

VIDEO: ONE MATTERS INTRO

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INTRODUCTION

Good Morning! Welcome to Fox Valley Christian Church!

We are starting our new sermon series, One Matters. I am excited about this, I am glad you were able to be here today.

The whole premise of this series is that One Matters to God. That everyone matters to God and if everyone matters to God, then everyone should matter to us.

It is only fair that we ask the question then that lingers ... do they? Does everyone really matter to God? Should everyone really matter to us?

GOD DO I MATTER TO YOU

Be honest, be real with yourself, have you ever questioned this? Has there ever been a time that you say:

- God do I matter to you?
- God if I mattered to you then ...

I read a story this week about a 29 year old woman named Cintah. She has lived most all of her life in depression, darkness, and loneliness.

When she was 7 years old her dad died and this began her depression. She didn't understand what she was feeling at the time, she didn't understand that she was struggling in such an intense way from this loss. She was only 7.

Then at 16 she lost 80% of her eyesight. That was it. She was done. She lost all faith in God, she lost all hope in God.

Everyone matters to God? Really? Then God why am I going through this? Why is this happening to me? God do you not see me? Do you know me? Do you not even realize that I am here? Have I been overlooked? Or ... do I deserve this?

Depression became a normal part of her life. Nothing would ever be the same again. There was no comfort for her, there was no one or no thing that could give her the peace that she wished for, that she longed for.

She only had room for confusion and anger. She was filled with shame and a negative view of herself. And why not? She didn't even seem to matter to God ... Cintah said:

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"Life became endless darkness, each day living in a world unknown. There were tears of sadness, anger, and frustrations. It was literally a hopeless barrier that felt impossible to conquer.

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As a person who never showed my emotions in front of anyone, I was severely broken in spirit. Hiding my depression from family

was something I became very good at. Secretly, I broke down every single day. It truly felt like millions of thorns were piercing through my heart.

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I was at the edge of a breaking point, ready to jump, ready to tell God that I had chosen my path--to give up."

Have you experienced those times? Have you had those moments where you are ready to just throw the towel in and give up? Those times where you reach out to God saying, "God are you even there?" "God do you even care?" "God do I matter to you, even a little?"

GOD DO THEY MATTER TO YOU

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For some of us we hear that everyone matters to God and we say really? Everyone? Even them? Even after what they have done?

I remember when I was in High School, I really started to realize how broken this world is. How broken the people in this world are.

There was a boy that was kidnapped, molested, and murdered ... and his killer was on the loose. I remember when they found him and arrested him. There was so much anger going through my community.

People were saying all of the things that should happen to this man. To this killer. To this child molester.

- I hope he rots in jail
- I hope that someone shows him what it feels like
- I hope he gets what he deserves
- I hope he burns in hell

These are real things that we say, real feeling we have. These are the people that we look at and say ... everyone? Really God? Everyone matters to you? Even him? Even them? Even after what they did?

When we say that everyone matters to God ... we don't clump them into it. Everyone that has a conscious matters to God, but not them ... they are a monster. God do they really matter to you?

And God says ...

EZEKIEL 18:21-23

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²¹"But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

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²²None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live.

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²³Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

God says ... yes, even the wicked matter to me. Even the wicked I will forgive. Even the wicked I will forget the worst of their sins and deeds. Why? Because everyone matters to God.

FOR ALL NATIONS

And look, we see this throughout the entirety of scripture.

There is this false view that since God had a chosen nation, that all other nations He was against. This is just not true. God had a chosen nation, so that ...

He had a chosen nation ... so that ... they would be a blessing to all nations.

GENESIS 12:1-3

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¹Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

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²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

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³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

It was God's plan and desire that all families of the earth should be blessed because of Israel. Because of His covenant with Abraham.

And all nations were blessed because Jesus came from the line of Abraham, but was that it? Was that all that God meant for them. Just to keep the family tree going until Jesus could be born? Or did He expect Israel to bless the nations, to be for the nations in another way too.

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Sure God was preparing the way for Jesus, but God's love was and is for the entirety of His creation and when He gave the Israelites instructions for right living ... it wasn't so that they could be above all other people. It was so that they could be the light for the rest of the World.

We see throughout scripture constantly where the nations eyes were on Israel. They were watching. God said don't do this ... because the nations are watching you. Do thisbecause the nations are watching you.

Like a child learning from their parent's actions ... the world was watching to see what this nation, who had a covenant with God ... what would this nation do? What is this nation doing?

Because whatever this nation does, it will tell us more about God. However they live, it will help us to know their God better.

This was Israel's role, to be set apart in how they live, so that the world would be blessed even if just by seeing them live for God. So that the world would know God through them.

But listen to what God says in Ezekiel. This not only shows God's great love for all nations, all people, every one. But it shows the role that Israel was supposed to be playing in delivering God's love to the World.

EZEKIEL 34:1-4

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¹The word of the Lord came to me:

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²"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?"

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³You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep.

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⁴The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you

have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.

EZEKIEL 34:11

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¹¹"For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out.

EZEKIEL 34:15-16

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¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God.

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¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

Look at what disappointed God. God cares about us when we are sick and injured. He cares about us when we are weak. He cares about us when we are lost and when we have strayed.

He cares so much He took the reins. The Israelites would no longer be the shepherds for the world. God would shepherd His sheep. He Himself would come to them and seek them out.

And God does this doesn't He? He comes to this world, fully man and fully God. Why? Because He is the good shepherd. He

came to seek out the lost sheep and to give His life for the sheep. To pay the price for our sins.

JOHN 10:11

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¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

If you haven't realized, we are the sheep. And that is exactly what Jesus did. He laid down His life. He gave everything for us. Not just through His sacrificial death, but He sacrificed in the way He lived. He lived as a servant to the World. He healed the sick, cared for those that were mourning, strengthened the weak, and sought the lost.

Why? Because every one of us matters to God. And when He gave His life ... who did He give it for? For everyone ... God so loved the WORLD, that He gave His son ...

2 PETER 3:9

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⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

1 TIMOTHY 2:3-4

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³This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,
⁴who desires all people to be saved and to come to the
knowledge of the truth.

He desires that none should perish and that all should repent. He desires all to be saved. Why? Because everyone matters to God.

BUT ... we go through these times in our lives where we say ... really God? Everyone? God they matter to you? God I matter to you? Are you even with me now? Do you really care about what I am going through?

VIDEO – NATHAN SCHROER

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Something awesome happened in Nathan's life. Did you see that. Nathan finally realized just how big God is.

Nathan had felt God's presence, but ignored His power. He said God heal me, save me, let me not lose my life ... and then He realized just how big God is. Praying to save his life, his physical life. To be healed just in this life ... that is far too small a prayer.

God has a great love for all people and a great desire to save all people. Not from physical affliction, but from an eternity apart from Him.

See this is what I think happened to Israel. They saw His presence in their lives, but ignored His real power. So they began focusing on themselves. Their situation. Their problems.

Their successes. They began trying to provide for themselves and ignoring the purpose that God had for them.

God built them up so that ... the world ... whom He loves ... would be blessed by them. How? By knowing Him as Lord. Why? Because everyone matters to God.

When Nathan realized this very simple principle ... God is huge and He loves me. God is powerful and He loves the World. Nathan changed. He began to see God for who He is and He began to see the World like God sees the World.

He served sexual abuse victims, he trained officers overseas, he ministered at both his job and his Church. He served his family and his community.

He didn't go sky diving and rocky mountain climbing. He went out into the world seeking, and healing, and loving.

WE ARE HIS BODY

Often we see where Jesus says that He is the good shepherd and we think ...

- I could never care for people in the way Jesus does.
- I could never seek the lost like He does. I could never bring them back like He does.
- I could never be a Shepherd like Him.

And to some extent you're right. He is the good shepherd and you by yourself are not.

But we ... the Church ... we are the body of Christ. We are the physical representation of Christ. The World will know us (as His body) by our love.

And see, the God who loves the World so much that He gave His life ... look at what He commands. Look at how He tells us ... His body ... that we can love Him back.

JOHN 21:17

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¹⁷He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

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Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

We are going to spend the next 4 weeks looking at the people that God has put in our lives. We are going to look at our Church, our Home, our places of Work, and our Community ... and we are going to look at these places through God's eyes ... eyes that say everyone matters.

Each week we are going to talk about how we can feed the sheep, how we are supposed to be feeding the sheep. The good shepherd, who loves the World ... has put the care of the World into our hands. He has handed us this tremendous responsibility of caring for, nurturing, and loving the World.

How we can live realizing God's power and our potential to do what He has called us to do?

How we can live our lives abundantly in Christ?

How can live knowing that everyone matters?

PRAYER

COMMUNION