

Learning to Be at Home With Hardship

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Preacher: Josh Johnston

[0 : 00] We're now going to turn to our Bible reading, where we'll be continuing our series in Luke's Gospel. So this morning, we're going to be reading from Luke chapter 9, verse 51, to Luke chapter 10, verse 16.

And if you're using our church Bibles this morning, that's on page 868. And this, of course, is the passage that one of our ministers, Josh Johnston, will be preaching to us from later on in the service.

Now, if you've forgotten your Bible this morning, don't worry, there's plenty of visitor's Bibles at both the sides and the back of the room. And I'm sure if you just wave to someone on the welcome team up the back, they'd be delighted to bring a Bible to you.

So that's Luke chapter 9, verse 51. Verse 51.

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him who went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make preparations for him.

[1 : 19] But the people did not receive him. Because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples, James and John, saw it, they said, Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?

But he turned and rebuked them. And they went on to another village. As they were going along the road, someone said to him, I will follow you wherever you go.

And Jesus said to him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests. But the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

To another he said, Follow me. But he said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

And Jesus said to him, Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, Go and proclaim the kingdom of God.

[2 : 41] Yet another said, I will follow you, Lord. But let me first say farewell to those at my home. Jesus said to him, No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.

After this, the Lord appointed 72 others and set them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go.

And he said to them, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

Go your way. Behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no money bag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.

Whatever house you enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him.

[4 : 07] But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide. For the laborer deserves his wages.

Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, The kingdom of God has come near you.

But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you.

Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near. I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

Woe to you, Chorazin. Woe to you, Bethsaida. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

[5 : 36] But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven?

You shall be brought down to Hades. The one who hears you hears me. And the one who rejects you rejects me.

And the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me. Amen.

This is the word of God and we shall return to it later. Do open up once again to Luke chapter 9.

Luke, and so Jesus, don't do false advertising. He isn't interested in a kind of bait and switch message.

[6 : 51] We have seen very clearly, indeed very beautifully and powerfully, the glorious significance of Jesus' arrival, his coming into the world. That is the message of the first half of Luke's gospel.

A picture, a preview of Jesus' glorious kingdom. But Luke is equally clear about the path to that kingdom for Jesus and his followers.

It is the path of the cross. And now from 9.51, Luke is turning our attention fully to that path.

The path to and through Jerusalem. The path to and through the cross. But do you see here, the cross isn't the destination.

The destination is the glorious kingdom that we've seen again and again pictured and previewed so wonderfully. See 9.51, the day drew near for Jesus to be taken up.

[7 : 57] Taken up into heaven. The day for him to ascend to his father's side in heaven to rule over the whole world. That journey will involve going first to Jerusalem and to the cross.

And so Luke uses the metaphor of a journey to shape the rest of his gospel. It's a real journey. It's a journey that will see Jesus arrive in Jerusalem in chapter 19 and then to be taken up in chapter 24.

before. But it's more than just a physical journey to Jerusalem. It's a journey of learning what it is to walk the path to God's kingdom. And so Jesus is journeying and teaching his followers to journey towards that kingdom.

And so we have it very plainly from Luke. No fake news, no bait and switch. That path requires Jesus' followers to learn to be at home with hardship and indeed rejection in this world.

It's a theme woven through our passage this morning. And so firstly, Luke teaches us that that path means we should expect hostility. We see that in verses 51 to 56 of chapter 9.

[9 : 16] Expect hostility. The life of following Jesus means facing real and at times painful rejection. It will very often appear unfair and unmerited.

We mustn't be unprepared for that. Luke is playing with us. Look at verse 51. The days have drawn near for Jesus to be taken up so he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

And so verse 52 he sends messengers off to go and prepare for his arrival in the next village. But notice here that the village that Jesus is going to is a village of the Samaritans.

This is signaling the spreading out of Jesus' ministry and mission outside the bounds of Israel for the first time. The gospel of God's kingdom was going to spread far and wide even to the hated enemies of Israel, the Samaritans.

But notice their response, verse 53. Jesus wasn't to be received. There was no room at this inn. Why?

[10 : 18] Because his face was set towards Jerusalem. This was a rejection based on religious discrimination. There was to be no hospitality to the Jews heading to Jerusalem to celebrate and worship their temple.

Here is a blatantly sectarian refusal of Jesus. There is, of course, a touch of irony to it. For Jesus, him going to Jerusalem wasn't going to be a time of wonderful communion with fellow Jews and worship at the temple.

Rather, he was going to face a thorough and outright rejection by the religious establishment. But regardless of that, the Samaritan village reject Jesus out of sheer prejudice simply for embarking on the journey to Jerusalem, he's rejected out of hand.

And we must be braced for that same experience. Simply for claiming the name Christian, there will come this kind of rejection. Sometimes it can provoke in people almost a visceral reaction that people have to the things of God.

I heard just recently of someone, a Christian, being barked at by an individual. The truth of God was so confronting. They detested it so much.

[11 : 35] They had no words to counter it, and so all that could come out of their minds was a bark at one of Jesus' people. Or I recall a few years ago watching an interview on TV with someone claiming Christians shouldn't be allowed to run businesses.

If Christians won't bend their convictions, if they won't fit in with whatever the latest progressive thing is, if their loyalty to and love for Jesus means they won't change, then they don't belong in the public sphere.

Jesus, who was the most gracious man who has ever lived, who was perfect, yet even he provoked this kind of response, not because his actions were odious or obnoxious, but just for walking his path.

And so those who walk after him ought to expect the same treatment. Now, James and John are affronted at such a response. Don't they know who this is? Don't they know that this is Messiah, the chosen one of God, the true king of the world?

How dare they refuse him? Verse 54, shall we summon fire from heaven to sort them out, to consume them? It's easy for us to wince at such a response, but before we roll our eyes at the silly disciples, it's worth reflecting on this.

[12 : 57] They haven't pulled this idea of fire from heaven out of nowhere. Perhaps they had in mind the incident from 2 Kings 1, where Elijah is confronted by separate groups of 50 men.

They weren't coming for a friendly chat. This wasn't an invitation for dinner for God's prophets. They were a death squad sent to deal with the prophet of God. And so fire from heaven came down and consumed them twice.

Or perhaps the fire that the disciples have in mind is what's referenced a little later in chapter 10, verse 12. The fire that rains down on Sodom, like in Genesis chapter 19.

It isn't without precedent that the fire of judgment can rain down on those who stand hard-heartedly opposed to God and his prophet and his people. I do wonder if there's something we can learn from James and John here, being burdened by the honor of Jesus.

When Jesus is utterly dishonored, when he's flagrantly scorned, mocked, what might it reveal about us if we're unmoved by that? Well, as it is, James and John's zeal is misapplied.

[14 : 12] Jesus says, no, that's not the way for now. A day for judgment would come, and we'll see that later, but it wasn't today. It's not that dishonoring Jesus is no big deal, but rather Jesus' ministry was heralding the day of salvation.

It was a time of patience. And so verse 56, they're to move to another village. It isn't for us to deal with those who reject Jesus. Fire will come, but not at our beckoning.

Sometimes all that we can do is accept hostility and move on. Engage instead with those who will hear and heed the news of the kingdom of God. But notice, too, that Jesus listens to those who do not want him and his message.

That in itself is very sobering, isn't it? When somebody makes clear they want nothing to do with the gospel, when they are totally unwelcoming of Jesus, any talk of him, he listens, and they'll move on.

But Luke is wanting us to see here that Jesus' followers mustn't be deterred from the path because hostility rears its head. Be prepared for it. Don't reel against it.

[15 : 29] Accept it. Now, as we brace ourselves to have the hostility and hardship of the path to Jesus' kingdom, we don't do that ignorantly, and we don't do it underprepared or under-resourced.

Notice, Luke draws attention to Jesus' face here twice, in verse 51 and in verse 53. He had set his face towards Jerusalem.

But that isn't just an idiom. You see, Jesus is picking up words from Isaiah chapter 50, verse 7, words of the suffering servant, words we've seen Luke draw upon again and again.

And the suffering servant set his face like a flint. The suffering servant had experienced unexplained suffering, and yet he stands firm, he endures it in faith, because the Lord God helps me.

Therefore, I have set my face like a flint, and know that I shall not be put to shame. I take it that Luke wants us to have this in mind.

[16 : 37] Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem and beckons his disciples to follow him, and he does so with a rock-solid confidence that the Lord God is his and is our helper.

As Ralph Davis puts it, Jesus turns toward Jerusalem where he will be victimized and vindicated. That's his commitment. Jesus walks the path to the cross with total confidence in the Lord God.

And so we walk that path after him. As we face hardship and hostility, we're assured that we can have that same confidence that God is our helper, and he will not let us be put to shame.

Yes, we'll be victimized in this world, but we'll also be vindicated. Expect hostility.

But secondly, Luke teaches us that earth isn't our home. in verses 57 to 62, earth isn't our home. Jesus' followers will find that we do not belong to this world.

[17 : 44] Notice verse 57, they are on the way, walking the path to Jesus' kingdom. And as they do, so we find three would-be disciples coming to Jesus in these verses, and each interaction makes something clear about what it means to follow Jesus.

And so with the first disciple we see following Jesus means being uncomfortable in this world, verse 57 and 58. Don't be surprised if you feel like you really do not fit in in this world.

It's because you don't. And that is because we belong to the world to come. And it's important that we grasp that in order to let our heavenly home shape our priorities in this world.

So notice the first would-be disciple says, I'll follow you wherever you go. Sounds wonderful, full of devotion and promise. Sometimes we can be given to grand claims of loyalty and devotion until reality bites.

See what Jesus says? Foxes have holes, birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Jesus' response to this grand claim of devotion is, do you know that it will mean forsaking this world's security?

[19 : 04] Even animals have a home in this world, but Jesus didn't, and you won't. Jesus is being plain and realistic with this would-be disciple.

Following me means holding very loosely to this world's security, to this world's comforts. It means not being as at home in this world as those who don't belong to Jesus.

And we find that, don't we, regularly, that our priorities, our choices clash with and confound those who belong to this world. Aren't we often left feeling that we're outsiders in this world?

I know we've had some of our youngsters in school left to eat their lunch alone every day because they take Jesus seriously. Others know that and hate that and mock that.

Or how many of us feel left out in the office or staff room when we're mocked and teased for choosing a different way to our colleagues? Sort of the butt of all the jokes.

[20 : 08] Friends, those feelings of being on the outside of not fitting in, well, that's because we don't. Jesus is saying our home isn't this world.

We, of all people, knew that Jesus has promised wonderful things. We knew that one day he's coming back. We knew that there's another world, that one day that world will rule over this one majestically, wonderfully.

A world where all that's evil and wrong will be gone. No more tears, no more death. And so, of course, that shapes and reshapes our lives today.

It means that we see everything through a different lens to those who live and work beside us. Because we know that this world isn't ultimate, and so our roots cannot be planted too deeply in this one.

For those who are unaware of or who reject the world to come, then of course it makes sense for their roots to be planted deeply here. Always eyeing up home improvements or career advancement to fund a bigger and better home or life, a life that involves more sunshine or whatever it is that you love, to be more and more established and comfortable and secure in this world.

[21 : 27] But Jesus makes clear that his followers must hold loosely to these things, because the more at ease and more comfortable and more established we are in this world, means we may just be losing our foundations in the world to come.

Jesus is clear to all who would follow him. Our home cannot be this world and in the world to come. Well, following Jesus also means being uncompromising with our priority, verses 59 and 60.

Jesus calls upon us to take, Jesus call upon us must take precedence over every other call, however worthy they are. Verse 59, this would be disciples actually summoned by Jesus, following me, he says, but the response comes, let me first go and bury my father.

And that word first is so important in these verses. We see it again in verse 61. But Jesus demands that his call upon us is first.

Now this man's request doesn't seem totally unreasonable in first reading. We don't know if this man's father was already dead or if he was dying, or perhaps this man simply means let me first await my inheritance before then taking up this new phase of life.

[22 : 53] Whatever the case is, he's asking to tend to other things first. And maybe Jesus' response here is shocking to us. I'm sure to many of us it might be. Particularly for those who really do seek to cherish family.

because the truth is we do have real responsibilities to our family and there can often be real expectations from them. But nonetheless, Jesus says that his claim must come first because Jesus is God's king, summoning people to follow him.

Jesus' words throughout this passage are not comfortable, but they are clear. Jesus was summoning someone to an urgent task. You see that a little later in 10 verse 2, we see a shortage of laborers.

And here was Jesus summoning someone to that laborer. And so Jesus is saying that family expectations cannot get in the way of his kingdom and his work.

Where a clash between these two spheres presents itself, Jesus' call upon us comes first. the call of his kingdom must take absolute priority.

[24 : 08] It comes even above good and right responsibilities in this world, even above family. Because even our earthly families only belong to this world to this age.

The family that belongs to the world to come is our spiritual one. Now this isn't to say that Christians take no interest in their families, not at all. Those who don't care for their families properly are worse than the pagans, according to Paul.

In Mark 7, Jesus rebukes those who twist God's law to mean that they don't need to tend to their parents. We're to honor father and mother. But our earthly families, indeed other good and right responsibilities in this world, can be things that pull us off the path of God's glorious kingdom.

if we get their place wrong. Jesus' call upon us, his claim upon us must come first. Because his kingdom is where we truly belong.

Not in this world. And not with this world's concerns. And that can be a means of real hardship. Particularly when it may cause real ructions in our earthly families.

[25 : 19] But look at what Jesus says. Verse 60, leave the dead, leave the spiritually dead, I take it, to bury their own dead. As for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.

Do you see, it isn't just about priority, it's also a case of urgency. The harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few. Jesus is seeking to spread his kingdom across the world, and that's urgent.

Nobody else is going to do that. Do you see, other people can bury the dead. But other people cannot proclaim the kingdom of God. Only those whose home is in heaven are able to do that.

And those whose home is in heaven must be given to seeing the spread of that kingdom. There are all kinds of good causes in this world, all kinds of charities, all kinds of concerns.

But Jesus' words here speak to this. The top priority of the Christian and the church is the kingdom of God, and proclaiming it and spreading news of it abroad. That's an exclusive claim.

[26 : 30] And so it means that it's not family. It's not caring for creation. It's not tackling racism. It's not a million and one other things.

Our top priority must be proclaiming the kingdom of God, getting priority of our time, of our money, of how we shape our family's life. Now, of course, this doesn't mean that we're all to quit our jobs and go to Cornhill.

Of course not. But it may mean that some of us are required to forego careers that we've dreamt of, or perhaps that our families have dreamt of for us.

These things are hard. Family is dear to us. Many other causes have places in our hearts. Careers can be precious to us. That cost is a real cost.

But it's not a hidden cost. Jesus is playing about it. Even the things that are most dear to us cannot get in the way of following Jesus.

[27 : 43] Then we also see that following Jesus means being undivided in our commitment, verses 61 and 62. Our Christian faith and service cannot fit around anything else in life.

Verse 61 again, let me first say farewell to those at home. The lesson here is that following Jesus cannot be done with a divided heart. Ancient and Eastern cultures had customs around farewells and hospitality, and they would often be drawn out affairs.

And such a thing could provoke or amplify the wrench that it is to say goodbye. I think that's what's being gotten at here. These verses tackle a divided heart, wanting to follow Jesus, but to also have some time first to enjoy life as it is, or to have our old lives alongside life with Jesus.

Certainly seems to be the thrust of Jesus' answer. Verse 62, to plow effectively, one's eyes need to be focused on what is ahead, not looking backwards.

Those who've watched Clarkson's farm will have seen Jeremy Clarkson making a mess of various fields by not keeping a clear and straight path forwards. He's teased about it mercilessly.

[29 : 08] Constantly wanting to look back, back at what we're leaving behind, will pull us off course. Letting our old life retain a grip on us will get us into a mess.

And I wonder if this isn't just another little note of Sodom coming through. Remember the fire? Verse 54 and 10, verse 12, Sodom's judgment. And then here, do you see that?

Those who look back are not fit for the kingdom of God. Just like Lot's wife, who looked back with a sense of longing for what she was leaving behind.

We cannot have a little bit of the life that we've left behind mixed in with what Jesus has called us to do. A divided heart will lead us astray. We cannot have a bit of church, yes, but I still really want to prioritize my successful career and I'll do whatever is necessary and go wherever is necessary for that.

Or I'll bring my children to church most of the time. But what I really want for them is to be set up to make their home in this world. The best education, the best opportunities.

[30 : 25] And so not the best preparation of a life in service to God. If church becomes the thing that fits around anything else, then that will tell eventually.

Where hobbies or a desire for a certain lifestyle or for our children or anything else nudge church ever so slightly out of the way, if there's a splitting of loyalties, a divided heart, in the long run, it will tell.

Jesus is clear about that. But he's clear in the context of all that he has been saying. What is at stake in all of this is nothing short of heaven. That glorious kingdom that Luke has shown us again and again and again.

Following Jesus is following him, yes, in self-denial, yes, to Jerusalem and the cross, but ultimately following him to be taken up with him to glory, to our true home.

Well, finally, Luke shows us that to follow Jesus means to engage in the harvest.

- [31 : 32] Chapter 10, verses 1 to 16 means to engage in the harvest. Following Jesus means sharing his concern for those who are lost in unbelief, even doing so amidst hostility.
- Following Jesus means playing our part in the gospel being declared to the world. And again, we see three aspects to this. Firstly, in verses 1 and 2, the scoop of gospel mission. The gospel is to reach to the end of the earth, and so Jesus' people must take their part seriously in that. Look at verse 1. Do you see, this work is no longer just the work of the 12.
- Gospel ministry isn't just for the apostles. Jesus appoints many, many more than that, 72 others. And he sends them out, notice, to every time and place where Jesus was going to go.
- You'll see if you've got a footnote in your Bible that there's some disputes here over whether the number should be 72 or 70. And there's actually some similar discussion about Genesis chapter 10 and the list of all the nations of the world from Noah's descendants.
- [32 : 46] There, again, is it 70 or 72? I don't think we need to get bogged down in this, but it's enough to say that there is likely a connection between this number and the list of the nations in Genesis 10.
- The point is, Jesus' mission is spreading out further and further. It is set to go to all the nations of the world. That's the scope. We've already seen Jesus moving outside of Israel to Samaritan territory, and he's making clear here that the scope of his mission is global.
- 72 disciples for the 72 nations that made up the world. But more than that, look at verse 2. Jesus also says that the harvest is plentiful.
- Jesus is expecting that many will respond to him in faith, that many will hear and heed the gospel and repent. I think sometimes we can be pessimistic Calvinists.
- We know that God can save anybody. We know that he's sovereign in salvation. But we're just not really expecting it to happen much in our sphere.
- [34 : 00] I see Paul Brennan has just recently written an article for us on this. It's on our church website if you want to read it. Recommend it. But look at what Jesus says. The harvest is plentiful.
- Not it may be plentiful, or let's hope it's plentiful. He says it is. The lack isn't numbers of people to respond to Jesus.
- Jesus says the lack is in the laborers for the harvest. I wonder if sometimes we think it's the opposite. The laborers are many, but the harvest is small.
- Jesus says that's not so. There's an urgency to Jesus' call upon us, and that urgency has to do with joining his mission to rescue people from eternal darkness and judgment.
- That urgency is what means the responsibilities of family and all the rest need to be subordinated to our service of Jesus. Perhaps we need to learn to be optimistic Calvinists.
- [35 : 02] Jesus is sovereign in salvation, and he will and is saving people. What if he saved the people I know and love? What can I do to play a part in that?
- I notice, too, Jesus' message to those he sends into the harvest is to seek more laborers. Pray about that, too, he says. It's important for us to grasp that it is not a side task, a kind of luxury in church life to train people for gospel ministry.
- It's a concern that runs right beside evangelism. Do you see that? Those whom Jesus is sending out, he also says, pray that more workers will come. Because the gospel is to reach the world, and the harvest is plentiful.
- Well, that's the scope. Well, what about the shape of gospel ministry, verses 3 to 9? We don't have time to look at all of this in depth.

We are going to look at six Ps that pull out some of the points. Don't worry, they're short. Things that speak to those given to full-time ministry, yes, but actually things that speak to all of us who are engaged in ministry as part of this church.

- [36 : 20] And so firstly, gospel ministry is marked with peril, verse 3. Jesus sends his followers out as lambs amongst wolves.

We're to expect hostility, as we've seen. But that doesn't mean that we don't go. In fact, we go as lambs amongst wolves, not with weapons, not with great strength, but following in the footsteps in the most real way possible.

Following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus himself, the sacrificial lamb of God. It's peril. Gospel ministry must be purposeful, verse 4.

Travel light. This is an urgent task. Don't be waylaid with endless hospitality along the way, being well thought of by everyone rather than getting to that which is most important.

It's purposeful. Gospel ministry is offering peace terms, verse 5 and 6. We must be clear about what it is that we're doing and saying.

- [37 : 26] The offer of the gospel is a declaration that the victorious king is coming. That's what these disciples were doing, heralding that Jesus was on his way to this very time.

They're preparing the way, preparing people for the monumental decision facing them. Submit to Jesus and know the everlasting peace and prosperity of his kingdom. Or refuse him and never know peace again.

Refuse him and face endless hostility at the hands of God himself. Do you see? It is the word of the gospel that does the work. Verse 6, the gospel will truly bring peace or peace will depart.

Gospel ministry has eternal consequences. And that is why gospel ministry must have adequate provision. Verse 7, where the gospel message is received, there will be provision for its messengers.

But because of the urgency of the task, because of the eternal consequences at stake, Jesus' ministers mustn't be overly taken up with their material provisions. Moving from house to house in search of finer things, of a better offer.

- [38 : 47] But notice this goes both ways. God's messengers, his ministers, ought not to make a fuss over what's provided for them. Being careful not to long for more and better. Satisfied with adequate provision.

Not to do so could be the beginnings of a divided heart. But at the same time, verse 7, a laborer does deserve his wages. The ox isn't to be muzzled.

And the reality is that how ministry is provided for in Luke's gospel does show how the gospel is being received. And so the onus is on those who receive the gospel to make provisions.

To be on the front foot. Not leaving Jesus' messengers having to seek it and ask for it. But also that speaks to our preferences, verse 8.

Gospel ministry sacrifices our preferences. Don't let your stomach be an obstacle. And then verse 9, gospel ministry has real power.

- [39 : 48] Because it's confronting people with the kingdom of God. It's confronting people with the reality of the breaking in of the world to come. In Jesus' earthly ministry, this was manifested in his miraculous saving power.

His power and mastery over demons and disease and even death. As we've seen so beautifully. But that was part of a unique era in history. Now, the gospel of the crucified, risen, ascended and reigning Jesus does the same thing.

It confronts people with the joy of the kingdom of God. The gospel message that we now have in full brings the kingdom of God near to people.

Bringing certainty that Jesus is coming back to judge the world. And coming back to claim his people. Who've turned to him. To take them up with him to his glorious kingdom.

Which will spread across this whole world. The gospel has real power. And we see that particularly then.

[40 : 56] In the starkness of the gospel message. Verses 10 to 16. The starkness of the gospel message. When the gospel is refused.

It signals a truly terrible future. Rejecting the gospel. Rejecting God's word. Which reaches out to us. Is a terrible, terrible decision.

And that needs to be made plain. It is never for us to call down judgment. As James and John suggested. But it is for us to alert people.

To the very real peril. That comes to refusing Jesus. That's the beating heart. Of reaching out with the gospel.

Don't go that way. Do you see verses 10 and 11? If you don't receive the message. That rejection will stand as a testimony against you. It lines up for you.

[42 : 01] Verse 12. Judgment worse than what Sodom faced. Worse than what James and John had proposed. Worse than having fire and sulfur rained down upon you.

To hear the gospel. Is not to hear the offer of an alternative way of life. A neat new suggestion. It isn't a new fad lifestyle. It's not something to shrug our shoulders at.

Nice if it works for you. No. To hear the gospel. Is to be confronted with the judgment of God. It brings with it the offer of peace.

The offer of heaven. But not if you refuse it. It can be the offer of joy. But it is a message of judgment.

And if you're here today. You won't be able to say that you didn't know. For in this very service. The kingdom of God.

[43 : 04] Verse 11. Has come near. The gospel message is stark. It's not comfortable. But it's clear.

That tells us we either belong to the world to come. Or to this world. It tells us we either receive peace. Or peace passes away.

It tells us verse 15. It's either heaven. Or hell. Theities. It's either joy. Or judgment.

The message we herald to the world. The message that confronts us. Is a stark one. But notice. Jesus' heart breaks for those who refuse his gospel.

He doesn't shrug his shoulders. Look at verses 13 to 15. He cries. Woe. To Chorazin. Woe. To Bethsaida. You've seen the mighty works of God.

[44 : 04] You've been confronted with Jesus' kingdom. Yet you've refused it. Where even Tyre and Sidon. Pagan Gentile nations.

Even if they'd heard. And had the privilege of the gospel. They'd have repented. What a spur to us. That is in our church's mission.

The harvest is plentiful. Jesus cares that people hear and respond. Yet. Yet. He also says. It will be more bearable. To be Tyre and Sidon on judgment day. To be Sodom.

On judgment day. Than to have heard the gospel. And refused it. Because the kingdom of God. Has come near you. You've had the complete picture.

Refused it. Jesus cries. Woe to them. He's overcome with sorrow. At what they've chosen. And. Why have you gone that way?

[45 : 01] And yet. Verse 16. He says. The one who hears. That yet. Verse 16. The one who hears Jesus' followers. Hears Jesus. When the true gospel is declared.

Jesus is speaking. And thus. When it's rejected. When his people are rejected. When Jesus is rejected. The father is rejected. That's a frightful thing indeed.

Don't. Don't. Go that way. If you're hearing this today. And haven't repented. Haven't turned to Jesus. Don't. Leave this place.

With God himself. Shaking the dust. Off of him. Don't leave. With Jesus. Weeping woe. I remember.

Simon Manchester. A good friend of our church. Preaching here. He said these words. For the Christian. This world now. Is as dark.

[46 : 01] As things will ever get. Because better is coming. But for the non-Christian. This world now.

Is as light. As things will ever get. Because judgment is coming. The gospel says to us. It says to this world.

Will you be exalted to heaven. Or brought down to hell. The kingdom of God. Has come near. Calling peace.

Be to this house. How will you respond? Let's pray. Father.

Grant us. Your gracious. Enabling. That we would ever. And always. Respond to your call. Don't let us.

[47 : 03] Leave this place. Unchanged. But plant. This word. Deep within us. And strengthen us. And encourage us.

To walk. Jesus path. To hear his summons. For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.