* **Series Slide**
* I’m going to attempt this morning to explain what happens to you when you fall into a black hole.
  + http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20150525-a-black-hole-would-clone-you
* But I’m not Stephen Hawking. So I’m going to rely on a BBC earth article from 2015.
* “**A black hole is a place where the laws of physics as we know them break down. Einstein taught us that gravity warps space itself, causing it to curve. So given a dense enough object, space-time can become so warped that it twists in on itself, burrowing a hole through the very fabric of reality.**
* **A massive star that has run out of fuel can produce the kind of extreme density needed to create such a mangled bit of world. As it buckles under its own weight and collapses inward, space-time caves in with it. The gravitational field becomes so strong that not even light can escape, rendering the region where the star used to be profoundly dark: a black hole.**
* **“The instant you entered the black hole, reality would split in two. In one, you would be instantly incinerated, and in the other you would plunge on into the black hole utterly unharmed.”**
* Ok, that was a lot of science.
* Here’s the basic idea.
* When a star runs out of gas- the area around it collapses in on itself and instead of giving off a great deal of light- that space now sucks light into itself- creating a massive black hole.
* If a person were to enter that black hole- (and this is where it gets crazy)- theoretically- you would become two realities at once. To yourself- you would seem “fine”. In other words- still whole, conscious, I suppose floating in space.
* But imagine from the spaceship, your friend was watching out of the window of your spacecraft. She would see you being torn into pieces and incinerated at the same time.
* **Title slide-** **“Black Holes (Literally) Suck: How Grumbling & Arguing Spoil Our Mission & Sacrifice Saves It”- Philippians 2:12-30**
* In the part of Paul’s letter to the Philippians that we are going to cover today, he’s going to offer us a choice- shine like stars, or collapse like a black hole.
* Give off light in the darkness- or suck the light out of everyone you know.
* **Philippians 2:12-30**
* **12 Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose. 14 Do everything without grumbling and arguing, 15 so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world, 16 by holding firm to the word of life. Then I can boast in the day of Christ that I didn’t run or labor for nothing. 17 But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrificial service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 In the same way you should also be glad and rejoice with me.**
* **19 Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so that I too may be encouraged by news about you. 20 For I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests; 21 all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know his proven character, because he has served with me in the gospel ministry like a son with a father. 23 Therefore, I hope to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. 24 I am confident in the Lord that I myself will also come soon.**
* **25 But I considered it necessary to send you Epaphroditus ​— ​my brother, coworker, and fellow soldier, as well as your messenger and minister to my need ​— ​ 26 since he has been longing for all of you and was distressed because you heard that he was sick. 27 Indeed, he was so sick that he nearly died. However, God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 For this reason, I am very eager to send him so that you may rejoice again when you see him and I may be less anxious. 29 Therefore, welcome him in the Lord with great joy and hold people like him in honor, 30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up what was lacking in your ministry to me.**
* **Transition**: In the entire letter to the Philippians- a letter about how joy relates to the mission of the church- in the ENTIRE LETTER- there are only two specific things that Paul tells the church to NOT DO. I mean, he does tell them about some attitudes to reject….but I’m talking about things that you actually can DO.
* And in all the litany of things he could say “Don’t do”…
* He doesn’t say “Don’t have sex outside of marriage.”
* He doesn’t say “Don’t physically attack people”
* He doesn’t say “Don’t steal, or lie, or any of the 10 commandments”
* The only 2 concrete commands of things NOT TO DO in the entire book of Philippians…are DO NOT GRUMBLE OR ARGUE.
* Because Grumbling and Arguing turn you into a Black Hole.
* **1) Grumbling & Arguing suck life & spoil mission.** 
  + First, Let me show you the mission in these verses.
  + **V 13**
  + Paul writes that God is working in the church according to his good purpose.
  + In other words, God is working his mission through the church.
  + God has purpose for the church in the world.
  + What is that purpose?
  + **V 15**
  + Specifically to shine like stars in darkness.
  + In a perverted and crooked generation- the church’s mission is to shine- to stand out- positively- as a people of great depth, and beauty, and love.
  + The purpose of the church, as Jesus said, is to be light in a dark world.
  + Where there is hurt, and pain, and anger, and abuse, and evil, and pride and selfishness and isolation… the church is called to shine- to bring comfort and peace, and encouragement and good, and humility, and selflessness- as a part of a family- together the children of God our Father.
  + Where there is satanic and demonic and broken humanity- the church is to live like Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit to give a picture of redeemed and restored and holy humanity.
  + Notice the description of the *opposite* of the church.
  + NOT the CHILDREN OF GOD.
  + Rather the PERVERTED AND CROOKED CHILDREN.
  + That’s what a generation is. A group of kids born about the same time.
  + Ok, so if the Children of God are shining stars.
  + Then, what happens when stars burn out?
  + **A massive star that has run out of fuel can become so warped that it twists in on itself, burrowing a hole through the very fabric of reality.**
  + That’s the description of a black hole. Warped. Twisted in on itself. That’s exactly what the opposite of being God’s children is- Perverted, crooked.
  + The opposite of being a shining star living out God’s purpose and mission- is being a black hole- turned in on yourself.
  + **V 14**
  + And the outworking of that is Grumbling and Arguing.
  + Think about the severity of that.
  + Doesn’t grumbling and arguing not seem that big a deal.
  + It seems like something we consider a “minor” sin.
  + Not one we’re afraid to admit. You know its like “gossip” or the ever ambiguous “pride”.
  + Its not one that makes us cover our mouth and gasp.
  + “She’s been (*GASP)* grumbling and arguing!”
  + Right? Definitely not something you want to do, but its one of the minor offenses.
  + But here, Paul uses it as THE THING that will derail the church from the mission of God.
  + Paul’s word choice here is a reference to the children of Israel during their 40 year wandering in the desert.
  + In fact, the whole reason that Israel spent 40 years wandering around a desert, and an entire generation died before they could even enter the promised land- was all rooted in grumbling and arguing.
  + They grumbled that God wasn’t going to take care of them (even though he miraculously delivered them from Egyptian slavery).
  + Then they argued with Moses about whether they should even trust God and follow his leadership.
  + That all led to worshipping a Golden Calf…and then a plague on the children of God that killed many of them.
* **Back to 1)**
  + To grumble is to complain.
  + You know what this is.
  + Its to focus on what you think you are missing…rather than what you have.
  + or to focus on exclusively on the fault of someone else…rather than on your own sin.
  + Or to focus on circumstances you can’t control that you think are unfair…rather than on what you have been called and gifted by God to do.
  + That’s when we grumble. That’s when we complain.
  + Arguing means quarreling and debating in ways that are divisive.
  + Both are like little pebbles that get in your shoe when you run.
  + They seem so small, but with every step they are a distraction from running the race.
  + And it takes precious time to stop and remove those pesky pebbles.
  + But if a community doesn’t seek to get grumbling and arguing out of its midst- it can derail the whole mission. Put a giant blister on the foot so the body can no longer run.
  + Paul’s is not making this point to one individual, but to a church.
  + He is confronting each member of this church to stop with attitudes and words that tear apart the social fabric of the community.
  + When your conversation is laced with complaints and personal attacks, we lose our distinctive quality as the children of God and sound exactly like the crooked and perverted world.
  + Paul is addressing the way Christians talk with and about each other.
  + Our churches, our communities should be free of griping and bickering.
  + Our Social Media posts and pages should not read as a nitpicky list of things others are getting wrong.
  + When one person in a community grumbles and argues- they become like a black hole.
  + Because complaining and arguing NEED someone else’s ears. They NEED an audience. Complaints and arguments NEED someone else to engage- to cheer them on- to say “you know, that guy really DOES kind of tick me off too”
  + Grumbling and arguing NEVER push toward a face to face conversation with the person who hurt you…but always try to rally others to agreement. Misery loves company.
  + In that way, complainers and arguers are like a black hole. They suck others into their darkness.
  + And just like a black hole- when you get sucked in- you can’t even see it in yourself- You can’t see yourself being torn apart. In your eyes, you’re complaints are justified. It takes someone from the outside seeing you being torn apart, burned up – to tell you, “Hey, you’re being sucked into something that is extinguishing your light. Its sucking the life out of you…and its starting to drain the life out of me! Its derailing you from your calling. Turn around. Repent. Get out of there!”
  + Don’t turn in on yourself and become crooked and warped...instead- lets be light in the darkness.
  + Let’s do the opposite of grumbling and complaining.
  + Let’s be the opposite of a black hole.
  + Lets be shining stars.
* Transition: …and the opposite of grumbling and complaining is loving sacrifice. Because….
* **2) Sacrifice gives life & fuels mission.**
  + The sun is incredible.
  + I could give you a lot of statistics about the sun…
  + …but frankly, I didn’t want to look them up.
  + The sun is a star.
  + A HUGE BALL OF BURNING GAS that- at its own expense (its burning up, not burning us up)- lights and heats our world.
  + Stars have been- even dating to ancient times- used for navigation. They not only light up the night (and in the sun’s case- light up the day)- but they help provide direction.
  + In Paul’s day, when he is speaking about “Stars” he is talking about “heavenly bodies”. Stars as representatives of spiritual beings closely connected to God.
  + Additionally- there is a very close reference here to the ending of the book of Daniel.
  + **Daniel 12:2-3**
  + **2 Many who sleep in the dust**
  + **of the earth will awake,**
  + **some to eternal life,**
  + **and some to disgrace and eternal contempt.**
  + **3 Those who have insight will shine**
  + **like the bright expanse of the heavens,**
  + **and those who lead many to righteousness,**
  + **like the stars forever and ever.**
  + Daniel writes about the final resurrection from the dead.
  + Notice- he says some will resurrect to eternal life- that’s the children of God. Others- the children of the crooked and perverted way- will have eternal contempt.
  + Then Daniel writes about those who have resurrected to eternal life…and he refers to them as bright stars in the heavens leading others to righteousness. Stars that don’t burn out- but last forever.
  + **V 15**
  + Paul takes those future stars- from a future resurrection- and look what he does- he brings them down to earth in the present.
  + He is uniting heaven with earth.
  + He is saying “Christ resurrected- and church- we resurrected with him.- at least our spirit has. We have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. We don’t have to wait to shine. We don’t have to wait to lead others to righteousness. We don’t have to wait for the end of days for heaven to be united to earth- by God’s Holy Spirit working in us- we can bring heaven to earth NOW.”
  + Not by grumbling and arguing- but through loving & joyful sacrifice.
  + **V 17**
  + I say sacrifice because that's where Paul points by the example of his own life and the lives of Timothy and Epahphroditus.
  + Paul points to his own sacrifice- being poured out like a drink offering- so that the Philippians will have faith in Jesus.
  + And he says that when he sees his sacrifice result in something good in their life- he rejoices.
  + **V 18**
  + Likewise, he says, he wants them to sacrifice for others outside of the church- to show them the beautiful love of Christ- and then they will rejoice with him. experiencing the joy of burning like a star to give light to a dark world. To show a crooked generation the beautiful way of God.
  + Then, he gives Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples of sacrifice.
  + **V 29-30**
  + He says to welcome E. with great joy and hold him in honor- BECAUSE he sacrificed- he risked his life for the work of Christ- in order to minister to them when Paul was imprisoned and couldn’t make it to them.
* **Back to 2)**
  + Over and over here he points out the way of the stars.
  + They don’t suck life like black holes…instead they give life.
  + When you are around a shining star- you get joy from them. You get fueled for mission.
  + You are invigorated to live a life worthy of the calling you have received from God.
  + You want to be a better you.
  + That is the direct opposite of a way a black hole sucks you in.
  + A shining star sends you out. It fuels mission.
  + Did you see the way Paul points to his own sacrifice- not to receive glory- but as an example that the Philippian church will do the same…for some one else.
  + A shining star pays it forward and asks others to Pay it forward.
  + I know what you’re thinking- easier said than done.
  + That’s why Paul gives us instruction here as to how to be an eternally burning star- instead of one that burns out and turns into a black hole.
  + **V 12-13**
  + First, he tells this church- “Hey, you guys have been doing great. But don’t just do this when me or my guys are around. Don’t just straighten up and act right for my sake. Instead- you need practice GOD’s Presence.
  + That’s what he means by work out your salvation with fear and trembling.
  + This doesn’t mean that God wants you to do this to figure out if you are worth saving.
  + It means- GOD HAS SAVED YOU from your sin.
  + He has given you his Holy Spirit.
  + HE has given you everything you need for life and godliness.
  + Jesus has died for your sin and resurrected and invited you into his family.
  + NOW- that you have that salvation- in you. WORK IT OUT.
  + You have been given all the gas to BURN- now BURN. BE A LIGHT.
  + Jesus said, “No one hides a light under a bushel, but puts it on a post for to give light to everyone.”
  + Let your good works SHINE before men- so that they will know your heavenly father and worship him.
  + After all- its not YOU that’s doing the work. It is the God that saved you that is working in you to complete his mission of love!
  + And notice he says do it with FEAR AND TREMBLING.
  + That is a reference, again, to Israel’s encounter with a personal God in the OT.
  + It doesn’t mean be afraid of God.
  + It means be AWARE of God’s presence
  + It means…
  + **Practice God’s presence.**
  + Very simply- practicing God’s presence is being aware that God is with you in everything you do.
  + There are several ways you can do this. Paul is about to give you the best one…but I’ll give you a couple that I use.
  + I have a Celtic cross on my keychain that says “Peace”. I often reach into my pocket and run my fingers over this cross to remind me of my salvation that Jesus purchased for me with his blood…and my calling to live a life of sacrificial love for others.
  + Before I step up here to preach every week, I make the sign of the cross. Not as a good luck charm, but to remind me as I preach to you that this is not a moment of self exaltation, but of sacrifice. I’m to be poured out like a drink offering for your sake- not to try to get you to like me and affirm me- which is a devastating and real temptation for me.
  + These are moments that I am actively DOING something to remind me that I am holy, that God is with me, and he has set me apart for his good purpose- to sacrifice so that others Know his love.
  + But those pale in comparison to the best way to practice God’s presence- that is…
  + **Meditate on Scripture.**
  + When the black hole of grumbling and complaining starts pulling you into its gravity- you need something weightier to hold on to…to keep you from drifting into it.
  + **V 16**
  + Paul writes- Hold firm to the word of life.
  + That verb- Hold firm literally means to fix your attention to.
  + And word of life- is talking about God’s revealed word. The word about Christ. The Bible.
  + This is where meditation comes in.
  + The Hebrew word for meditation in the old testament is interesting. Because its very similar to the idea of grumbling.
  + Except with different results.
  + It literally means to mutter.
  + It means to think over in a way that you are kind of having a conversation with yourself about the meaning of the text.
  + Its also is a word that refers to a lion devouring its prey.
  + So grumbling focuses on someone elses perceived faults and mutters to others….(*AUDIBLE MUTTERING)*
  + But meditation focuses on the word of God and mutters to oneself in a way to understand what it is saying.
  + Then mediation always leads to responding to what God says, first and foremost- in prayer.
  + This is what we do primarily in our hear journals and on the City Church podcast.
  + Literally, that podcast is usually me reading a text….muttering to myself about it…and then responding in prayer…which then shapes what I do at work and home and in our community.
  + Can you see the vast difference in grumbling and meditating?
  + In arguing and holding firm to the word of life?
  + In being a black hole- or a shining star in the world?
  + In WORKING OUT your salvation- or working out your frustrations?
* Church- there are complainers- and there are sacrificers. There are shining stars that don’t run out of fuel because they are fueled by the love of their savior…and there are black holes that suck the life out of everyone who will give them an ear.
* I wonder which one Jesus is like?
* **Isaiah 53:5-7**
* **5 But he was pierced because of our rebellion,**
* **crushed because of our iniquities;**
* **punishment for our peace was on him,**
* **and we are healed by his wounds.**
* **6 We all went astray like sheep;**
* **we all have turned to our own way;**
* **and the Lord has punished him**
* **for the iniquity of us all.**
* **7 He was oppressed and afflicted,**
* **yet he did not open his mouth.**
* **Like a lamb led to the slaughter**
* **and like a sheep silent before her shearers,**
* **he did not open his mouth.**
* That sounds like sacrifice. Sacrifice for us- without grumbling or complaining. He did not open his mouth.
* In fact when He did open his mouth on the cross- you know what came out?
* Scripture he had meditated on. It was Psalm 22.
* Or- it was a prayer- for those who were killing him. Father forgive them they know not what they do.
* Or- it was a blessing- “Today” he said to the criminal that hung next to him- the one who stopped his grumbling and complaining and said to Jesus- remember me- Jesus replied “Today- you will be with me in paradise”
* And what is that “paradise” like?
* Well- it's the opposite of a black hole.
* **Revelation 22:3-5 & 16**
* **and there will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 Night will be no more; people will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign forever and ever.**
* **16“I, Jesus, … am the Root and descendant of David, the bright morning star.”**
* Church- Jesus has sacrificed to give us life and fuel our mission. He’s not burning out.
* Now- lets work out our salvation in the presence of our Great God. Lets put to death grumbling and arguing- and shine like stars in the world.
* City Church- lets go and multiply the gospel.