

# The Overriding Importance of a Real Relationship with Jesus

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] And so we're now going to turn to our Bible reading. If you don't have a Bible, there are some located at the side, the front, the back.
- Someone in the welcome team would love to grab one for you if you need it. And do open them up as we spend some more time this morning in Luke's Gospel. We're going to be reading Luke chapter 10, verse 38, through to chapter 11, verse 28.
- So Luke chapter 10, beginning then at verse 38. Now, as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.
- And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving.
- And she went up to him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me. But the Lord answered her, Martha, Martha, you're anxious and troubled about many things.
- [ 1 : 1 8 ] But one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her. Now, Jesus was praying in a certain place.
- And when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples. And he said to them, when you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.
- Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins. For we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us and lead us not into temptation.
- And he said to them, which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, friend, lend me three loaves. For a friend of mine has arrived on a journey and I have nothing to set before him.
- And he will answer from within, do not bother me. The door is shut. My children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything. I tell you, though he will not get up and give anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.
- [ 2 : 3 7 ] And I tell you, ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives. And the one who seeks finds.
- And to the one who knocks, it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent?
- Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?
- Now, he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke. And people marveled. But some of them said, He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons.

While others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself has laid waste.

[ 3 : 45 ] And a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul.

And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoils.

Whoever is not with me is against me. And whoever does not gather with me scatters. When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest.

And finding none, it says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself.

[ 5 : 00 ] And they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first. As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed.

But he said, blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it. Amen.

This is God's word. I'm going to return to it shortly. We'll do you open once again in your Bibles to Luke chapter 10 and 11.

What is of paramount importance to you? What in life is considered to be an absolute necessity? These are vital questions if we are to follow the Lord Jesus.

Now remember, the whole second half of Luke's gospel is taken up with Jesus' journey to and through Jerusalem, to and through the cross, to be taken up in glory.

[ 6 : 19 ] And it's a path that any and all who wish to follow Jesus must also walk, as the only path to his kingdom. And this morning we begin a new part of this journey.

Do you see verse 38? Now as they went on their way. These little on their way phrases are used by Luke to structure this whole second half of the gospel.

The next one comes in chapter 13, verse 22. And so these few chapters, they don't really include many details about where events happen.

It's a metaphorical journey as much as a geographical one. And also in these chapters, there are only two miracles. And so what we have here from the verses we've read through to 13:21, is a collection of Jesus' teaching that is all of a kind.

And the key thrust to Jesus' teaching in this section of his journey is that there is a real urgency that is brought upon us to respond to Jesus' claims.

[ 7 : 23 ] The kingdom of God is being brought near, very near, so near, that it has come upon his hearers. And that brings with it the reality of ultimate things, eternity, heaven and hell.

And our response to Jesus cannot be put off. Because who knows what tomorrow might bring. We'll see that as we work through the rest of these chapters in particular.

But what this whole section through to chapter 13 puts before us is the key question of what are the absolute necessities in life.

Indeed, the absolute necessity. What is it in your life? Well, Luke wants us to have our priorities shaped by what Jesus says should be of paramount importance.

And he breaks these chapters down into four different parts. We're looking at the first of them this morning. And the first part through to chapter 11, verse 28, we see in it that Luke makes clear the central importance of a real relationship with the Lord Jesus.

[ 8 : 35 ] And he shows three key necessities involved in that relationship. The first of which is sitting at the Lord's feet. Verses 38 to 42. Sitting at the Lord's feet.

A real relationship with Jesus will always have as its fundamental basis a delight to be in his presence. Amongst his people.

Listening to him. Jesus must be the one who sets the course for our lives. And enjoying his presence and hearing and heeding his voice is the beating heart of belonging to him.

And that's what we see in this account of two sisters. Verse 38. Martha welcomes Jesus and his followers into her house to teach them. Verse 39.

She has a sister called Mary. Very often this passage is used to say something along the lines of, well, we all need to embrace our inner Marys and our inner Marys. Churches need both Marys and Marys.

[ 9 : 39 ] Marys the one who loves to listen to the Bible and Martha is the one who's eager to serve. And so on. But that is to get all mixed up with why Luke includes this story right here.

Never mind getting mixed up with what Jesus actually says. Luke has one very clear point in this incident. Do you see verse 42? There is one thing that is necessary.

One sister has chosen the good portion. And one sister has not. Now, whilst there is one very clear point, whilst sitting at Jesus' feet here is the one necessary thing, we can't go overboard and completely slate Martha.

After all, it is Martha, verse 38, who welcomes Jesus into her house. She isn't cold and indifferent to Jesus. Quite the opposite. But isn't that instructive in itself?

We can have a lot of zeal for the Lord Jesus, a lot of love for him. But in how we express it, we can miss what he desires most from us. There's no limits to what we can do in this world, in our lives, for the Lord Jesus.

[ 10 : 50 ] Those whose lives are given wholly to ministry and to leading churches can testify to that particularly. There's always stuff to be done. Always stuff that can be done. Always stuff that's worth doing.

And isn't it a reality in church life that we can busy ourselves with all kinds of things. Even getting frustrated that others aren't quite getting to the things that we want them to get to.

Or that others aren't really getting to very much at all. But notice the word there in verse 40. Finally, Martha was distracted with much serving.

It isn't that there was a problem with Martha wanting to serve Jesus. Clearly not. Jesus is very serious about his people serving him, serving one another. Indeed, it was Jesus himself who said that it's more blessed to give than to receive.

And we'll see in chapter 12 a parable about servants and a master. That Jesus is using to instruct about serving him. But here, in her service, Martha was distracted.

[ 11 : 56 ] And more than that, verse 41. Anxious and troubled by many things. And it's into this that Jesus speaks. And notice he deals with Martha tenderly.

Martha, Martha. You're anxious about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion.

In the midst of serving, she has lost sight of what is absolutely paramount. You see, Jesus was on a journey. He was only passing through. There was limited time with him.

And here he was in Martha's house. And what is she doing? Not spending time with him. Not listening to him. But fussing about serving. Notice the word that's repeated in here.

Who is it that's come to her house? Verse 39. The Lord. Verse 40. Lord. Verse 41. The Lord. Here was the Lord God.

[ 12 : 56 ] The Messiah. God himself present in her house. And Martha had lost sight of that. Remember what Jesus has already said?

Back in chapter 5. The scribes and the Pharisees ask Jesus why his disciples aren't fasting. When theirs are. Do you remember his response? The bridegroom is here.

No, it isn't a time of fasting. It's a time of celebration. It's a time to enjoy his presence. Or do you remember what we saw last time? There can be wonderful encouragement in gospel ministry.

Wonderful success. But remember what Jesus says back in 10 verse 20. Don't rejoice in the success of ministry. But rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Rejoice that you've had the father and son revealed to you. Rejoice that your home is in the father's house. There's nothing more fundamental in following Jesus than the bare truth that we have a real relationship with him.

[ 13 : 56 ] That what we get by being Christians is Jesus himself. That before we get to do things for Jesus, we are to be formed by Jesus.

By being in his presence. By feasting on his word. The one thing that is necessary is to deepen that relationship through sitting at his feet.

Enjoying his presence and his preaching. And letting him dictate the shape of our lives. It's possible for us to lose sight of that. To think that we know better.

Of course we wouldn't ever put it that crassly. But we can act like we know better than Jesus on this. Know better about what really is most important in journeying with him.

To act like we know better than him about what he really wants from us. And so our lives can be filled with all kinds of things that are good and fine. But if life then becomes about those things.

[ 14 : 58 ] Then our life's journey will be distracted. Filled with anxiety and trouble. If life is all about creating family bliss. Or if it's all about our particular area of ministry or service.

Or if it's all geared towards a career. Then these otherwise good things can actually leave us feeling empty. Because the thing that matters above all else. Is who we are in Jesus' presence.

Indeed these things might not just leave us anxious and troubled. It could be worse than that. Look at Martha's question. She takes her grief to Jesus. And it isn't just frustration at Mary.

But with Jesus himself. Lord don't you care. That my sister has left me to serve alone. Isn't it so often the case. That when we do get frustrated in life.

When perhaps the reality of not choosing the good portion comes home to us. That actually we can aim some of or indeed all of our ire at God himself. Isn't that a path to bitterness with God?

[ 16 : 05 ] Jesus' word to his followers. Is that what really matters most. Is not serving me. It isn't the things that you can do for me. Good and right as they are.

The key thing is belonging to me. It's what I will give to you. When you sit at my feet. And so there's nothing more important. Than spending time in his presence.

Listening to him. So that he can speak life to us. So that he can realign the whole shape. And priority of our lives. Now this isn't speaking primarily about.

A kind of private. And personal interaction with Jesus. Just between you and him. No Jesus is journeying with his disciples. They're all together. Welcomed into Martha's house. And that's where Jesus is teaching.

And the reality is that today. The place where Jesus is particularly present. And speaking. Is in the gathering of his people. It's right here. Right now. And so we need to ask.

[ 17 : 06 ] Are we taking Jesus at his word? Is it really the fixed and immovable priority in our lives. To have time at Jesus feet. To dwell in his presence.

To hear his gracious words of life. Spoken to you. Or is it simply one thing. Among many things. That we allow to clamor for our time and attention.

So that we allow other things. Even seemingly worthy things. To distract us. And keep us from sitting at Jesus feet. It's always a concern. When someone only turns up to church.

When it's their turn to serve. So that they're rarely if ever sitting and receiving from Jesus. Jesus wants to tell us that we are missing out on so much.

If that's the case. Because notice Jesus' last words here. For Mary chose the good portion. Which will not be taken away from her.

[ 18 : 07 ] One writer says. What a marvelous assurance of the stickability of Jesus' word. What you receive. Will remain with you and stand by you.

And isn't that the case when. We see folks deteriorating. When folks are in hospital in their last days. Jesus' word. What they've gained from being in his presence.

Sticks with him. When all else falls away. Memories fade. Faculties diminish. But very often the words and songs and prayers of the church. The assurance of Jesus' promises are there.

Sustaining them. The good portion. Will not be taken away. But rather will guide us through the cross.

To be taken up to glory. Well the second thing we see. About the necessity of a real relationship with Jesus. Is that it means speaking to our loving father.

[ 19 : 10 ] Verses 1 to 13 of chapter 11. Speaking to our loving father. Jesus wants his followers to express their relationship with.

And trust in God. Through prayer. Real relationships involve listening. And speaking. Relationships are two way things.

And so Jesus' followers sit at his feet. And they speak to our heavenly father. Prayer. Notice. Verse 1. Jesus is praying. And when he finishes.

One of his disciples asks. Lord. Teach us to pray. Prayer is not some discipline. That's rammed down the disciples' throats. A burden pressed upon them.

No. Look. They ask. Teach us to pray. And so Jesus does just that. Prayer isn't something in the Christian life. That you just have to live with.

[ 20 : 08 ] No. Prayer is a wonderful expression of real relationship with the living God. Real trust in him. Jesus regularly prayed to his father. And it's a privilege granted to all who follow Jesus.

Look at the first word of the prayer. Verse 2. Father. Prayer isn't some sort of mechanical thing. Repeat certain lines and trigger a predetermined response.

No. It's getting to speak to the glorious creator and sustainer of all things. And it's getting to call him father. Now before we dig into the detail.

It's worth us noting. That Jesus' words about prayer are focused on corporate prayer. Of course that doesn't mean it isn't for us to pray by ourselves. But prayer here is primarily corporate.

Notice verse 3. Give us our daily bread. Verse 4. Forgive us our sins. And so on. Well let's look then at some of the details.

[ 21 : 14 ] In verses 2 to 4 we see the composition of our prayers. And something that stands out is that this model prayer is but five lines. It isn't long.

And it isn't complicated. We don't come to pray to prove a point or to pontificate. Look at verse 2. The first two lines are concerned primarily with God's name and God's kingdom.

This prayer begins not with our own personal needs and requests. But rather with a concern for what God is doing in the world. Eternity hangs over everything.

And isn't it the case that we face a perpetual struggle to see things in right perspective? And so having the discipline and the desire to pray about ultimate things as a matter of course.

With a priority and even an urgency. Is really quite important. We come acknowledging that God is God. And we're not. And so we come submitting to him.

[ 22 : 20 ] Expressing that his concerns are far above ours. And that actually his concerns, his name, his kingdom are actually ultimately good for us.

Now, these opening two lines. Rolf Davis argues rather convincingly that the concern for God's name to be hallowed. Is not just a kind of general honor for it.

But rather it's rooted in Ezekiel chapter 36. In that chapter, God's people had been unfaithful to him and were exiled. But exile caused a PR problem for God's name.

God had to judge his people for their unfaithfulness. Or it would undermine his name. But when he judged his people, it appeared to undermine his name to the surrounding nations.

What kind of God allows his people to be carted off into exile? Well, and so Israel's unfaithfulness profaned God's holy name.

[ 23 : 22 ] As we can see in Ezekiel 36 verse 22. But God is going to reverse all of that and ultimately show the awesome holiness of his name.

By bringing restoration to Israel. By giving them the promised land. By sprinkling them with cleanness. By pouring out his spirit upon them. And on and on. So that the same people who questioned God's godness.

Will end up saying. The land that was desolate. Has become like the garden of Eden. And Ezekiel says. The nations that are left.

All around you. Shall know. That I am Yahweh. They'll know his name. His name will be hallowed again.

And so this prayer. That Jesus is teaching. Is a prayer for ultimate things. Eternity ought to fill our prayers. As we long that God's name is hallowed.

[ 24 : 22 ] And that his kingdom comes fully and finally forever. What a thing it is that we can talk to our heavenly father about eternity. As we long for it with eager hope.

But we can also talk to him. About our daily needs. Do you see? It's ultimate things first. A concern for his kingdom.

But we can also bring to him regular things. The one doesn't exclude the space. Excludes space for the other. And so Jesus tells us. That we're also to pray for daily provision.

And pardon. And protection. There are echoes. In the daily bread. Of verse 3. Of the manna in the wilderness. Remember.

The Lord's people are told. Collect enough for one day. And then the next day it will come again. A daily reminder that God is God. And we're not. That we need him to provide for us. That all that we have comes to us from his hand.

[ 25 : 24 ] But notice too. That whilst we can ask our father for material needs. That that is only one line. And there are two lines given to our spiritual need.

For we need daily pardon. We need forgiveness for our sin. Notice. There in verse 4. How bound up that is. With showing forgiveness to others.

The sure sign of knowing the forgiveness. That our father grants us through Jesus. Is in showing that same forgiveness to others. But Jesus also makes clear.

That we need to be realistic about our weakness. Our prayers ought to be honest. Asking for protection from temptation. Don't let us fall away Lord. And so Jesus in this prayer.

Makes clear what is of paramount importance to us. As we follow Jesus. And enjoy relationship with him. And he shows us that it plays out in how we pray.

[ 26 : 23 ] His followers prayers are shaped first by his great kingdom purposes. And then for ourselves. And our prayers for ourselves minor on our physical and felt needs.

Major on our spiritual ones. These are the prayers that will lead us on with Jesus. Through Jerusalem. Through the cross. And to be taken up to glory.

But Jesus tells us more than just what to pray. He also shows us secondly. The confidence with which we can pray. Verses 5 to 13. And so we see.

There in verses 5 to 10. The gladness with which God hears. Jesus paints a picture of a bit of a nightmare scenario. For a culture that was very serious about hospitality.

As was the case in the Middle East. Someone arrives at midnight to your house. And you've got new supplies to feed them with. And so you're in a terrible position. You go to your friend.

[ 27 : 19 ] And you bang on his door. You ask for some bread. Very understandably at midnight. The reply will come. Verse 7. Do not bother me. The door's shut. We're all in bed.

Got children asleep in here. Verse 8. It isn't because of the friendship that he will help you. Rather it's because of the impudence of you asking that he will.

That word impudence. Perhaps better translated as shamelessness. Because of the shamelessness of the request. Because you had no other option. Because of the audacity of asking.

Because of the great need. Then he might respond with help. Even though in his heart. Inside. He doesn't want to. And so Jesus' point here.

Is that we can bring our requests. To our Father in heaven. Requests that are born of any kind of desperation. And every kind of desperation. If our hearts are breaking over something.

[ 28 : 21 ] If our nerves are frayed. If we're at our wit's end. If we're wracked with guilt and anxiety. Whenever we're conscious of our helplessness. We have a Father who will hear and respond to these things.

We don't ever have to fear that God will say. Oh away with you. I've had enough of your blubbing. Enough of your problems. How much more can we be sure of that?

Because verse 9. Jesus asks. Jesus says ask. And it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock. And it will be opened to you.

Our Father's response to us. Coming to him with our needs. Will never be met with. The door is shut. Now is not the time. Do you see that verse 10?

Everyone who asks. Receives. Everyone who comes to God. So conscious of their need before him. Coming in faith. Everyone will receive.

[ 29 : 24 ] And find. And have the door open to them. Here's Ralph Davis again. We pray. Jesus tells us. Knowing the willingness of God.

To be disturbed. God the Father. Really is your friend. At every midnight. But we also see in verses 11 to 13.

The goodness. With which God answers. If even human fathers. Treat their children well. If even a human father. Listens to their children's requests.

And doesn't return evil to them. Not giving a serpent to a child. Who asks for a fish. Or a scorpion. Instead of an egg. How much more.

Our father in heaven. If even fathers. Who have been corrupted by sin. Can do their children good. How much more. Our father in heaven.

[ 30 : 21 ] God. And. And. Verse 13. He will give us all that we need. For he gives us his very spirit. He strengthens his people.

He illumines his people's hearts to the truth. He holds and keeps us. When things are welling up against us. The reality is. We won't always know what is best for us.

But God does. And our heavenly father. Will persistently do us good. From his heavenly throne. Well maybe.

Some of us find that hard to accept. But Jesus wants us to know that. Perhaps we have. Reasons to doubt that about God. Perhaps we've become suspicious of prayer.

We've been burnt by it. Listen to Ralph Davis again. Maybe we hear about someone. That prayed for patience. And God sent them trials.

[ 31 : 18 ] In order to learn it. And we think yes. God has a tricky way of working. But Jesus is telling us. That God is not devious. That he will not give you the shaft.

That you can trust his goodness. Trust that actually. He will not double cross you. That he's not looking for loopholes. In your requests. To not answer you. Or to spite you.

We could perhaps even say. That even if we asked our father. For a scorpion or a serpent. He wouldn't give them to us. Instead he delights to give us himself.

Just as we saw last time. That Jesus delights to reveal his father. Not to the wise and understanding in this world. But to the little children. The same father delights to give the spirit.

To his children. Who ask him. Who turn to him in need. Shamelessly. Because nothing else can help. And nothing else will do. How much more can we have confidence.

[ 32 : 20 ] In our good father in heaven. Well finally. We see. Verses 14 to 28.

The necessity of siding with Jesus. Not his foos. Siding with Jesus. Not his foos. A real relationship with Jesus.

Requires fidelity. To his work. Ways and word. Even when they're called evil. By this world. It's fitting. That the one miracle.

That is here in this passage. In verse 14. Is Jesus restoring someone. Who has been made mute. By a demon. The word. Translated there as mute.

Means both deaf. And dumb. And Luke doesn't place this here by accident. Jesus work. His ministry. Is ultimately about restoring relationship.

[ 33 : 14 ] Between fallen humanity. And his father in heaven. Without Jesus ministry. We couldn't ever have a relationship with God. We're like a dumb man without him.

Unable to hear him. Unable to sit at his feet. And unable to speak to him. But. Jesus ministry. Whilst wonderful.

Isn't welcome by many. Notice this. Miracle only takes up one verse here. And then straight away. We're into a controversy. Straight away.

We're into a dispute. About how Jesus was able to perform this miracle. Verse 15. Ah. Jesus. He's in bed with Beelzebul. Jesus is actually in thrall to the devil.



The one who rules demons. Jesus can do this. Because his ministry is wicked. It's birthed in hell. That's what they're saying. Others. Verse 16. Just want more evidence.

[ 34 : 14 ] Evidence. That the evidence. Is really evidence. Kind of thing. Verse 14. People marveled. At the wonderful restoration of this mute man.

But for many. That wasn't enough. No. He must prove. That he's actually from heaven. And not from hell. Jesus. Of course. Is having none of it. Verses 17 to 19.

What kind of kingdom. It extends its influence. By reducing its influence. The kingdom's divided against itself. It falls. So.

So. You think Satan's great plan for dominance. Is to attack his own kingdom. That's the level of logic. That unbelief leads to. I think C.S. Lewis encapsulates this so well.

In the character Uncle Andrew. In The Magician's Nephew. As Narnia is brought to creation. And there's great excitement and joy. At all that's happening. Aslan has been singing Narnia into being.

[ 35 : 15 ] But there stands Uncle Andrew. Telling himself. It's not singing. No, no. A lion can't sing. It must just be a roar. And C.S. Lewis writes.

The more beautifully the lion sang. The harder Uncle Andrew tried to make himself believe. That he could hear nothing but roaring. Now the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider.

Than you really are. Is that very often you succeed. Uncle Andrew did. And when at last the lion spoke. And said Narnia awake.

He didn't hear any words. He only heard a snarl. That's the logic of unbelief. Seeing good. And calling it evil.

Seeing Satan's kingdom. Getting a bloodied nose. And claiming it's because Satan's punched himself in the face. It seems that even some of the crowd's sons were casting out demons.

[ 36 : 13 ] Verse 19. And so Jesus says. Are your sons also demonic? Well they might not say that. Because you see. Sometimes people have a special kind of prejudice. Kept only for Jesus.

And we see that today. Don't we? Notice the language that's used for the legislation. That's being brought to parliaments. In order to propagate. And perpetuate the spread of the dangerous.

And evil trans ideology. It's a ban on conversion. Particularly pointed title. Taking aim at the Christian church. Very literally.

We're seeing the exchange of evil. For good. Calling things like child mutilation. Healthcare. But look at the real issue in this.

Verse 20. If actually your nonsensical arguments don't hold up. And actually Jesus is overthrowing demons by the finger of God. That phrase the finger of God is loaded with meaning from the Exodus.

[ 37 : 13 ] When Pharaoh's magicians could no longer match what Moses was miraculously doing in the plagues. They eventually admit to Pharaoh that it's only happening by the finger of God. If Jesus was casting out demons by the power of God.

God alone. Then the kingdom of God. Verse 20. Has not just come near. But has come upon you. And there's a decision to make. That is the problem.

When it is recognized that Jesus is doing something mighty by God's power. That's the problem when it's seen that the church is a place where people can flourish. Become more truly whole human beings.

Because it prompts a question that people have to reckon with. Are Jesus claims true? And accepting that has monumental implications.

Because it exposes that people are standing against the Christ. Not standing against just verse 21. The strong man. The strong man in verses 21 and 22 here is Satan.

[ 38 : 19 ] He has all of his captives under lock and key. Safely guarded. His plunder is nice and safe. But not standing against him. But actually they're standing against Jesus. The stronger one.

The one who has already defeated Satan in the wilderness. The one who has seen Satan falling like lightning from heaven. The one who will crush Satan's head finally. The one who has already begun to raid Satan's palace.

By restoring relationship to all manner of helpless mutes. People like you and me. It's a real relationship with the living God. And so what Jesus spells out here with crystal clarity is that verse 23.

There can be no neutrality with Jesus. There's no middle ground. Whoever is not with me is against me. To resist him.

To reject him. To look at his work and words and call it anything other than good. That is to be aligned with Beelzebul. With the devil. The one who's been plundered.

[ 39 : 25 ] The one who loses. That's a very pointed word. Particularly in our day and age. Jesus makes an absolutely exclusive claim here.

The reality is that if we reimagine what Jesus says about sin. If we ignore or downplay what Jesus calls sin. If we minimize in any way Jesus' wonderful sin atoning work.

That isn't to embrace nuance. It's not progressive. It's not enlightened. Those are the kinds of words we often hear, aren't they? From all manner of people who want to be called Christians.

But who are actually uneasy with Jesus' plain teaching. Who aren't really with him. No, Jesus is plain. To treat his work and words as anything other than good.

To call them evil. Or misguided. Or out of date. That isn't to broaden the church. To strengthen the church. It's to be in bed with Satan.

[ 40 : 26 ] And so a real relationship with Jesus means being on his side. Absolutely. So that when the kingdom of God comes upon you.

You heed the summons. To side with Jesus. Now Luke develops and unpacks verse 23. With two further incidents.

To show that being against Jesus isn't only seen in obvious opposition. But also in inadequate responses to him. We see that first day in verses 24 to 26.

A response that's merely external. Following Jesus cannot just be an attempt at whitewashing yourself. If I can just have some Jesus.

As an attempt to deal with a bad habit. Or to sort out an addiction. If I can just clean up how my life looks. A bit of Jesus to help with just this one area of life over here.

[ 41 : 24 ] Maybe I'll pray a bit. I'll drop into church from time to time. That'll help me turn things around. Look at what Jesus says. When an unclean spirit goes out of a person.

Verse 24. It moves around looking for somewhere else to rest. But then decides the best course is to go back to where it came from. And yes, verse 25. It may find a nice life looking nice and clean and neat and tidy.

Cleaned up on the outside. But then verse 26. It comes back with seven friends. Brings a whole new and bigger wave of evil and mess.

Jesus' message. Is that he must take the wheel of our whole lives. So that our sitting at his feet.

And our crying out to our father. Feeds us and nourishes us with God's spirit. So that we're transformed completely. Having blind eyes opened.

[ 42 : 26 ] Deaf ears unblocked. A merely external response to Jesus. Just dabbling a bit with him. Only invites Satan to gain an even firmer grip upon us.

That's what Jesus says here. That too is ultimately to be against the Lord Jesus. A second inadequate response. Verses 27 and 28.

A response that's merely excitable. Here was a woman who cries. Blessed is your mother. Your wonderful Jesus. Blessings upon you and your family. Another inadequate response.

Jesus says rather blessed. Are those who hear the word of God and keep it. Simply crying Lord we bless you. Even telling people oh Jesus is wonderful.

Singing wonderful songs about him for hours and hours. Having a fish in your car. All these sorts of things. Engaging in all manner of excitement and emotion around praising Jesus.

[ 43 : 25 ] Without actually obeying him. Is another inadequate response. Jesus says verse 23. Whoever is not with me. Is against me.

And so notice. We finish here where we started don't we. The beating heart of the Christian life. Is a real relationship with Jesus. So that we cherish his word and his presence.

So that we respond to him by praying to our father. And we really side with Jesus. By not just hearing his word. But by doing it.

Verse 28. By keeping it. But friends. As we side with Jesus. As we take these words to heart.

Be assured. That if you who are evil. Know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more. Will the heavenly father.

[ 44 : 25 ] Give the holy spirit. To those who ask him. Let's pray. Lord for the sake of your holy name.

And for the advancement of your kingdom. Grant us the grace we need. To follow you. On the path. To and through the cross. And illumine our hearts.

To see more and more and more. The wonders that are ours. From your hand. And grant us the courage. To reshape our priorities.

Where that is required. Help us in this we pray. For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.