

The Pain of Real Kingdom Witness

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, let's turn now to God's Word this morning, and we're in Matthew's Gospel, and continuing our series here, and we are in Matthew chapter 10, and we'll be reading this morning from verse 32 to the end of the chapter.
- So please do turn your Bibles there to Matthew chapter 10, and I'll read from verse 32. This is Jesus speaking to his apostles.
- So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.
- Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.
- And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.
- [1 : 1 6] And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.
- Whoever finds his life will lose it. And whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Whoever receives you receives me.
- And whoever receives me receives him who sent me. The one who receives a prophet, because he is a prophet, will receive a prophet's reward.
- And the one who receives a righteous person, because he is a righteous person, will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water, because he is my disciple.
- Truly I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. Amen.
- [2 : 2 0] May the Lord bless his word to us this morning. Well do turn with me, if you would, to Matthew chapter 10, and we come to this last section.
- Real Christian witness and the life of witness of a real Christian church often seems very hard. And that's not because we perceive things wrongly.
- It's because it is often very hard. And it seems like being invested with Jesus is much tougher than rejecting him.
- And that's because very often that is the way it really is for now in this world. Now that's not a great sales pitch for following Jesus, is it?
- But actually I think as we've seen these last couple of weeks, that is exactly Jesus' own sales pitch here in Matthew chapter 10. His kingly briefing of his ambassadors for their mission is full of dark realism.
- [3 : 3 0] He's teaching his apostles, of course. He's not teaching us directly. But these things are preserved for us, for our instruction also, just like all the scriptures. And he's teaching us also to expect hardship and persecution and hostility.

Expect the same pattern, says Jesus. At school, at college, in your workplace, and even in your family.

Verse 16, you will always be like sheep among wolves. And so you must learn wisdom as well as being innocent doves, transparent in all you do.

If you don't learn spiritual savvy, then you'll never last a month in witness. Never mind, a lifetime. You've got to be wise as serpents.

Wise to the reality of the opposition that will always accompany real gospel mission. And we saw last time that this all too familiar pattern, it comes from all directions.

[4 : 37] The opposition comes from the religious establishment. It comes from the state and the society around us. And it comes even from our own families. So don't expect an easy life if you're going to be invested with Jesus.

Because this is genuine discipleship. This is what good witness looks like. The gospel always divides between those who marvel at Jesus and his words and those who just call him a devil.

That's that stark contrast, isn't it? So clear there in chapter 9, verses 33 and 34. Jesus is telling us that a call to mission is a call to warfare.

And warfare is always painful. There are always casualties. There's always loss. There's a price to be paid for real kingdom witness.

It's a call to perseverance amid persecution. And in the face of many fears within. And there is also pain involved in real kingdom witness.

[5 : 52] And it will involve us in some grievous earthly rifts. But what Jesus tells us here in these last paragraphs of chapter 10 is that the very experience of such things promises us great eternal rewards.

We can't accuse Jesus of misselling, can we? No promising all sorts of great returns, but hiding the risks and the loss. That's such a feature of modern life, isn't it?

Misselling scandals around us all over the place. You've seen in the news how lockdown lunacy seems to have driven lots of foolish youngsters into wild speculation in the financial markets.

Driven by bulletin boards ramping up stocks to crazy heights and so on to make a fast buck. Well, no doubt some people have, but some have made very great losses, been badly burned.

But so have many much more sober investors been badly burned too, when large chunks of their pension have been disappeared. When well-regarded fund managers like the famous Neil Woodford turned out to be investing in all kinds of illiquid investments, concealing that fact.

[7 : 02] And billions of pounds have been wiped off people's pensions who trusted him for their retirement. Had they really known up front that his so-called patient capital fund might actually mean disappearing capital for decades at a time, I think they would have thought very differently.

They would have calculated differently. Just as I think when people look back in future with a fuller understanding of the vast consequences and the devastation to health and wealth that's coming after a year of these lockdowns, I think they will wonder why they trusted the government so readily in their pandemic responses.

You may disagree with me on that, but time will tell. But what I think we must agree on is that with Jesus Christ, there is not one hint of mis-selling.

There is no propaganda, there is no political maneuvering, there is no hiding unpalatable truth. You entrust yourself to him.

You invest your future with him with your eyes wide open to the truth right from the very start. Look at verse 34 here.

[8 : 17] Do not think I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. Now the Jewish expectation of their Messiah was for a great king, for the prince of peace.

And to the Jews of Jesus' day, that meant driving out the Romans. It meant restoring the kingdom of Israel to self-rule right now. Peace and self-determination in our time.

And there are still many people today who think really that that is the Christian message. Peace on earth now, the brotherhood of man, kumbaya and all that.

But that is nothing but fantasy. And just like the people of the first century, it totally underestimates the depth of the severity of the real problems facing this world.

Which are not just man's relationship with his environment. Not even just man's enmity with fellow man. But the vast enmity and the rupture in man's relationship with God.

[9 : 23] Anybody, in fact, involved in any kind of serious peace process knows that real peace, knows that the restoration of harmony and well-being can only be reached when the real enemies of peace have been completely overcome.

Either their minds subdued and overcome, or sadly more often, actually when their bodies are overcome by force.

And the reality about this fallen world, this rebellious world, this world at war with its creator and its sovereign, is that real peace, cosmic peace, can only come through a conquering and a destruction of all the enemies of God and his people.

The reason that the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil, says the Apostle John. And in his death on the cross, our Lord Jesus has done that, as Paul says in Colossians chapter 2.

He disarmed rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, triumphing over them. He has defeated enemy command.

[10 : 38] But you see, the only way that those who were formerly under enemy command come into the victor's peace is by laying down their arms, laying down their hostility, surrendering to the victorious king.

And that's what rebels against God and his king find so very hard to do. Even though he offers peace, so many refuse that peace.

So many want to go on making war with him. And that will be so right till the very end. When at last, the day of God's patient invitation to peace draws to an end.

And Jesus comes to judge the whole wide world. See, this age that we live in is the age of grace. God has slowed his coming to judge the world in his mercy to allow that great harvest so that the lost sheep of the world may be sought and may be found and gathered into his peace.

This whole age of gracious invitation and mission, it's also one, therefore, of warfare. Because the great king has sent his emissaries, his ambassadors out into the world, bearing that offer of peace, bearing that amnesty.

[11 : 53] But very often, too often, they're met with resistance. Met with the sniper fire of a world that would rather die than surrender.

And so there's cost. There is real pain in that kingdom witness now. And there will be right until the very end.

It's a time marked not by peaceful solidarity, but by painful separations. A time of division caused by the very offer of that peace.

And these divisions will be deeply painful and very personally painful. So to invest your life with Jesus as one of his ambassadors, offering peace through surrendering to him as king and lord, that will sometimes be very hard indeed, very painful.

And you need to know that. There will be great earthly rifts. But there will also be great eternal rewards. And we need to know, friends, that it's in that order.

[13 : 12] That the rifts and the rewards are not separable. And so to teach us, Jesus picks up on some of the examples that he's already alluded to, and to show just how painfully divisive the gospel message will be inevitably in the experience of his followers.

And it may be painful for us to hear what he says, but unless we come to terms with what he says, we will never be able to be his true followers. He's telling us in these chapters that real kingdom witness costs everything.

Everything that is, that is invested purely in this world. But it's in order that we may realize an investment that will prove in the end to be the only thing that is worth having.

When all earthly stock is liquidated. And when it's valued against the gold standard of our king himself. It was Warren Buffett, the great American investor, who said that the biggest hindrance to successful investing is not being able to separate yourself emotionally from bad investments so as to move into good ones.

Or even from the good ones so as to move into the very best ones. And it's just exactly that kind of investment language that Jesus uses. As he talks about something far, far more important, even in a lifelong investment.

[14 : 46] As he talks about matters of eternity. Eternal life and destiny. And first, you see, he says that investing wholeheartedly in the witness of the kingdom of heaven, it will involve, as verses 34 to 37 tell us, it will involve a painful separation from loved ones.

I've come to set a man against his father. A daughter against her mother. A daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.

Jesus says that following him means that the ties of our closest natural affection may be sorely tested. Even to the point of real sadness and grief and pain in this present age.

But Jesus must come first. That's the painful reality of these verses. The piercing sword of division will pierce even families and divide them because the gospel does divide even the bonds of flesh and blood.

That's a simple fact, isn't it? Not in all families, but in many. I've come, says Jesus, verse 35, literally to separate father and son, mother and daughter, in-law and in-law.

[16 : 15] The word set against there means literally separate into two. It's very stark. It's that hated word today. Binary.

Two ways. Not, of course, that Jesus purposes to poison family relationships. Of course not. But it's simply that some will accept him for who he is, Lord and Savior, and others refuse him and rebel against his authority.

And we know that. We see that. And some of us here will have experienced that very painfully in our own families.

verse 36 is such a terrible, terrible thing, isn't it? But there are many listening this morning who can testify that that is all too true.

A young teenager converted to Christ and a parent so furious that they threatened to send them off to boarding school to get them away from the infants of Christian friends and the Christian union at school.

[17 : 21] or the anger of a parent that their child grows up and throws away their career in order to devote themselves to Christian ministry work. And so furious are they that they actually disinherit them completely.

Or a spouse who's forced to choose between Jesus and their marriage because their partner is so, so hostile to their faith. Or the son or daughter growing up to rebel against the faith and the discipleship of their parents and their other brothers and sisters.

All of these and many others like that I know have been true for some who are listening here this morning. And for most of us in life I think there'll be nothing more painful, nothing more painful to bear.

and I know how deeply painful that is for some of you. But that's why we have to listen to Jesus' words here in verse 37.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

[18 : 40] I think that might be about the hardest thing any of us would ever have to hear, don't you think, in this life? But it's so very clear. We can't avoid it. It's Jesus or it's our family in the ultimate sense.

It can't be both because we can only worship one God not two. That is, we can only be owned by or be in service to or get our identity from one God not two.

So if we love or cherish even our closest earthly bonds more than the spiritual bond we have with Jesus Christ then it's not sharing our affection with them, it's idolatry.

It's worshipping another God. just as having a mistress isn't sharing your love with another sharing your love for your wife it's hating your wife.

Now it will be few of us I'm sure who are forced to make that choice in such a dramatic sense in an ultimate sense but the truth is you see that in constant subtle ways we are always being so easily seduced in that way.

[20 : 06] The human heart is a perpetual factory of idols as how John Calvin put it and family love can be a very great idol. That's what Jesus is telling us here.

It's easy to make your marriage relationship into an idol. Jesus says that in his parable in Luke chapter 14 you remember about the man who excludes himself from the kingdom of God because of his marriage.

I've married a wife and I can't come he says. Well I can't tell you how many times I've seen young people and especially men lose their spiritual fervor or become enfeebled because they become ruled by their relationship and their marriage.

They've imbibed all the nonsense this world talks about investing in your relationship about having quality time about having us time and all the rest of it. And friends it's so easy for that to drift away from what every married couple needs most of all and above everything else which is to be united together in marriage for the better service of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

marriage is not an end in itself never will be. It's a means to the end of serving the kingdom of God. And if it won't do that well better never marry at all.

[21 : 38] And if it hinders you from doing that far better never to marry at all. Whoever loves marriage more than me is not worthy of me says Jesus or whoever loves their children more than me.

It's easy to make children and family life your idolatry because that's so pervasive all around us in the culture today. Making children the real object of our worship.

Making children where you find your identity your satisfaction in their education in their achievements in their career and so on. Well of course we've got a duty as parents to nurture and care for our children to provide for our children not to neglect them of course.

But I have to say it concerns me very greatly how many Christian parents seem to prioritize things in their children's life like their progress in music or in sport or in academic study in their social life far above their progress in spiritual maturity and discipleship and Christian fellowship.

Friends do not be deceived says the apostle Paul whatever you sow that also you will reap. And if you love these things more than Jesus if you teach your children to love these other things more than Jesus don't be surprised if they grow up not loving Jesus at all.

[23 : 17] Need to be very careful when we think about these matters of family life. Because unless all of our loves all of them are put in their right place by the greatest love of all love to our Lord Jesus Christ love to then so easily they become not true loves at all but just worldly lusts over desires which actually are just manifesting an idolatry in our hearts that makes us unworthy of Jesus Christ.

Because even our best even our highest instincts are corruptible. That's why Jesus warns us this way. especially about the best and the highest loves of family life itself, marriage and the home and so on because these are God's greatest gifts to us.

But the greatest gifts that God gives us can so often become the things that can corrupt us the most. These are the things that can turn us into worshippers of these created things not the creator himself.

And that can be so of course whether we have them or whether we don't yet have them. Sometimes as far as children are concerned it can be the desire for them which is natural which is wholesome which is wonderful an entirely good thing but that can become an over desire that can become all consuming and damaging because really it's becoming idolatrous.

I know how difficult that situation can be but our Lord Jesus Christ isn't some insensitive man who doesn't understand how hard it is. He is the one who supremely bore all our griefs all our sorrows.

[25 : 20] He does know but he still says whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Remember Abraham's story the epitome of the man of faith the true believer but also the epitome of the agony of childlessness for so long.

Remember how the promise was to be through Isaac alone not through Ishmael but through Sarah's only son. They waited for so so long. And then after all those decades of waiting and receiving the boy.

It was Isaac. It was precious promised Isaac. But God asked Abraham to lay on the altar out of love for God above all other things.

And he did so and God said now I know that it's me that you truly worship. See that's what that's what Jesus is asking of every one of us here.

And he's saying that the world needs to see that kind of love, that kind of trust in Jesus above every other love, above even our dearest love here on this earth.

[26 : 43] The fact is, the truth is, it's only when we come to love and trust him so as to do that, that we're actually released and enabled to love our dearest ones on earth with the true and best love of all because it will be love that is shaped by costly Christ-like love to Jesus.

Any other love, any other love that doesn't flow out of a true love to Jesus Christ isn't real heavenly love. It's a corrupted, it's a selfish love.

It's actually just cloaking lust, which is the Bible's word for mere earthly appetite seeking satisfaction. And the mission of my heavenly kingdom will test these closest ties of earthly affection, says Jesus, even to the painful separation from loved ones, because I've come not to bring peace, but a sword of division.

And in the same way to invest wholeheartedly in the mission of the kingdom of heaven will mean secondly a costly separation from the world. Verses 38 and 39.

Our natural ambitions in this present age, even the very best of them, they must be crucified, says Jesus, because you cannot be fully invested in this age and in the age to come.

[28 : 16] Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. In other words, he isn't really a follower at all. Verse 39 clarifies, you see, what it means.

It means the opposite of finding life in this world, of grasping at fulfillment. In this world, no, says Jesus, it's the one who rejects that path totally for Jesus' sake, who finds the true life of fulfillment and satisfaction.

Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. He's not talking here, is he, just about rejecting the bad things of this world, sex, drugs, and rock and roll, whatever it is you think is bad.

He means the very best things in this world, the good things, the rewards of learning, of culture, of industry, of science, everything that is good in this world.

Now, don't misunderstand, he's not talking about asceticism, he's not talking about rejecting all of these things as if they were bad for their own sake. No, verse 39, he's clear, look, it's for my sake you do this, he says.

[29 : 27] He's just saying the same thing of our natural desires and ambitions in life, is what he said about our ties of family life. Jesus must come first there as well.

He's saying, you see, that the cross isn't just some religious symbol that you romanticize and put around your neck. taking up the cross means that many good things, many otherwise profitable things must be left to wither and die if we really are going to put Jesus first.

You see, he knows the truth is that very often we'll happily follow Jesus until the cross gets in our way. so we love a church's Bible teaching until it gets in the way and it challenges our particular ideas, our particular desires, our particular ambitions, our particular political view, and so on.

We can be enthusiastic, we can be joyful until these thorns and thistles begin to appear. that's how Jesus puts it in the parable of the sower as we'll see.

The cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, all of these things can choke the faith of a disciple to death.

[30 : 54] See the offer of a job promotion for example, that can be a very good thing, a wonderful thing, an excellent thing, but it could also totally scupper a key ministry that you're involved in for Jesus because you have much less time to be part of it.

Or a new and a better house for you and your family can be a wonderful thing, a great thing, a great blessing, but it might mean that it takes you moving far away from the church where your service is vitally important and so it won't be able to happen anymore that way.

Sometimes it's the calamities in life that put a cross in our path. It's a family crisis, it's a health scare, whatever it might be. There's so many things, aren't there in life, that face us with a fork in the road where one path faces us with a looming cross and the other path seems mercifully free of that kind of pain.

And the question is, will we take up the cross and go on that path with Jesus? We often pray with Jesus, don't we? Father, let this cup pass from me.

But can we pray that next line? Yet not my will, but thine. See, that is the challenge of real mission to us all, whether it's youngsters at school, whether you're at university, whether it's as parents or grandparents or all the rest of us as well.

[32 : 26] taking up the cross isn't putting on a piece of jewelry. Taking up the cross cannot be anything other than very painful.

But it's the only way, says Jesus, to a witness that is truly powerful. Paul says in Philippians chapter three, I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.

And of course, we all do in our own lives as well, don't we? But what does that mean? Well, Paul says it means sharing in his sufferings and becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection of the dead.

You see, it's taking up the cross now in a costly separation from the world, in detachment from the ties of this present age.

age. That is both the way to resurrection power being at work through us in this present age, and also, it's the way to resurrection glory with Christ at the last.

[33 : 34] Verse 39 again, whoever loses his life like that for my sake now will find it on that day. And you see, that wonderful promise brings us to Jesus' final point here, which is absolutely vital for us to hear.

Because the life of real kingdom witness is not just about painful and costly separation from loved ones and from the world. It's also about something else, and it's totally overshadowed by it.

And it's what verses 40 to 42 speak about, a privileged union with our Savior himself. There's no separation from him.

Not now, not ever. Investing your life totally and completely with Jesus brings not just extraordinary privilege now, here on earth, but it brings wonderful reward forever and ever in the eternal joy of his heavenly kingdom.

See, if Jesus is realistic about the pain and the rifts that we may face in life as we follow him, he's just as open, he's just as encouraging about the enormous privilege and the wonderful rewards of being his disciples.

[34 : 52] All of these things, he says, is not for nothing. It's for his sake. And it's for the sake of our wonderful eternal union with him that has begun.

Already. And that is what transforms everything. Both now, but also forever. We aren't just witnessing for Jesus.

We're so closely at one with him in it that our words are taken as his very words. That our actions are taken as his own actions.

I remember years ago reading the autobiography of Chris Patton, who was the last governor of Hong Kong.

He was the former chairman of the Tory party, I think. And I think he's now the chair or the chancellor of Oxford University, isn't he? He's become a bit of a grumpy old man. I heard him on the radio recently and he really sounded like a grumpy old chap.

[35 : 49] But anyway, John Major appointed him as the governor of Hong Kong. And he wrote in his book, he recorded that when he was appointed, John Major said to the Chinese, when speaking to Chris Patton, you're speaking to me.

And when he speaks to you, I'm speaking to you. And you see, that's what Jesus is saying here in verse 40.

Whoever receives you, receives me. And indeed the Father, the one who sent me. And so, verse 41, those who receive one speaking in Jesus' name, a prophet, will be rewarded as receiving Jesus.

And anyone receiving a believer, one of Jesus' righteous ones, because he is one of Jesus' own people, he'll be rewarded as having shown love to Jesus himself.

Indeed, verse 42, anyone who even helps in a tiny, tiny way with just a cup of cold water in a hot land, even the least impressive gesture to the least of Christ's people, these little ones, will by no means lose his reward.

[37 : 12] To give a drink like that is not worthy of any reward. It's just the least courtesy in a hot country. But because it's been done for one of his little ones, it's been done for the Lord Jesus himself.

And he will never forget it. Isn't that a wonderful encouragement? Even whatever we might do so feebly in Jesus' name, it's received as though it was Jesus the Savior himself doing it.

Today, every word that we speak for him, every little kindness that we do in his name, and everything that we seek to do for his people, to help in their ministry, to help in their mission, is done for him.

It's done for his personal glory now. And he'll not miss it. He'll never forget it. He'll reward it. Let us not give wages as if we'd earned it, but reward from his gracious hand, which outgives us always.

It's not just that we have the most privilege of giving to him now in this world. We have this promise of a wonderful reward from him forever.

[38 : 29] Three times repeated here, verse 41, twice, he will receive a reward. Verse 42, he will by no means lose his reward. And remember, all through this chapter, it's eternity that's in view, isn't it?

Back in verse 15, there's a day of judgment coming. That's what really matters. Verses 32 and 33. Do you remember? It's on that day when the only thing that will matter is whether Jesus will acknowledge you or not before his father.

And that'll be the verdict made public before all heaven. For what's been confessed now, or not confessed now, here on earth.

In other words, what he's saying is that it's our identification with Jesus now, it's our union with him now that will be unveiled on that day to be in itself the greatest reward the world could ever have.

Sometimes Christians are worried about this language of reward. How can there be greater or lesser rewards when we're saved by grace, when we're not saved by things that we've done?

[39 : 44] Well, you see, if we're worried about that, it's because we tend to think about rewards in the wrong way, in a sort of arbitrary way. Like saying to your children, if you do all your Zoom homework and do all your good schoolwork, then there'll be ice cream for tea.

Actually, kids, I think if you do all your Zoom homework, there really ought to be ice cream for tea, because I think you have deserved it. But that's not the rewards Jesus is speaking about.

Where we say, if you do your piano practice every week, when Christmas comes, I promise you'll get a new bicycle. See, that sort of thing, that's not reward, that's bribery, that's wages that you earn.

And that's not what Jesus is describing. C.S. Lewis is most helpful in this. He tells us that real reward is the thing that you're doing in itself, in its fulfillment, consummated and glorious.

Real reward is when you say, if you practice the piano every day, one day you'll be able to play Beethoven and Chopin or Billy Joel or whoever it is for you.

[40 : 51] If you keep training every day like that, one day you will be able to play rugby like Finn Russell for Scotland. That's the reward, you see. And Jesus is saying, live now in so much detachment from this world, united, identified with me, that on the day when I come again in glory, you will realize that to be united with me forever is the reward of all rewards.

It is everything worth existing for. Just as if you cherish your fiancé now, loving them truly, then your wedding will bring a wonderfully rewarding consummation.

And if you go on living in costly separation from all others till death you do part, your whole married life will go on being wonderfully rewarding and glorious always.

And so it is, you see, with our union with the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's the wonderful encouragement at the end of this chapter. Chapter full of honest, hard talk about witness that does claim everything and does cost everything.

But in the end, what seems to our world now, and often sadly to our worldly minds now, what seems to be nothing but cost and pain, it will be revealed at last to be truly the pearl of great price.

[42 : 24] The only thing worth having for all eternity. That is life with Jesus, united to him and in witness to him.

Yes, there will be grievous earthly rifts to be born. But there is great eternal reward. It is a truly contrarian approach to investing your life in this world.

But it will be proved true abundantly so in the end. I have a friend who used to be a fund manager in the city of London.

He's a committed Christian. And he said that was what made him by nature a contrarian investor. He would buy stocks that were rejected totally by the market.

Often things that the world laughed at as they cheered on the latest herd ideas. But over the long term, again and again and again, he it was, who turned out to be the winner of many, many investment awards.

[43 : 29] Not because he had just invested in things that were of little value and then he sort of struck lucky, but rather because he could see right from the start what other people couldn't see.

He could see something of immense value even now, but it was hidden. It was despised. It was forgotten by others. But he knew that one day the truth would out.

What was hidden and covered would be revealed to everyone. And then there would be a mass re-rating to its true value. But of course, you see, on that day, it's too late for others to join in.

Harder they might try. And so it is, you see, with Jesus Christ and his offer of the gospel. He doesn't offer any soft sell. Doesn't give us any sales pitch.

Far from it. He says the cost is high. It is painfully high. But he offers value that is lasting. Infinite value.

[44 : 34] Utterly hidden to this world. Indeed scoffed at and scorned. Despised. He tells us it will cost you everything you have to invest with me.

But for those who do, there is joy. Great joy now. Privilege now. Loving him. Serving him. Speaking for him in this world. But also, there is certain reward forever.

For all eternity. You will by no means lose that reward. Whoever finds his life here in this life will lose it.

But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Forever and ever. Amen.

Let's pray. Gracious God, our Heavenly Father, how we thank you for the truth that is in Jesus Christ, your Son. For words.

[45 : 44] For words. Which do indeed scythe through our consciousness like a double-edged sword. Showing us.

The way of truth and the way of life with all its cost, with all its pain. But with all its marvelous joy, even now. And the promise of joy everlasting.

So help us, Lord, we pray, to see now with the eyes of eternal light. And so follow you every day of our lives in that way everlasting.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.