

# Jesus Exposes Our Hearts

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] We're going to turn now to our Bible reading for this morning, so please do turn up Matthew's Gospel. Matthew chapter 14, this is the first book in the New Testament, and we're continuing our series through Matthew's Gospel.
- So Matthew chapter 14, and we're picking up the reading from verse 34. Matthew chapter 14 and verse 34. So this is Jesus with his disciples.
- And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent around to all that region and brought to him all who were sick, and implored him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment.
- And as many as touched it were made well. Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, Jesus answered them, And why do you break the commandments of God for the sake of your tradition?
- For God commanded, honor your father and your mother. And whoever reviles father or mother must surely die. But you say, if anyone tells his father or his mother, what you would have gained from me is given to God.
- [ 1 : 4 3 ] He need not honor his father. So for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites. Well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.
- In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. And he calls the people to him and said to them, Hear and understand.
- It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a person. Then the disciples came and said to him, Do you know that the Pharisees were off offended when they heard this saying?
- Jesus answered, Every plant that my heavenly father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone. They are blind guides.
- And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit. But Peter said to him, Explain the parable to us. And Jesus said, Are you also still without understanding?
- [ 2 : 5 9 ] Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.
- For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.
- These are what defile a person. But to eat with us unwashed hands does not defile anyone. And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.
- Well, amen. May God bless to us his word this morning. Well, do turn with me, if you would, to the passage that Paul read for us there at the end of Matthew's Gospel, chapter 14, and into chapter 15.
- And hope that all of you in Queens Park and in Bath Street are able to see and hear, along with those of us here this morning in Kelvin Grove.

- [ 4 : 14 ] Jesus exposes our hearts. We're coming this morning to one of what I think is one of the most devastating diatribes that we find in all the Gospels.
- And the shock is that the one who is speaking is the Son of God himself. And it's the more shocking when we realize that Jesus is firing his broadside not at deteriorating public morality, not at castigating false Gentile pagan religions.
- Now, in his sight are not pagan hedonists, but the religious establishment, the professing church of the day. Now, we saw last week, didn't we, that there's never any neutrality with respect to Jesus Christ.
- And there's no static state either. We're all either journeying onwards with him in faith and understanding, growing in love and loyalty to Jesus himself and his priorities for his kingdom.
- Either that or we will be moving away. On a path of evermore blindness, evermore unbelief. And the great shock, you see, is that very often that blindness and unbelief is too often found among those who think they are pious, who think they're moral, who think they are dutiful people of faith.
- [ 5 : 48 ] People who turn up every Sabbath to hear the Bible taught from pulpits rather like this one. So here's the truth, friends. This tirade from Jesus Christ is directed at people just like us.
- Keen Bible people. And, by the way, we have to note, especially their leaders and teachers. So we're in for an uncomfortable time this morning. Not least those who are called to teach others in whatever capacity.
- And, indeed, perhaps especially preachers and leaders. Because look at verse 14. Jesus warns, doesn't he, that unless we bow under the challenge of his word, not only will we come a cropper, but we'll lead others to fall into a pit.
- So all preachers and teachers particularly better brace themselves this morning. But why is Jesus' message for his own professing church so hard and challenging?
- Well, it's because Jesus hates all religious sham, all hypocrisy, all pretense. Because that's evidence of the conceit and the self-justification.
- [ 7 : 02 ] That's the very antithesis of everything that he stands for. It's a perversion of the very godliness that it pretends to be.
- And that, above all other, is what brings scorn upon the name of God, isn't it? Paul, the apostle, says that in Romans chapter 2. You boast in God's word, he says, and yet you dishonor it by breaking it.
- And so the name of God is blasphemed among the nations on account of you. So there's nothing worse in God's eyes than heartless religion.
- No matter how orthodox it might be, outwardly, it may very well have a show of piety, it may have impeccable doctrine, but inwardly, this hardness, this rottenness, this self-preoccupation, the total opposite of the true heart of God.
- And so what we have in these pages here, in this passage right before us this morning, is a vivid assault of the demands of the true gospel of Christ upon the worldliness that is so often part of organized religion.
- [ 8 : 15 ] However impeccable those biblical credentials might appear to be. Let's be very clear, Jesus is not lambasting liberals and skeptics here.
- Now the Pharisees, verse 1 there, they were part of a movement for orthodoxy and doctrine, for godliness, for genuine purity and truth.
- At least that's how it began. There were many commendable things about it. But all too quickly, you see, it ended up losing the very heart of God.

And that's what Jesus exposes here with such devastating candor. When he confronts them with a living gospel, with a life-transforming kingdom, and the demands that that really does make of true kingdom people.

So as Bible people, as we like to think of ourselves, well, we have to take this very seriously, because Bible people and Bible churches can grow cold, can grow satisfied with themselves, can become very established in their ways and their traditions.

[ 9 : 27 ] And Jesus is always challenging and saying, where are your hearts? I hear what your lips says, Tron Church. I hear what your sermons say, Tron Church, your Bible studies. But are your hearts really in tune with that?

Or have they drifted away? Well, the test is, how do our hearts respond when the full beam of the gospel floodlight is turned upon us to expose the truth?

So how do we measure up with this devastating confrontation that Jesus forces upon us, just as he forced it upon those Pharisees and those scribes in our passage before us?

We better brace ourselves, and we better get ready to hear Matthew's message for us this morning. First of all, he shows us that the true gospel confronts us always with authority that exposes tradition.

It exposes the heartlessness of what is mere human religion. And that's what's made so plain in this last little paragraph of chapter 14 and the first two verses of chapter 15.

[ 10 : 35 ] Here is a living gospel ministry. Here's a situation of extraordinary advance for the kingdom of heaven. And that always exposes hardness and opposition in the heart of what is really just human religion.

Because the issue is always one of authority. Who and what is really in control of our lives? That's the challenge. So does Christ and his gospel priority really dictate, really direct everything about our way of life, our personal life, and our corporate life together?

Or are we actually in the control of ourselves, asserting our ways, asserting our preferences?

Asserting what verse 2 here would call the tradition of the elders. Well, there's nothing like a situation where Jesus really is at work, changing lives, transforming people to show up the truth about where real loyalty is.

Whether it is to the authority of the kingdom of heaven at work in the world, or just our own traditions and culture, our own personal hobby horses, if you like.

[ 11 : 52 ] And that's what's going on here. Look at this last paragraph of chapter 14. What a wonderful work of evangelism and mission we're being shown. The unreached people of Gennesaret, ordinary people, they're flocking to Jesus Christ.

And they're bringing to him everyone that they know, everyone with great needs. That's a great mark, isn't it, of people who really grasp the gospel. They want to bring other people to where they can meet with Jesus, when they can hear his wonderful words.

And it's a wonderful picture. As many as touched Jesus were made well. And not just physical wellness, of course. Whenever Jesus touches the lives of people, he brings utter wholeness, spiritual wholeness.

That's always what's being imparted when people come to him. But what a total contrast there in verse 1 and 2 of chapter 15 from the official opinion of the church.

These people don't care about trivialities. Like crowds of people coming to Jesus and entering the kingdom of heaven and finding salvation and eternal life. They don't care about that.

[ 13 : 00 ] What do they care about? What's important to them? Verse 2. The fact that Jesus' disciples haven't used hand sanitizer before they've had their meal. Actually, it's not so much to do with hygiene.

It's a matter of ceremonial tradition. Not anything, of course, that's in the scriptures. But it's something that was added as a ritual by their religious teachers, by certain groups.

The tradition of the elders. The way that we do things in our superior tradition. And Jesus, the real son of God, is messing up their comfortable way of thinking.

And therefore interfering with their power and their authority. That's the issue, you see. It's ultimately one of authority and control. Now we may laugh at that kind of attitude that we encounter very often in churches.

Oh, we've always done it this way. And we can see how trivialities can become quite important issues. But we need to see why it often is like that.

[ 14 : 08 ] And it's because to assert human traditions, whatever they are, means asserting ourselves. It means asserting our power, our authority, our control, our self-rule.

And that's always, it's a way of avoiding surrender to the frighteningly radical rule of Jesus Christ over our lives.

It's refusing to bow down to his command and his direction. That's the only reason that in churches, issues of outward triviality, things which are a totally insignificant nature, why they can become things that cause such huge ructions in churches, cause resignations and so on.

Because underneath it all is the real issue, which is authority. Whose authority really holds sway? Is it that of Jesus Christ and the demands of his kingdom mission alone?

Or is it that of ourselves and what we want and how we like things to be? And so often when there's a rumpus in a church where there's someone annoyed at something, the real issue is this.

[ 15 : 23 ] I'm not at the center of this. I've not been consulted about this. It's not being done my way. It's not being done the way that I think it should be done. So I'm going to be in a huff about it.

That's never said, of course. But that's the truth, isn't it? The tradition of the elders gives power and authority to human beings, to men and women, to do it their way.

Because when you add to scripture alone, whenever you add human authority, in fact, you're seeking to avoid God's authority and take it back into human hands. Where you add to the gospel, therefore, you absolutely destroy the gospel.

And there have been so many examples of that all through the history of the church still today. It's easy for us to see that church and that fault in other places.

Easy for us, I think, to see it in the church of Rome, which is so much added to scripture with its sacred tradition, with its hierarchical structure that's quite foreign to scripture. So the real authority is in the magisterium, in what the Pope declares to be really legitimate.

[ 16 : 32 ] And it's the Catholic distinctives that really count more than anything else. And so the gospel of God's grace alone and Christ alone has been supplanted. You ask a Roman Catholic person, are you a Christian?

And then they'll always say, yes, I'm a Catholic. Well, at least I belong to the real tradition of the elders. Or it's easy for us, I think, to see that sort of thing in some charismatic church circles.

Where, yes, of course, the Bible is held as the word of God, but also very prominent. Other words of knowledge, the words of contemporary prophets, these sorts of special revelations and so on.

So what really begins to count is the more immediate, often more exciting authority that so speaks directly into your life.

And again, the authority comes back into the hands of human beings and control into the hands of men, which sometimes can lead to real dangers.

[ 17 : 32 ] Unhealthy, heavy control over people's lives in the guise of shepherding and so on. And some of us have seen that. Now, maybe we can see these sorts of things quite clearly.

I hope we can. But it's never so easy, is it, to look at yourselves in the mirror. And it's quite easy to slip into all kinds of traditions of the elders, all kinds of ways of our preferred ways of doing things, the things that we enjoy, the things that we will fight to keep unchanged and unchanging in our church or in our personal life.

Nothing wrong, of course, with traditions. There's nothing wrong with that. It's changing things just constantly for the sake of change. There's no point in that. No virtue in that.

But the real issue is this. How willing are we to let go of some things if the needs and the priorities of the kingdom of Christ demand it?

What's your attitude when something you really like, something you really enjoy in church life has to be stopped for a while, or maybe stopped forever? Because the priorities of Jesus' mission demands that other things must take their place, where to reach those who are around us.

[ 18 : 55 ] Or how do I react when what Jesus is doing in my personal life messes up my comfortable thinking, my congenial Christian routine?

See, these are the kinds of things that expose whose authority we're really living under. Is it Christ's alone? Or is it actually just our own particular version of comfortable human religion?

And the real gospel, you see, always confronts us with that challenge and says, which authority? Whose authority? Notice Jesus doesn't say there's anything wrong or wicked about washing your hands ceremonial before a meal.

But what he's saying is, what is the priority here? What's the real driving force in your church life? Is it really God's word and his work saving people?

Or is it really your control and your comfort? And the true gospel always confronts us with an authority that exposes all of our human tradition.

[ 20 : 06 ] And all too often it does just expose what is just comfortable human religion. And it's revealed as heartless. It's revealed as being much more about keeping up appearances than in rejoicing in sinners being made whole.

But the truth will come out when Jesus begins to probe below the surface. And that brings us to the second section here in verses 3 to 9.

And in Jesus' reply to the Pharisees. What we see here is that the true gospel demands an integrity that exposes all sham. It exposes the hypocrisy of what is just self-serving piety.

When you add to God's word the traditions of men, whatever form they are, you don't just set up other human authorities above God's word. In fact, you're destroying God's word altogether as an authority.

Look at verse 6. You make it null and void altogether. You have made void the word of God. You both disobey God's word, but also you're destroying it altogether.

[ 21 : 13 ] Because you're turning it into something that is the very opposite of what it truly is. And that's far worse than what rank outsiders do.

The Gentile pagans out there. The atheist scoffers today. It's worse because, you see, it pretends to speak and act for the one true God. But in fact, it's just pure hypocrisy.

It's sham. And people can see through that. But it blasphemes God. And it causes people to look at that and say, Well, curse that God.

Not bless him. If that's how his people are. And sadly, that too often has been a terrible indictment of the church right down through the ages. And indeed, still today in modern times.

But that is what always happens when man's tradition, when man's authority replaces the true authority and the true priorities of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven.

[ 22 : 14 ] Outwardly, it might look very pious, very proper. But inwardly, verse 8, you see, people's hearts are just far from him, says. Jesus. And here in verse 3, you see, he challenges these very pious-looking Christian leaders with a very specific example.

Jesus' preaching, you see, never deals in generalities, does it? People much prefer generalities because we can brush it off. They don't like preachers that are very specific and close to the bone talking about issues right in the congregation in front of them.

But Jesus doesn't hold back. Jesus flags up here a custom that they had gladly adopted, which was a wonderful picture of exploitation and self-delusion at the same time.

Something that could make you feel very smug, very holy. And yet, at the same time, save yourself an absolute fortune. It was equivalent to a sort of brilliant tax dodge. What he says here, you see, verse 4, is that the fifth commandment of God is absolutely clear.

Honor your father and mother. And then in Exodus chapter 21, verse 17, it adds this stern penalty for abusive parents. You must take this seriously. And there's plenty all through the law of Moses that tells that caring for parents and elderly parents and providing for them is a clear responsibility.

[ 23 : 37 ] But verse 5, you see, these Pharisees, they had added their own tradition to this law.

A vow that you could make to devote your money and property and say it's all been set aside for God. It was called the given to God scheme.

Or Corban, as it's called in Mark chapter 7, verse 11. Like one of those sort of trust funds that the politicians like to use so that you can keep your shares and not look to the public as though you're feathering your own nest when you're giving out contracts for COVID testing and things to a company that's owned by your sister.

So you can keep all your wealth. That was the beauty of this Corban scheme. You can keep it and you can keep using it, but you just say, oh, I'm looking after it for God. It's all devoted to him.

And so when your age, your parents come to you and say, well, I'm needing help with the rent. Or my car needs repaired. Or the council tax bill has to be paid. Or I've got extra costs for nursing care.

[ 24 : 42 ] And so you can say to them, I'd love to help you. Of course I would. But you see, I'm such a devoted worshiper that I've devoted all that money to God. And I've made a vow.

And I couldn't possibly break that religious vow. I'm so sorry. I feel for you that you have hypothermia. But there's nothing I can do.

It's the cost, you see, of my godly devotion to him. No cost to me, of course. Great gain to me. I get to keep all that money. And I get to look very holy and very good and very pious.

But that's what they did. And not only did these men devise these shameful schemes. They worsened the abuse.

By making adherence to their vows far more important than obedience to the command of God in his word. See the scandal in that. It's absolute, utter sham.

[ 25 : 45 ] Talking in spiritual terms about costly giving to God. Which is, in fact, just giving to yourself. And doing it at the expense of others. Indeed, abusing your own family and your own parents who bore you.

Everyone looks so spiritual. Feels so spiritual. Very pious. Pious to God. But in fact, they're behaving worse than any pagan Gentile.

And the Apostle Paul is just as clear, isn't he, in 1 Timothy chapter 5. Which would suggest that some of these same attitudes persisted in the early church. He said, if you don't provide for your own household, you've denied the faith.

You're worse than an unbeliever. No wonder here in verse 7, Jesus calls them, you hypocrites. You're just like the people of old that the prophet Isaiah spoke about.

He was talking about you. Honoring me with your lips. But showing just a hardened mess in your hearts.

[ 26 : 51 ] And the passage from Isaiah, by the way, is talking about teachers and prophets who are blind, who are asleep to the true word of God. Just as these men are. Not hearing God's true word and worshipping him, verse 9, do you see?

But instead, by substituting the commands of men, just worshipping themselves. Dressed up as spiritual people worshipping God.

But in reality, just pious laws that gave self-serving loopholes. I'm quite shocked, really, aren't we, reading this?

The rank hypocrisy of it. But we have to look in the mirror, says Jesus. Is it just possible that sometimes we might do the same thing?

Actually serving ourselves, serving our own needs. Serving our own desire for fulfillment, for satisfaction, for recognition. When others think, actually, we're doing all this to serve God and his purposes.

[ 27 : 56 ] Is it possible for us to deceive ourselves? We have to ask that, I think, don't we? We have to ask the question, is my life really governed by a love mentality?

Love for God that therefore puts God's word and God's command in total authority over my life? Or is it sometimes, or oftentimes, a loophole mentality?

That's really, if we're honest, driven by love of me. So my service of others is really done to serve myself and to serve my needs, whatever they might be.

Recognition. Praise. A sense of people thinking I'm godly. See, a loophole mentality only needs our lips. But a love mentality needs our hearts.

And it's a response of our hearts that shows whether we really do grasp the gospel of grace. Of all that God has given to us in Christ.

[ 29 : 00 ] And therefore what the gospel asks of us in service. If we have really grasped that, we will rejoice. If we haven't, that's when we'll be really trying to serve and protect ourselves.

We'll always be looking for those loopholes, won't we? Think of our giving, for example. A love mentality will rejoice as we find ourselves, perhaps as we move on in life with more money.

Because we're able to give more to Christ's cause. But a loophole mentality, we see a look at that and think, oh my goodness. This tithing business is becoming a bigger and bigger item.

So you'll find all sorts of ways of calculating it differently so as to avoid costing you more. But you can still feel just as virtuous about it. Or the areas that you perhaps serve in church life.

A love mentality joyfully serves wherever the need is. Doing whatever is needed to help the ministry and the mission of the church. A loophole mentality.

[ 30 : 10 ] Well, we'll want to get maximum visibility, maximum attention for minimum effort, minimum commitment. Love mentality. Or a loophole mentality.

It'd come out in a myriad of different ways, wouldn't it? It's all about motivation. And the thing is, by nature, we're all loopholeers. God says, do this.

And we immediately think to ourselves, well, how can I do it and be seen to do it, but at minimum cost? Remember the encounter that Jesus had with the teacher of the law in Luke chapter 10.

The parable of the Good Samaritan. And Jesus says, what does the law command you? And he says, rightly. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. And your neighbor is yourself. And Jesus says, yeah.

Do that. Then the man says, oh, but wait a minute. Who's my neighbor? What he really means is, who isn't my neighbor? How can I limit the authority of God over my life in this?

[ 31 : 12 ] I'm looking for the loophole. I'm looking for the easy way out. And it's that attitude, isn't it, that the gospel always exposes in us, in our personal life and in our church life.

Are we real, authentic, gospel grace driven people? Or is it a sham? Are we lip people or are we heart people?

Are we looking for loopholes, protecting ourselves by all kinds of self-serving traditions and cultures and preferences? Are we looking to love, living in line with the heart of God?

And that brings us to the final thing you see in Jesus' words here in verses 10 to 20. That the true gospel always shines a light that exposes the heart.

Exposes the real horror, indeed, of our corrupted human nature. Because the gospel gets right under our skin. It gets right into our hearts.

[ 32 : 20 ] And when it does, the reason you see that it does cause such offense is because it exposes what is so often the underlying real motivation behind all of our outward actions and our words.

And indeed, all our apparent piety. The gospel light always shows up what the motivation of our hearts really is. And that's a real challenge.

A real challenge among apparently pious and exemplary religious people, church people, leaders. It's a challenge that people like that very often find offensive, just as these Pharisees did.

Look at verse 12. Do you know these Pharisees were offended when they heard these things? What had offended these apparently Bible-loving people so much?

What had got up their noses so that they wanted to lynch the preacher? Well, Jesus had confronted them with the fact that for all their religious and moral credentials at heart, there were people full of sin who needed to repent, change their attitudes and priorities, and submit to his sole authority to direct their lives in everything.

[ 33 : 39 ] Verse 11, you see, it's not outward show that matters. It's not what goes into your mouth. It's the inward state of your heart.

It's what comes out of you, he says. Unless there be any doubt what that means, look at verse 18, where he does explain it explicitly to his disciples.

It's what comes out of your heart that defiles you. And your hearts are pretty rotten. Look at verse 19. That's what they're full of. In your hearts, you're defying God's law, his command, all the time.

Constantly in thoughts and in words and in deeds. That's what defiles you, verse 20. Not what's out there coming in to tarnish you.

That is so important for us to grasp. One of the very interesting things over this past year, I've found, is listening to how many thinking intellectuals I've heard exploring issues of faith to understand what's really going on in the world today.



[ 34 : 45 ] What's lying behind some of the government's actions across the world that have been so destructive to humanity. And I've listened to some very fascinating discussions among thinking people who are finding themselves forced into a much more serious Christian investigation.

Because they see that the Christian worldview is what explains the situation our world is in. And they're coming to realize there is such a thing as evil.

Even that there is such a thing as the demonic. And I heard one such man saying, yes, the Christian worldview is now the only explanation. And I see that evil is real and out there for sure.

But what he hasn't yet grasped, you see, is that its source, the source of that evil in this world, is in here.

It's out of the human sinful rebellious heart that comes the evil that defiles us and that defiles the whole world with it. And you see, the answer to that evil will not be found in a transformed world order.

[ 35 : 53 ] Well, maybe we need that too. But it will be found only in transformed human hearts. Our hearts need to be transformed and go on being transformed. But we won't let them be transformed because we won't submit to God's authority.

We won't submit to his word and to obey it. And that's the challenge for that particular commentator that I was listening to. He needs to submit and bow the knee to Jesus Christ. He needs to repent.

And turn his life around. But you see, remember, Jesus is speaking here, isn't he, to people who think that they are living as God's people, except they weren't.

They were protecting themselves from real transformation through the living word of God by blocking it out with their religion, with their customs, with their culture, with their comforting self-congratulatory piety.

And friends, these things are written and preserved, says the New Testament, for us. Because there's a real danger in the church, always, including us.

[ 37 : 06 ] We like, don't we? We like to be part of an evangelical church. We like to be a church that has a gospel message to challenge the outsider. But we don't tend to like nearly as much a double-barreled assault by the word of God on our hearts and on our life, accusing our hearts of being full of evil thoughts and slander and false witness and so on.

We don't like that, do we? We don't like our lives being challenged, being exposed, being pricked by the real priorities of Christ and his kingdom.

And the way that that does make real demands on our lives, on our time, on our talents, on our money, in all kinds of uncomfortable ways. Isn't that true? We don't like that.

But let me ask you a question. Do you expect to be called to real repentance and change week by week by God's word as you come to hear it here in church?

Do you expect that? Do you expect to be forced every week to examine your thinking and to change your thinking, to change your mind about your life at home, about your life with your spouse, with your children, with your parents, at your work, in your attitude to your part in the church, how you treat others and so on and so forth, how you change your behavior, your actions, your words, your thoughts.

[ 38 : 33 ] Do you expect to be challenged to do that all the time? If not, you see, if you find that thought rather offensive, you're like these Pharisees.

It's very likely that there's a lot of sham, a lot of pretense in your heart. And if I think like that, it's very likely that I have actually domesticated, that I have made void the word of God with my particular tradition, the things that I use to allow myself to say, well, I'm not listening to that.

I don't need to listen to that. So if you get ruffled by a sermon, well, you blame the preacher for not being sensitive enough in his language. Or if you get uncomfortable reading something in scripture, you find difficult, well, you blame the writer and you say, well, actually, Paul didn't really understand modern science, Paul didn't really understand modern sexuality and so on.

That's what people do, isn't it? They take offense and then they leave. In fact, being offended, being, feeling victimized, it's become endemic in our culture today.

And our culture is a culture of self-righteous, self-focused identity politics. It's all around us. And we can see that, I think, to some extent, at least outside the church.

[ 39 : 58 ] But you see here, Jesus is turning his telescopic sight and aiming it quite clearly at Bible people, not at outsiders, not at Gentile pagans, but the challenge is for Bible people and Bible churches but who blunt the sword of the Spirit from doing its work of challenge and its work of change in our hearts by failing to hear and by failing to teach the uncomfortable challenge of the true gospel and its uncomfortably radical priorities.

And the warning that Jesus gives to all of us listening today, it's very simple, it's very blunt. Look at verses 13 and 14. Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up.

Let them alone, verse 14. If all you want is comforting evangelical platitudes, cocooned in pleasant anodyne songs and lots of comforting informality and familiarity, if that's all you want, so be it.

Let them alone. keep avoiding the real challenge of the true gospel to your comfortable ways and your self-made traditions. Keep blunting the transforming power of God's word to reshape your hearts and your minds and your world view.

And keep refusing to really buy the knee to God alone and his authority alone and his priorities alone, not your preferences for your life and for your church life. Keep doing that, says Jesus, and I will let you alone as blind and hardened people, if you're blind and hardened guides.

[ 41 : 49 ] And both of you, verse 14, do you see, will ultimately fall into a pit of judgment. Friends, that's what Jesus is saying today in these words to us, to our age, to all churches, all denominations and to us, to all professing Christians, including every one of us.

And he's saying that unless we're willing for our hearts to keep on being challenged and changed in conformity with his word alone, unless we're willing to go on being challenged and changed in our church life, in continuous submission to the priorities of the gospel of his kingdom alone, then we will be breaking the commandment of God for the sake of our tradition and our comfortable familiarities.

And we'll be making void, useless, the gospel word and its ministry among us. Yes, we, if we do that, we, the Tron Church, will be the blind just leading the blind, all to fall into a pit together.

So we're faced, I think, unavoidably with a real challenge this morning as those who profess to be Bible people as we do. What is our real priority? Is it what we see here in verse 35 at the end of chapter 14?

All the people of the region being brought to Jesus and finding in him joy, healing, newness of life. Is it that? Or is it verse 2?

[ 43 : 32 ] Just making sure that the things in this church are just the way we like it. Nothing offends my cultural preferences or my proclivities. The one you see is real evangelical Christianity.

The other is just sham evangelical churchianity. The true evangel, Jesus' gospel and his kingdom confronts us with an authority that always exposes tradition, with demands of integrity that exposes all sham and it shines a light that exposes our hearts always.

Don't let us be offended by its probing, by its searching, however painful it is. Don't let ourselves and don't let each other drift from him and walk away from him so that Jesus should ever say of us and of our church let them alone.

Rather, let's bow together and continually to his sole authority as the leader and the director in all things in our lives, our personal life and our corporate life.

let's keep welcoming his light into our hearts, not turning it away so that we will be transformed day by day more and more forever and ever.

[ 45 : 05 ] Don't let us ever be a church that verse 21 is true of. Jesus went away from there and withdrew. Let's pray.

Look upon us, O Lord, and let all the darkness of our souls vanish before the beams of thy brightness.

Fill us with holy love and open to us the treasures of thy wisdom. All our desires are known to thee. Therefore, perfect what thou hast begun and what thy spirit has awakened to ask in prayer.

We seek thy face. Turn thy face unto us and show us thy glory. And then shall our longing be satisfied and our peace shall be perfect.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.