

Jesus' Ministry Preaching the Gospel

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Preacher: Dave Jensen

[0 : 0 0] But we're going to turn this morning to our Bibles, and we're going to be reading together in Matthew chapter 9 and the beginning of chapter 10. We have a guest preacher with us this morning, who I'm going to introduce properly a little later on, but we're delighted to have Dave Jensen with us all the way from Australia.

He's been speaking at an evangelism conference in Edinburgh on Friday, and will be again in London this coming week. Dave, it's lovely to have you here with us. I'll get you up a little bit later when the stream has joined us, and we'll hear a little bit more from you.

Dave's going to be preaching on this passage at the end of Matthew chapter 9, and we're going to read from verse 35 through to verse 7 of Matthew chapter 10. Matthew 9 and verse 35, Jesus went throughout the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.

And healing every disease and every affliction. And when he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

And he said to his disciples, 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.

[1 : 2 9] And he called to him his 12 disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal every disease and every affliction.

The names of the 12 apostles are these. First, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother. James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother.

Philip and Bartholomew. Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector. James, the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus. Simon, the Canaanian, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

These 12 Jesus sent out, instructing them, go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

And proclaim as you go, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Amen.

[2 : 3 2] And may God bless to us his word. Amen. Wonderful to be with you, friends. It's a great delight indeed.

We are speaking today from and looking in detail at that passage from Matthew chapter 9. So please have that open in front of you with your Bibles or devices or whatever it is. And of course, the topic, if you are listening intently to the reading, will be of no surprise, which is evangelism.

And that word simply means the heralding, the speaking of God's gospel. So what I want to do is I want to begin by getting you to speak to the person around you.

And if you're a visitor or guest, don't worry about it. They won't be that weird. Slightly weird. Not too weird, though. And I want you to speak about a very simple question, one that's hopefully interesting to you all, which is, what do you believe are the greatest barriers to sharing faith, the Christian faith, your faith, if you are a Christian, in modern day Scotland, in Glasgow 2024?

What are the greatest barriers to evangelism? And if you're not a Christian, if you're a visitor or guest, you can still have an opinion. What are the greatest barriers, you think, to other people sharing faith? So just take a moment, would you?

[3 : 46] Turn to the people around you, here or at the live stream sites, the other church congregations, and talk about that for a minute. The greatest barriers to evangelism. Go for it. Well, lovely friends to hear you speaking and chattering away.

Just yesterday, I had the pleasure of spending some time here. And I found myself in the vestry, which is in that small office just next door. And I was looking at some of the photos on the wall when I noticed a picture, a stunning picture, actually, which really caught my attention.

It was a photo of a young man on a stage in 1955, speaking to a huge crowd of captivated listeners. The man's name was Billy Graham.

And he was the most famous evangelistic preacher, I say of the last 100 years, but it's probably of the last, well, 300. I won't say 2,000.

But still, nonetheless, he spoke to more people in the flesh about Jesus than any other person before him. Now, I'm certain I don't need to tell every one of you this. Many of you will know.

[4 : 51] But Graham visited Scotland many times, but in particular, his most significant visit was in 1955. Can I ask, was anyone here present when he visited in 1955?

Very good. Thank you, sister. And yes, very good. When he came, there was an incredible act of God's kindness displayed to Scotland. He visited for just over a month, six weeks.

And he preached in that time to over 2.5 million people in the flesh. The population of Scotland at that time was 5 million people.

He spoke to half the nation in person. He finished up with a rally at Hampton Park in front of 100,000 people. After six weeks, the crusade recorded over 52,000 decisions for Christ.

I'm sure, if we were to ask, that if not you, but the people you know, perhaps even parents or grandparents were among them. Now, the reason that photo grabbed my attention was because, well, it's an astonishing photograph, actually.

[6 : 06] It's a wonderful picture. But the reason it particularly grabbed my attention was that four years later, in 1959, Graham visited Sydney, Australia, all of Australia, actually, with a similar result.

Three million people attended, a quarter of the country. 130,000 people made commitments to Christ, including my own father. First Christian in his family. My aunt and uncle, my mother was there, but she demands, she tells dad that, of course, she became a Christian in Sunday school.

She's far more godly than him. She picked it up earlier. It took him at the Billy Graham crusade to do it. Numerous family friends. I have to say, in Australia, at least, over the decades that followed, it was very clear that this was not a flash in the pan.

This was not a fake news event. Churches were full for decades again as a result. Sunday school was overflowing. Thousands of people went into the ministry.

And in Scotland, of course, the impact of Graham's visit was felt in the same way for decades, I'm certain. Yet fast forward 70 years to today.

[7 : 13] And if you were to take the temperature of the spiritual state of the nation here in Scotland, well, you could be forgiven for viewing it with a sense of discouragement.

Is that right? And dismay. In many senses, I think it's absolutely accurate to say that this is the hardest time for evangelism in Scottish history.

Since the gospel has arrived, certainly since the Reformation. The reality is that there has never been, certainly in living memory, I'll offer, a more difficult time for you to share the gospel with the people that you know than today.

You are often described as a post-Christian country. And I must make you aware, if you weren't already, that your country is internationally a byword for post-Christianity.

The epitome of it. Now, that term means the glory days of Christianity in the past are gone forever. And no doubt, if you look around you, I've no doubt that you'll come up with many reasons to be discouraged.

[8 : 15] Most Scottish people, most people, your neighbours and friends and colleagues, never ever attend church for any reason. According to the data available, millions of people here are not only disinterested, but often openly hostile to Christ and his church.

And indeed, that's from the leadership down, is it not? And perhaps when you reflect on your own efforts and endeavours to share your faith with friends and family, this strikes a chord. The response you've received has been apathetic at best, aggressive at worst.

The spiritual soil, well, it doesn't seem like soil, it seems like concrete. The situation for the gospel can feel hopeless and helpless. And as you consider the barriers facing you and sharing your faith, perhaps two minutes was nowhere near long enough.

You could have given you two hours and you could have kept chattering away about it. And yet, dear friends, brothers and sisters in the Lord, despite those things being true, I'm persuaded, utterly persuaded, it is not the big picture.

It is not the full picture. It's not the end of the story. This morning, I want to offer you a different perspective, a perspective which is shocking and surprising, yet I'm utterly persuaded is true.

[9 : 40] You see, I believe that this is not only the most difficult, but it is also simultaneously the greatest opportunity for evangelism in Scotland's history.

More than greatest, and this isn't trickery, fake news with a twist at the end. No, no, I mean it. That there has never been an easier or a better time for you to share the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with the people you know, the people you love, heck, even the people you don't like very much.

Maybe even especially them. Then today, you live in a golden era of evangelism. But how can both of these contradictory statements be true?

Well, my intention today is to prove it to you. I want you to leave here today utterly convinced that this is the greatest time for evangelism in Scotland's history.

And I want to do so by going to the source of all knowledge and understanding that we have about life, God's word, and using God's wisdom to consider the world around us, not the world around us to consider God's wisdom.

[10 : 47] I've heard wisdom defined, wisdom is one of those words, of course, it's easier to describe than it is to define. And I've heard a wonderful definition of wisdom years ago, which I've kept with me, which is very helpful.

I've heard wisdom defined like this. Wisdom is the understanding of reality. Understanding truth. Knowing what's what.

And because you know what's what, you understand truth, you are therefore able to live in a way that is wise, to make wise decisions in life. The Bible offers to every single one of us an astonishing claim that the beginning of the wisdom of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

In other words, what does that mean? That if you want to understand reality, do not trust your eyes. Do not trust your gut instinct on what's going on.

Instead, trust God's word. And use this as the paradigm upon which to view the world around us. So, how do we, you, together, see Scotland won for Christ?

[11 : 59] What is truly going on in this nation? Well, any conversation about reaching people for Jesus must begin, of course, with Jesus. Jesus is, not just was, but is the master evangelist.

His life was all about proclaiming the gospel, as we'll see very shortly. It's worth identifying, of course, that again and again throughout the gospels, Jesus turns from doing the things that we would value as of the most importance, of healing and miracles.

Mark chapter 1. He stops healing deliberately and proclaims that that's not what he's come to do. He has come instead to preach, to teach, to tell the good news of God.

Jesus is the master evangelist who did not just speak, but acted. He gave his life to achieve life for us. That means for us there are endless lessons in observing how he evangelizes.

But dear friends, it's more than that. You see, what you notice as you read through the gospels is that whilst there are key and significant contextual, cultural, biblical, theological differences between 2,000 years ago and today, there are also astonishing similarities.

[13 : 08] You see, Jesus, when he walked the earth, was operating in a world that was largely hostile and disinterested to his message.

He proclaimed and trained his disciples to equip. So he proclaimed and trained his disciples to proclaim that same message in the midst of a culture which was hostile towards them.

And look at chapter 10. Chapter 10, after the reading from verse 8 onwards, what we see is Jesus, as he sends his disciples out to preach, to teach, to proclaim the word of God, he does not say, if you speak a particular way, the world will love you.

Instead, what does he say? Verse 16, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Beware of men. They will deliver you over to courts. Yet despite that, verse 19, do not be anxious how you speak.

He does not say, change what you say. Oh, don't start with the gospel. Instead, start with a few jokes, promise people heaven, and then somehow manipulate them through into our big club.

[14 : 12] Then we'll get them. No, no, no. He doesn't say, change what you say. He says, be prepared for the objection to come. And yet, persevere through it all.

So how did he approach the world around him? What did he do? What can we learn about reaching people for Christ from Christ? Well, let us investigate and look into this passage from Matthew 9.

Let me give you a bit of context. Matthew, of course, is the first gospel that we find in the New Testament. And that has, for evangelists, I want to say, for many years, been a source of, well, sometimes frustration.

Come back to Matthew 1. Many of you will know this, of course. Matthew 1, you want to give people a Bible to read. You say, go away and read this. Often this happens to give someone a New Testament. And then as they get to Matthew 1, what do we start with?

Oh, a family tree. Could God not have been more considerate as he put together his word for us to start with some sort of interesting story?

[15 : 10] But no, it starts with this family tree. What's the purpose of it all? Well, the purpose of the family tree that we get is not anti-evangelistic. Not at all.

The purpose is to point us to the true identity of Jesus. It's not a mystery. Look at verse 1. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

The son of David. The son of Abraham. From the very beginning, Matthew, in his gospel, tells us what his gospel will be all about.

Establishing that Jesus is the Christ. This is a royal line that we are reading. Jesus is king. And the word Christ means anointed one, king. It's a Greek word, Christos. Of course, it is the exact same word as the word Messiah. Messiah is the Hebrew variant of the word Christ.

[16:06] I think I was 35 when I worked that out. Oh, they're the same word. You may never have got that. They're the exact same word. One's Hebrew, one's Greek. Jesus is the king.

And for the first eight chapters, what we read as we hear of Jesus' amazing teaching and astonishing miracles is this establishment of his identity. From Matthew 1 onwards, we hear the title claim, the royal line.

And then we see behavior, teaching again and again of Jesus establishing his kingship. And then we get to chapter 9, where we are here, our reading, verse 35. And there's a slight change.

In Matthew 9, before going on, there is a pause in proceedings as Matthew summarizes all of Jesus' activity in his teaching and preaching ministry before showing us the second part of Jesus' kingship, of Jesus' identity.

That he is not just a king who has come to sit in a throne in a palace somewhere and do nothing. Rather, he is a king who has come on a mission and bringing his people with him.

[17:17] I want to point out two things in particular through this passage, Jesus' perspective and Jesus' prescription, before spending time thinking through what those things mean in the face of modern-day Glasgow and the challenges that you all face evangelistically.

So Matthew 9, verse 35, Jesus' perspective. Look at verse 35 and 36. First of all, I want you to pay attention to the way in which Jesus views the people around him.

Allow me to read it again. Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. We're told that Jesus is surrounded by crowds as he walks to teach and to preach.

Jesus is traveling around Galilee. He's visiting villages. There's around 210 villages in ancient Galilee, equally and apparently around 3 million people. I'm a bit surprised. That seems like a huge amount of people.

[18:23] But approximately 3 million people in over 200 villages. We're told as Jesus walks, as he teaches and preaches, he is surrounded by crowds who've come to hear him speak, but also to be healed by him.

I want you to imagine, dear friends, what is the state of the crowd that you think has come to hear Jesus? Well, these are people going through serious suffering. Amongst them would be many people facing physical malady, illness, disease, leprosy, paralysis, bleeding, all sorts of things, desperate for healing.

These are people, the Jewish people, ancient world, under Roman occupation. They're facing political suppression and oppression. These are a desperate people.

So it comes as no surprise when we read in verse 36, that what is the major perspective that Jesus brings to bear? As he sees the people around them, he has compassion on them. Now, compassion is a curious word.

It doesn't mean feel sorry for. It means feel sorry with. It literally means a pain in the gut.

[19:37] A pain in the gut. Like if you drink that horrible, what's it called? Iron brew? What is that thing anyway? Pretty sure it's medicine. It's cure polio or something.

It's horrible. Iron brew, you choose to drink it. Nonetheless, a pain in the gut. Or maybe Vegemite, whatever you want to use it. Someone's whispered, it's disgusting. I agree.

Anyway. A co-equal suffering. Jesus sees pain in the people and he feels the pain that they feel.

He views the world with compassion because he sees the suffering the world has. The question is, what is it that causes the pain that he feels?

Verse 36. You see it. It's very clear. They were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Yes, Jesus is surrounded by sick people, by dying people, by people under political suppression and oppression, by people facing all types of physical and present malady, undoubtedly true.

[20 : 43] And yet, the cause of Jesus' pain in his gut is that the people in front of him are harassed and helpless. Sheep without a shepherd.

Now, that is not a random term. That is an expression utilized many times through the Old Testament, specifically, most famously, Ezekiel 34. And when you understand that reference, you understand in Ezekiel 34, that is a picture of God's people, spiritually dead, who have been led so poorly by their clergy.

And by the way, it is always the clergy who are the first to run away from the truth of God. Always watch the clergy, the people who teach.

Hold them to account that they're faithful to the word of God. They are the ones who lead churches and denominations and nations of Australia more than anyone else.

Here, the Jewish people are no different. They have been so poorly led that they are spiritually dead. Harassed and helpless, that seems quite small and minor, but no, they're actually words that refer to like a wolf ripping apart an innocent sheep.

[21 : 53] They didn't know God, these people in front of Jesus. They were not saved people. So what is it that causes the compassion in the heart, the gut of Jesus? Not the physical presentation of problems, not the political presentation, not the physical and medical suffering they went through, but the spiritual reality they all faced.

It's spiritual darkness that causes pain in Jesus' stomach. And it's exactly because of that that we see him do what he does. Look again at verse 35. We're told he does three things in this summary statement.

He goes from town to town teaching in the synagogues. Now that's similar to what we're doing here this morning, explaining the Bible to people, performing miracles. He heals every type of disease and illness, but pay attention.

Of course, miracles that Jesus does as he does in his life, they are sometimes reactive actions of compassion, but usually proactive displays of identity.

But what I want you to mainly focus on is at the very center. Verse 35, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. The very same thing he sends his disciples out to do.

[23 : 07] Verse 7, proclaim as you go, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And as you read the biography of Jesus here in Matthew and throughout the New Testament, you realize more and more that what Jesus spent his time doing was not healing.

Although he did many of that, of course, in John's gospel says there's more things he does that could fill a million books over. But the focus of the Lord Jesus' life when the word became flesh was evangelism, gospel proclamation.

Jesus is the gospel and he centered his life around proclaiming the gospel. That God's kingdom has come near. That God's king has arrived and he's ushering his people into his kingdom.

When the king came to earth, he came as an evangelist. Why would Jesus do that? Here is the perspective that we have clearly displayed. He does it. Why? Because he knows not only the greatest problem humanity faces, spiritual death, but the only solution to it.

salvation that comes through the gospel. The diagnosis is spiritual darkness. The gospel is spiritual light.

[24 : 19] Now, why does Jesus act this way? Just consider it momentarily, friends. If you have the power, you're Jesus, you're God in the flesh, you can do anything that you want.

You can live wherever you want. Your bed could be anything. When you're born, you can be born into a palace. You can choose the very nature of everything that occurs. And yet when he becomes a man, his first bed is a dog bowl for donkeys.

His first house is a shed at the back. He spends most of his life in a know-nothing town of no significance, somewhere so small, you never would have heard of it before unless he came from there.

Somewhere insignificant, like Aberdeen or Dundee. It's just somewhere small. Thank you, friends, for laughing. A pity laugh, but I'll take it nonetheless. Why does Jesus act this way?

He does so because he's shaped by his perspective. Perspective. Now, perspective is a word I want you to consider for a moment. It's a word that means how you see things, how you understand reality.

[25 : 26] Having the right perspective in life is critical to living as a Christian in every manner of your life, every single area, because it's critical to understanding truth, to understanding what's really going on.

And if you do not understand reality, you will act like a fool. But if you do, then you may act wisely.

You need to see clearly. Several years ago, there was an ad in Australia for one of our big banks. And it was timed with the Olympics.

Now, in Australia, the Olympics is very big business. Not the Commonwealth Games as much, but the Olympics is very big business for us, mainly because, unlike Great Britain, we win a lot of things.

Friends, if you're not going to laugh at that, I'm in big trouble. If I can't mock Britain, unlike Scotland, no, England are terrible, but we win things. It's a great delight for us. In particular, we win events in the swimming.

[26 : 28] And this ad revolved around a young girl who was a swimmer. Here's, let me set the scene for you. In the ad, you witness this young girl and she's obviously training to be a professional swimmer.

She's early in the morning and you watch her just swim lap after lap after lap. And she's got this coach, an ogre of a man, yelling at her, screaming at her, go, go, keep going. But at the end of every lap, she sort of sits there, she looks sad and glum.

It's just obvious that she's tired. She's not enjoying it. The scene changes. Her father picks her up from the swimming pool. It's early morning still. You know, these swimmers, they always swim at 3 a.m.

or something like that. And she's taken to the house and she flops onto the couch, exhausted. The music is somber and sad and it's just obvious. This girl wants to quit.

She hates it. She's sick of it. She's exhausted. She's done. She rolls over and picks up the remote control and turns it on and you see her face brighten up as the TV goes on. And then she sits up to watch and the camera pans around to the television.

[27 : 32] And you realise that this is set in 1996. Now, in 1996, the Olympic Games was in Atlanta, Georgia, in the United States and Australia had one champion swimmer, a man called Kieran Perkins.

Now, when I use this story in Australia, everyone goes, oh, yes. But here, it is what it is. Kieran Perkins, he was a great swimmer, our world champion, amazing world record holder, 1,500 metre freestyle men.

He was our great hope for gold in Atlanta and yet in the heats, he'd nearly not qualified because he was very ill. He got gastro or something. He was very, very sick.

And that meant he qualified for the final by the skin of his teeth but right on the outside lane. All of Australia was incredibly distressed. He was our great hero.

I think he held our flag that year and it appeared that it wouldn't go well. I remember I was playing sport that day and we had the radio on. We were all listening. We were all terribly worried that Kieran Perkins wouldn't even be able to swim.

[28 : 35] And yet, miraculously, what you observe over 1,500 metres of swimming is Perkins on the outside lane. He starts very badly. He looks terrible. But as time goes on, he gets quicker and quicker and quicker.

And you're watching this girl watch this race. And she begins to, and her eyes build. Joy starts filling. And then, a song starts playing on the ad.

I thought long and hard for a couple of weeks about whether to sing this song for you. I thought, darn it, I will. Willie's been singing up the front here.

Why don't I? She's swimming. The guy's swimming. The commentator, Perkins, Perkins. And then the song. Many rivers to cross.

Perkins, Perkins. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Perkins, Perkins, Perkins, gold, gold, gold. And she sits up. And you can see. And then the screen goes black.

[29 : 35] And then, one line comes on this black screen. Keep the big picture in mind. Bank without bank.

National Australia Bank. Down the bottom. Which ruins everything about the ad, doesn't it? It really destroyed the whole momentum of the thing. This ad was famous in Australia. Why? Not because of the bank.

But rather because of the message. What was the point of it all? Don't give up. Don't base your life around what you see.

Instead, base your life around the invisible reality that is promised. Do not react to the circumstances around you by the basis of your instincts.

Your instincts are almost always wrong. We're like musical instruments that go out of tune. We're always falling away. We need the great tuner of them all. The Bible.

[30 : 36] The word of God to present reality to us. To give us the picture of the future. So why does Jesus persist in evangelism? Why does Jesus proclaim the gospel in the face of people suffering physically?

Because he knows the greatest problem any single human being faces is not cancer. It's not disease. It's not impoverishment. It's not suppression or oppression from a government.

It's Christlessness. It's dying outside of Christ. Why? Because the perspective Jesus brings to bear and once you see this you cannot miss it all the way throughout the New Testament.

The perspective Jesus brings to bear on his life here and now but also all the way to the cross is eternity.

Jesus views the world with an eternal perspective. He knows that what matters most in life is not here and now.

[31 : 46] Dear friends, some of you need to hear this very deeply not about evangelism but any every area of your spiritual life. This world is not your home. It is not the destination.

Do not shape your priorities in this world around this world as if it's the destination. It's preparation for the destination. It is not the destination. What matters most in life is not what happens now.

It's what happens next. Jesus displayed that throughout his life continually and of course it's beautifully summarized for us in Hebrews chapter 12 for the joy set before him he endured the cross.

Jesus died because he knew he would be resurrected. he died because he knew that by virtue of his death sinners like us could be saved and that that value is of far higher worth than anything else in this world.

And for the joy set before him he endured the cross. What is the joy? The joy is you and I dear friends being saved and coming into a relationship with God through what he has done forever.

[33 : 15] And so Jesus preaches. He keeps the big picture in mind. It shapes what he does. He proclaims the gospel because of the eternal realities that he knows better than anyone.

And that leads us to the second thing I want to point out for this passage I promise much quicker which is because that is the perspective by which Jesus views the world. The paradigm if you like by which Jesus sets his compass in life we see he offers a particular prescription but not a prescription for the lost.

He's already given us that. The prescription for everyone you know who doesn't know Jesus is the gospel. And if you are here dear friends and you are not a Christian can I implore you come to Jesus.

Put your trust in what he has done on your behalf. Turn and believe. Whatever is holding you back is not worth the price of admission.

Dear friends turn to him come to him trust in him. But the second thing Jesus points out for us here that we're shown is not a prescription that Jesus gives for the lost that is the gospel but rather it's a prescription for Christians for his followers.

[34 : 26] Look at verse 37. Then he said to his disciples the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.

Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest. Now harvest is a farming term. What I know about farming could be written on a postage stamp. However we all know I hope that harvest is a term that refers to the time of season when you gather the crops you're planted.

It's a term that's used to symbolize growth and life. So what is Jesus saying? There's two astonishing things. Firstly he's saying that despite what may appear to be spiritual darkness despite no one around him believing in what he says in fact Matthew has recorded rejection of Jesus again and again and again many people who liked him then turn their backs and walk away from him despite what may appear to be spiritual concrete.

In fact there are many people ready to believe in him. There are many people welcomed ready to be welcomed into God's kingdom. Jesus surveys the world around him hostile and disinterested on a surface level but not with disappointment and dismay but with confidence and gospel fueled optimism as to what God can do.

So if that's the case then what's the problem that he identifies with evangelism? Look at 37 again the harvest is plentiful but the labour is a few.

[36 : 12] I wonder what did you answer when I asked you before to speak about the greatest barrier to evangelism in modern day Scotland? There's no list there's no there's no end to the list is there?

Society and culture politicians and media wokery gone mad social media the cultural revolution we're all living through a cultural revolution based on a moral and ethic which is directly at odds to the gospel and which puts us squarely in the firing line of the cultural elites squarely in the firing line of those with the loudest voices my dear friends it's very easy to feel as if the biggest problem around us is the people around us is culture is society is the world is politicians in the media but that is not the greatest problem in evangelism according to Jesus we may be tempted to believe that the greatest evangelistic blockage in society is external a hostile world oppression opposition persecution and disinterest that is not what Jesus says the perspective Jesus brings to bear is that the biggest blockage in evangelism the biggest barrier to people being converted in 2024

Glasgow is not external but internal it's not culture it's us a lack of disciples ready to do the work ready to put our shoulders ready to put our whole bodies to pour our lives into the hard yards of evangelism thankfully he doesn't only identify the problem he also prescribes the solution verse 38 ask therefore pray earnestly to the lord of the harvest to send out labourers the disciples are called to pray but take note pray for what not the lost now we are to pray for the lost it's a wonderful thing to do you don't mishear me but no not only we are to pray that god would send out workers and by the way when he says send them out it literally means throw them out like a bouncer throwing out a drunk patron on a saturday night throw them out that god would throw out workers with urgency into the harvest field and then look what he does next i love chapter 10 verse 1 to 7 you can imagine the scene if you will the disciples who are sitting there praying earnestly lord please send send workers send workers father into the harvest then look what he does next then he called to him his 12 disciples and sent them out the very people who had been praying for workers become the very workers they had just prayed for now why would jesus do this he does this because he knows reality he sees truth clearly he knows that the gospel is powerful to save anyone he knows that despite the surface level hostility and disinterest apathy lethargy there are people ready and waiting to be saved he knows there is no one outside the power of the gospel that his blood is more powerful than any sin that his spirit is more powerful than any objection and they my dear friends if you want living breathing evidence of that look around you now what qualifies us as christians what is it that is called us as christians is it our intelligence please is it our good looks well for you maybe for me no is it that we're impressive to the world dear friends understand that the gospel the new testament makes it very clear that the qualifying feature of christians is that we are the losers of the world we're the rock bottom we're the worst of the worst and so in saving us god most clearly displays his grace to the world we are the living breathing evidence that there is not a soul in scotland further away from god than can be saved by him he saved you and you're the worst person you've ever met you've got a front row view to your own stuff don't nature jesus knows that the workers are what is needed most so he prays and gets them to pray for workers he then sends them out in so doing he makes it clear that yes as we pray for workers we do not do so as passive

uninvolved observers but rather as the workers ourselves that God has sent you to the people that you know so that they would reach out and find Him as He is not far from any one of us now what does that look for us my dear friends well let me put some skin on this bone as we close our time together for some it may look like preaching for gospel ministry the best of you that's what it should look like the best of you all of you here who are Christians should consider full-time gospel ministry there is no greater work there is no more important work all of you should consider it for others it might look like sharing your faith at work sitting with people and reading the Bible to explain the truth about Jesus for others it will look like bringing someone bringing them to the life course where they hear the gospel clearly explained bringing them to the church gathering the visible representation of the heavenly realities for others it might be given a book as well at the same time as doing those things for all of us it looks like praying for the loss that we know and praying for more workers evangelism is not a solo sport where one person gets the glory but rather a team sport where together we are far better and the key part is that God has promised and displayed for 2,000 years that He uses us in His great mission together and individually but always with the church as the end point of evangelism in ways we never realize let me illustrate this

I dare say most people I trust in this room have heard of Billy Graham the man I spoke about at the beginning certainly many of you would have heard of the world's most famous evangelist but who here has heard of Edward Kimball anyone heard of Edward Kimball Edward Kimball was a shoe salesman who worked in Chicago in the 19th century and he worked alongside a man called Dwight now Kimball shared the gospel with him but Dwight was difficult and objectionable to the gospel he rejected it again and again and again and yet Kimball persisted with it he persevered with patience and grace and eventually after years Dwight became a Christian Dwight's full name was Dwight L Moody has anyone heard of Dwight Moody before well the 19th century version early 20th century version of Billy Graham the greatest evangelist on the planet best known one who preached to more people to anyone before him in the early part of the 20th century he came to

[44 : 21] England he was an American became to England to preach and a man called Frederick Meyer was converted Meyer himself became a pastor and a preacher and later when he preached a man called Wilbert Chapman was converted Wilbert Chapman was not a preacher or a pastor but a personal evangelist who led a man he knew who was a professional baseball player called Billy Sunday to the Lord has anyone here heard of Billy Sunday Billy Sunday in those sort of post-war years in between the wars was the Billy Graham of his day now Sunday was a world famous evangelist and he raised and trained up other evangelists with him he trained up one in particular a man with one of the most magnificent names in human history the name of Mordecai Ham and if I ever get a pet pig I am calling him Mordecai you're a tough crowd here this morning Mordecai Ham or bacon whatever you want to call him Mordecai Ham now Mordecai Ham was not a well-known preacher in fact he was a stumbling and bumbling preacher and proclaimer of God's word yet a faithful one in 1924

Ham preached in a small service in Charlotte North Carolina and one evening a tall lanky teenager put his trust in Jesus his name was Billy Graham Billy Graham would later come to preach in Glasgow in 1955 in Sydney in 1959 where my father was converted the first Christian in his family changing the trajectory of my entire family forever my friends very few of us will be Billy Grahams but every single one of us can be Edward Kimbles people whose love for Jesus and obedience to his commands whose perspective of reality shaped by eternity forces us compels us not instinctively but counter instinctively to reach out with compassion to the lost so how do we best prepare for the job ahead of us my friends that's the wrong question before we do anything before we apply anything practically what we need to do is to see clearly we need to see reality the way that Jesus did we need to have our lives shaped around eternal realities to see the realities of heaven and hell to see people facing eternal death and damnation the wrath of God forever and yet who do not have to have that future that people's greatest need in life is not financial or political it's not social or medical it's spiritual my friends it's that conviction and that sight that allows us to see our own blockage clearly you see the thing that stops us evangelize is not that we don't know what to say of course we can always improve in our competence we can always improve in our ability to speak but that's not the biggest thing no what is it that stops us sharing it's fear we're afraid of man we're afraid of opinion we're afraid of what people will think of us but what does

Jesus say verse 26 verse 27 verse 28 chapter 10 have no fear of them nothing is covered that will not be revealed or hidden that will be known what I tell you in the dark stay in the light what you hear whisper proclaim on the housetops do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell dear friends we need not fear man we need to fear God hold him in the awe and proper love and respect he deserves and when we do that properly it means our lives are not captured by the fear of man but rather fear for man that we're terrified of the future facing those precious people who do not know Jesus that we care enough about their future that we're willing to sacrifice reputation we're willing to sacrifice occupation we're willing to sacrifice position and popularity we're willing to look like fools to the world because those who've got eyes to see know that foolishness in the eyes of the world is the very wisdom of God personified the world that would mock

Jesus on the cross that would look at the crucified Lord and consider him a fool yet for those of us with eyes to see know that it's the greatest act in human history so let's get to it the harvest is plentiful we're both the problem but also the solution let me pray heavenly father we give you great thanks for your mercy and kindness to us that through Jesus Christ death and resurrection you have saved us you have brought us into your marvelous light into eternal life through what Jesus has done on the cross on our behalf Lord we pray for the harvest field we pray you would use us as workers you would send us out with courage with clarity with boldness with love and we pray for the lost Lord we pray for their salvation please Lord show your mercy and grace to the people of Glasgow Scotland

Britain beyond bring millions of them to come to know and love you as their father and trust in your son as saviour and king we pray this all in Jesus name Amen