformed with something as minor as a cleft palate, you could take them to the edge of town and leave them so that they would die in the elements. They still do that in my baby girl's village in Haiti. That's why you rarely, rarely in a developing nation struggles with poverty, it's interesting. You usually won't see a child with cerebral palsy or an extreme deformity because it's too hard for them to feed their healthy kids. And so they still practice taking unwanted or deformed or medically challenged children, infants, to the edge of town and leaving them there. Do you know how Christians became known for? After a lot of part of the first and second century? Christians became known for, and actually vilified for this, that we would go and rummage through trash dumps to find discarded infants, and we would adopt them as our sons and our daughters.

- We became known for that. Do you know the first brick and mortar churches in that era? Small, informal affairs. Always had a basin outside the front door of the church so people could go by and drop off an infant. Because even as early Christians, we understood this isn't okay. It's not okay to take an innocent, beautiful, worthy, valuable baby and put them in a trash dump. The Christians would race the slave traders to try to get the little girls so they wouldn't be put into prostitution. Do you know, we were in Italy two summers ago doing a Trips of Paul tour, and I saw this, I think it's called a... Ruato de, Ruato de Trappateria. Suddenly I'm just craving for pasta.
- You see what it's called, it's called, does anybody speak Italian? Ruato de Trappateria, Trappateria. Or Ruato de Trappateria. Y'all, we're wanting Italian now too, aren't we? We'll all go to North Italia after lunch. I have a picture of a ruatta dei Trapatelli. This is all throughout Italian archaic. Okay, see bottom left, see that little box? That actually is a concrete cubby, and it's on a cylinder, it rotates.
- So you can come at night to the outside, that was an ancient church, you can come to the outside, and that little ruatta dei Trapatelli will be open, and you can put your baby in there anonymously. Knowing that somebody on the other side of that wall, probably a nun, will take care of your baby. So even early Christians understanding that all people have value, it impacted architecture. Ruato Dei, Travatelli, here's the deal. For Paul to speak to this audience of young Christians in Ephesus and say, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit thinks you are so worth it that he didn't just save you.
- He has actually adopted you as firstborns, as co-heirs, and you won't sit at the kiddie table or on the porch. You will sit to the right of Jesus the Son in a position of honor. Y'all, that was so counter-cultural. In their understanding, that would be like a UNC grad rooting for Duke. Or Drake and Kendrick Lamar writing a song together. Or Travis and Tay having a tiny wedding. I mean, that's not going to happen. That doesn't happen.
- We read Ephesians and most of us are like, oh, that's good. That's not. I like the way Pastor Stephen preached on that. We don't get the gravitas of the God of the universe saying, you are mine. And it just saves you. You're my kid. Y'all can diss me on social media. It hurts my feelings a little bit. But you diss my baby girl, I'll come find you and cut you. And ribbons. And I know Holly and Pastor Steven feel the same way about Elijah and Graham and Abby. I mean, these are my kids. For God to say we aren't just people he had to save because we're training reps who couldn't save ourselves. For God to say, there's so much more than worth the fun to me. I'm actually adopting into my family. And you know, according to rabbinical law.
- You can disinherit a biological child, but you can't disinherit an adopted child. So he's saying it's permanent. He's saying, I have ascribed this value you haven't earned to you. I've named you as priceless. And it's permanent, honey. It is absolutely permanent. I used to spend a lot of my free time volunteering at an organization in Nashville, a couple of organizations actually, who help women who are in recovery, addiction recovery.
- And I don't do it as much now because of Missy, and I just don't have as much time as a single mom. If you would set me up and I could get the baby daddy, I'd have more free time. Just saying, I don't miss one y'all. But I do spend a lot of time. I don't have a chance to get to do a little bit, but I, Love, love, love, love, love. Getting to spend time with image wearers who are coming out of any type of addiction because the gratitude is palpable. You know, there's just something about being incarcerated that strips your pretense. You don't have to have some loud preacher say that God loves you even though you haven't earned it.
- They're like, I get it. I mean, I know I didn't do anything to deserve this unusual love he has lavished on me. And anyway, those of y'all who are, I know we've got some elevation campuses, and y'all don't have quite as much physical freedom as we do, some of y'all are still incarcerated. And you didn't know that this whole team here, they talk about y'all like y'all are in the room.
- You are family. You stick here, you love me. This is not pity. We honor you. We can't wait to actually be face to face with you. to pray and to worship. Thank you, thank you, thank you. We love y'all. Y'all are not outside campuses. You are in the house campuses. Thank you so much for listening today. The good pastors will be back next week, so stay tuned. But I used to spend a lot of time with these girls, and one Thanksgiving they said, "'Miss Lisa, would you spend Thanksgiving with us?' And I was so honored.

- They asked me to spend Thanksgiving with them. I was like, oh, I'd be delighted to. And they said, We actually have so much extra. Do you know the best job that my friends could get out of when they stepped out of the halfway house into more freedom was at Chipotle. I ate at Chipotle all the time because Chipotle will hire women who have federal offenses on their records, who've come out. So that was the best job they could get. Oftentimes it was cleaning hotel rooms. So for them to say we have so much extra was, and they said, we want to take our extra and we want to just put together a Thanksgiving feast. And then so many of our friends are still home and insecure. They don't have a place to live tonight, but we want to go all over Nashville and find our friends who don't have homes and serve them meals. And I was like, yeah, I'd love to be part of that.
- And so I helped them make this feast. Somebody had donated 150 of those, you know, the styrofoam takeout. We actually had 175, but our goal was 150, and we had turkeys, we had stuff from all over. And so we were just humming. We're in this kitchen, 800 square feet is the size of their government subsidized apartment, and there were like 13 of us in there putting together these meals. We were singing, we were dancing. I have no rhythm, but I have a lot of enthusiasm. We're singing, dancing, getting these meals together.
- When it was all said and done, we ran out of meat. I said, let's count it. We had 172. So I was like, that is epic. So I said, let's pray and thank God for the extra, and then we'll go distribute these. So we had this major Pentecostal prayer, and I was like, don't call me pastor, and for anybody else in Nashville, I'll get eviscerated, but they all call me pastor, and said, don't call me pastor, that pee is, woo, that's polarizing. So anyway, we prayed, and then we said amen, and I was like, okay, what's the plan? And they're like, well, we haven't planned any for, And I was like, well, y'all, and they're like, well, none of us have our license.
- Our license hasn't been reinstated yet, so we don't have cars. I'm like, well, y'all, and they're like, will you help us? I was like, well, yes. So I've got an SUV, because prophetically, I thought God would give me a man, and I'm a fillet of kids. And so we piled my car with like 130. There's one other car. We had just boxes of food all throughout my car. One of the girls got in my car. Another girl was in the back. And we started driving around kind of sketchy parts of downtown Nashville looking for people who might be hungry. And our goal was not just to give somebody a meal, but was to look in their eyes and have a conversation, hopefully sit with them while they ate. And the most memorable of those 130 or so meals we gave away was the first and the last.
- The first was a train wreck, because I chose them. And we were driving down by Vandy, and there was just this kid dressed in rags. And so I sent him, he was housing insecure, and, So I hopped my car up on the curb and I was like, hey baby, gee, I'm probably eating Grammy or H. And we just punk it. And I was like, hey baby, we've got some extra food. He was so offended. And then I saw the Prada shoes. But it was rags, the rest of them were rags. So I thought he was homeless, and so he was really offended. So that was memorable, we got a earful from him. Because he wasn't hungry. And then, went all kinds of meals in the middle.
- But the very last guy was my favorite. We had talked with a fella who was living behind this building. He said, well run up the road and when you see a little half concrete wall, the guy who lives in the cubby behind that, his name is Cricket. He's a friend of mine, go see if you can find Cricket. And sure enough, we found this man named Cricket. Precious, precious, precious, 20-something year old man. And we had, as the sun was setting on Thanksgiving, I mean it was communion. It was one of the best meals I've ever shared with other Christ followers. And then we said goodbye. And I didn't think I'd ever see him again.
- And two weeks later, I was back in that same area because I'd gotten lost. And I recognized the street sign. And I thought, oh, my goodness, this is where we were two weeks ago at Thanksgiving when I got to meet Cricket. And I thought, I wonder if he's still here. So I pretended like I was a UPS truck, hopped my car back up on the curb again, started walking around, and ran into this young man who looked like he had been living outside. And I said, sir, excuse me, my name is Lisa, and I'm looking for a man who used to live in Syrian named Cricket. And he said, Lisa, I'm Cricket. And living outside for a couple weeks can change your appearance.
- And I said, Cricket, I'm so sorry, I didn't recognize you. I said, I don't know if you remember two weeks ago, and he goes, I remember, it was Thanksgiving. And I said, well, I found myself back in this neighborhood, and I just felt this

strong inclination to stop by and see you. and to tell you that God sees you, and he thinks you're worth it. And I don't know why I said that. Sometimes I'll say things because of prayer and the Holy Spirit, and sometimes it's insecurity or it's Celsius. You know, sometimes you think that was the Lord, and yet it might be, and it might not be. But I said, I think. I think it's the Holy Spirit. He impressed me to say, you're worth it. And as soon as I said that, he just went over and began to sob like a baby. And he kind of pitched himself in my arms. And even though I'm not as petite as Holly, he was a tall guy. It was hard for me to hold him up. I mean, he just put the whole weight of his body in my arms.

- I mean, he was just sobbing. And the only thing I could think to do was pray. And when I'm nervous, oftentimes I'll pray scripture. I'll pray the word of God, this love story we call the Bible. And so I just begin to pray Psalm 139. Oh Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise. You perceive my thoughts from afar. Every word you know before it proceeds from my mouth. You hid me in behind and before you have laid your hand upon me. Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me. to a tinny, where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you're there. If I make my bed in the depths, you're there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your right hand will hold me. If I say, surely the darkness will hide me, and the light become night around me, even the darkness will not be dark to you. Before and after. Then he goes on to say, for I am wonderfully and fearfully made. Your works are wonderful. I have that full will. My frame was in him for me when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before even one of them came to me. Long before you met a breath. Long before you had a baby. Long before you had ministry. He said, this is my worthy son. He's so amazing. And that's all I could think to pray over cricket when I got to verse 18, because after that David gets mad and that's when he says, do I not hate those who hate you? And it gets a little grumpy.
- And so I finished the prayer at verse 18 and when I did it, it's like I gave cricket just enough wear with all his stand back up. And he looked me in the eyes and he had no alcohol in his breath, his eyes weren't bloodshot, just completely clear. I just think he was, he was just in one of those thin seasons. And he looked me straight in the eyes and he goes, Lisa, you have no idea how much I needed to be reminded that I have worth. And I said, yes sir, I needed that reminder today as well. And we hugged and I drove away, a daughter and a son from completely different stations in life, different ethnicities, and I stopped at a 7-Eleven at the end of the street because I couldn't drive anymore because I was crying so hard.
- And I just pulled my car over and I said, God, forgive me, forgive me, forgive me. Forgive me that because of my station in life, sometimes I forget what an extraordinary miracle it is to be your daughter. To be adopted into your family. You didn't just... You didn't just rescue me from the trash heap of my decisions. You didn't just leave me in a concrete cubby to become someone else's responsibility. You said, she's my daughter. And she's worth everything to me, even the sacrifice of my only son. The worth, the worth you and I carry. If we could walk in just the My nudist understanding of the miracle that that is, you know, it would change the trajectory of our lives. Quite possibly it would change the lives of the people we get to rub shoulders with, these precious, precious image bearers around us. So many of them who think, I'm not worthy of you.
- Because that's what I've been told my whole life. You should bow your heads and close your eyes. close this family meeting with prayer. And I know I haven't earned the right, I'm so grateful Stephen and Holly allowed me to come. I haven't earned the right to ask you a question, but I'm going to anyway. I'm gonna ask all of you to raise your right hands. I promise I'm not a seven year old for a coffee club or anything. Just raise your right hands. The reason I do that is so you won't hear a hand go up next to you.
- Sometimes we can be a little nosy in church. And for those of you who maybe have been wounded in church, I want to assure you that you're safe in elevation. You're serious, serious about the love of God here, but you're not going to be judged. So everybody, right hands up. And would you just open those beautiful poems that God designed? Just spread that hand wide open. Now, if you're in a place in your life, a season in your life, or this may be the story of your whole life, where the idea of being, having value, intrinsic value, the idea of being loved unconditionally by God,

the idea that the God who breathed our universe into existence looks at you and says, I am so proud. of this one, this is my son, this is my daughter. They're worth the fine to me.

- If that's hard for you to wrap your mind around, hard for you to hang on to, maybe you'd be so honest as to say, I don't really believe that. Would you close that beautiful hand into your fist? Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Hey, thank you, thank you, thank you for your honesty. Can I ask you for just a moment more to keep your hands raised. Don't look around. Out of respect for the saints around you, there are hundreds with fists in the air. Beautiful, not defiant, beautiful, tired fists in the air. Kind of reminds me of the Statue of Liberty. Give me your tired. Give me your tired. Give me your hopeless. Give me your hurt. Give me your wounded. Give me your abandoned. Give me your no one ever looked at you and said, you are worth the fight.
- I'll walk across cut glass to give to you. You are precious to me. I'll exchange nations for you. Those of you with your fist raised, we're going to pray, and I'm going to ask you if Holy Spirit... prompts, would you pray this prayer of salvation? Pray this prayer of maybe for the first time or for the first time in a long time, just leaning into the wide open arms of the God who has described value to you. You're not a disappointment to him. You're not an interruption to him. He didn't save you because it's in his job description.
- He saved you because it was his eudokia, his good thinking. to set his favor on you. You're not an afterthought, you were the first thought. One glance in your eyes, you capture his heart.
- **Pastor, would you come and pray for these image bearers, some of whom have yet to believe their worth? They were head bowed and eyes still closed. We're gonna pray a prayer of salvation. With everyone praying out loud for the benefit of those who are receiving this word and applying it practically today, making the decision to ask Jesus into your life, into your heart, and to receive him as the Lord and Savior of your life. Everyone repeating after me. Heavenly Father. Heavenly Father. I believe that Jesus Christ. I believe that Jesus Christ. Is the Son of God. The Son of God. And the Savior of the world. The Savior of the world. I believe he died. He died. So that right now. I could be forgiven. I could be forgiven. Of all of my sins. All of my sins. Past, present, and future. Come into my life. Come into my life. Make me new. Make me new. I'll follow you. This is. This is. My new beginning. My new beginning. Every head still bowed, eyes still closed. If you just prayed that, I want you to do something bold in this place today. Shoot your hand in the air as an outward sign of an inward decision that you just made. Don't be afraid. This is the best decision you could ever make.**