

Heavy Burdens & Hardened Hearts

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[0 : 0 0] Here in Luke chapter 11, verse 45, the Bible says this, Then answered one of the lawyers and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.

And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers. Maybe this guy should have just kept his mouth shut. For ye laid men with burdens grievous to be born, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

Woe unto you, for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers, for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.

Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute. That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation.

From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which would perish between the altar and the temple, verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation. Woe unto you, lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge.

[1 : 1 5] Ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered. And as he said these things unto him, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things.

It wasn't because they wanted to learn. Look what verse 54 says. Lying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

We're going to preach a message entitled this, Heavy Burdens and Hardened Hearts. See, the Pharisees, they had their own way, and their own situation. They were saying, look how good we are on the outside.

Look how clean our hands are. And Jesus said, look how dirty your heart is though. You're dead on the inside. They had made religion about just this outside facade, and that's why Jesus multiple times said, hey, you're hypocrites.

You're saying one thing, but you're really another. And now he's kind of shifting directions here to these lawyers that were there to help people know the word of God. He said, listen, you've missed it. You're weighing people down and making it extremely difficult for them to find God.

[2 : 2 7] And he said, that's a dangerous place to be. When religion replaces grace, it crushes people. And that's what Jesus is teaching us right here this morning. So let's ask him to help us as we jump into the sermon.

Father, thank you for this day. Lord, thank you for your word that we can open this morning. Thank you for the songs that remind us of your goodness to us. And as Brother Cliff just sang, Lord, I'm so thankful you've been good to me. Lord, I'm thankful you've been good to every single person in this audience.

The fact that we're here today to hear the word of God is a blessing. Lord, I pray that you would speak to hearts as need be, Lord, that you would meet us where we are. If there's somebody that doesn't know you as Savior, Lord, that today would be that day.

Lord, I pray you would help me, Lord. I need you. I need you to clear my thoughts and my mind, Lord. I pray you'd give me the words to say. That it would be a help to the hearer today. And we ask all these things in your son's precious name.

Amen. Thank you so much for standing. May be seated. Have you ever tried to help somebody and they did not receive it as help?

[3 : 2 7] You ever, like, try to be a nice citizen, a nice neighbor on the road, so to speak, and you're driving up there and you see somebody's gas caps open and you try to roll down and you're like,

your gas cap's open.

And then they look at you like you've just insulted their entire family lineage. Like, bro, I'm just trying to help you. You know, let them know, hey, your blinker's still on, you know, because like, I don't want everybody else to be as mad at you as I was.

You know, because I was behind somebody yesterday and I kept slowing down, slowing down. I'm like, their blinker's been on for two miles. I'm like, I couldn't get around and I'm like, and you know, it's just, I tried to be in the spirit but I really wasn't.

I mean, the idea is, you weren't wrong and maybe you weren't even mean about it. You were just right. And somehow, that made it worse.

Because I think we can all relate to that because I think, you know, we've all been on the other end as well. That we've been corrected by somebody, we've been trying to, they may be trying to help us and it just hit a nerve.

[4 : 31] Not because they were wrong, because they were dead on the money. And we didn't like that. We didn't like how that felt and why is that? Why is it sometimes when somebody's trying to help us and they're trying to correct us and they're trying to show us the truth, it hits a nerve.

I think because sometimes it's not just confronting behavior, it's exposing what's really in our heart. I think that's what it is. It really, it gets down in there and we don't necessarily like that.

And as we saw last week if you were here in verses 37 through 44 and we see again, that's exactly what's taking place. These Pharisees, they were there and it seemed like they were always kind of in the shadows.

They were always kind of lurking behind seeing what Jesus was going to do. And they took opportunities like that Pharisee did last week. He said, hey man, I'd love to have you over for lunch. And it wasn't a friendly invitation.

That's what he wanted it to seem like. But really, he was looking for an opportunity to kind of really get in there and find something wrong with Jesus. We saw it at the end of our text here today.

[5 : 33] They were looking for something to come out of his mouth, the Bible said, so they could just nail him on it. They could find this situation. And so really, what he did is he confronted these Pharisees about their hypocrisy.

He said, listen man, you're so excited that you're so clean on the outside. And you're following all of these ceremonial washing laws. And Jesus went to dinner and didn't wash his hands.

I mean, and they just lost their marbles. And he said, you're so worried about the outside of the cup. What's going on on the inside? And he really exposed their hypocrisy.

You know, there are certain times in life when maybe the room is tense, you shouldn't say something. But you all know somebody, and maybe you are that somebody, you're like, I'm going to say it. You're like, don't say it. And maybe your inner self is saying, don't say it.

And you're like, hey, we don't like how you're treating our friends. Because that's what the lawyer did right here. That's what verse number 45, he said, master, thus saying, thou reproachest also.

[6 : 32] He said, hey, you can't say that. Who do you think you are? That's basically what this man is saying. That's kind of the idea and the tone that he comes with.

And he's really saying, Jesus, when you rebuke them, I don't know if you know this, but you're rebuking us also and we don't like it. You're really mean. I mean, that's kind of what's going on here. That's kind of the attitude here. So who are these lawyers? The Bible says that, then answered one of the lawyers, now they're not attorneys like we would think of today.

This is not a man that would represent you in a legal case before a judge. No, these lawyers were experts in the law of Moses. The law that Jesus just kind of offended and didn't wash his hands ceremonially, they were the ones that interpreted scripture.

These were the men, these lawyers, were those that taught people how to live out the word of God. Here's the problem though, just kind of recap a little bit last week. They took the word of God and then they added a whole bunch of things onto the word of God and said, this is the word of God too.

[7 : 42] They had built this crust around the law of God so they wouldn't break one single law. And yet, they were weighing these people down. See, the idea behind this lawyer and his group of friends, they didn't just study the Bible, they were the experts on it.

They didn't have Google back then. If you had a question, you couldn't Google it, you had to go ask one of these guys. You had to run it through him, you had to make sure that you were doing all the things that you were supposed to and he was the one that would tell you.

And as Jesus is confronting the Pharisees, they quickly realize, I think he's talking about us. You ever been in a situation like that? Somebody's talking like, is he talking about me? And that's kind of where he's at and he's there and he's hearing this.

But instead of repenting, instead of realizing, you know what? Maybe I've kind of missed the mark a little bit. Maybe I'm not exactly where I should be and maybe I should re-evaluate how I'm teaching the law and what exactly the law says.

No, he begins to defend himself. And that's a natural human reaction, isn't it? When we are called on the carpet, so to speak, even if they're right, I'm going to fight it tooth and nail to make sure that I win.

[8 : 57] Okay, come on, don't act like you don't do that. And that's when Jesus turns to him in verse 46 and begins to directly warn them.

And it's not just a warning for them because sometimes we look and say, well, I'm not a Pharisee, I'm not a lawyer like this. But I think we saw last week and I think we're going to see this week as well that sometimes we can kind of slide into the same things they're dealing with.

You know why? Because that's where our heart likes to go. We like to prop our own selves up. We want to make sure that we're the ones that are in control and here's kind of the truth, the main truth of this text this morning is that when religion becomes about control instead of about compassion, it crushes people instead of actually changing them.

Jesus didn't come to crush people. No, Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. Now, don't misunderstand. I don't have a lot of time to go into this. It's not all about just love everybody and compassion.

No, Jesus is full of grace and truth. So we just want to make sure that's clear on the top. Jesus isn't saying, well, just as long as you love, you're okay. No, there are some boundaries and the law is good and the law teaches us those certain things but there are many things here that they were adding to it that wasn't about God, it was about them and keeping their finger on the people, so to speak.

[10 : 20] Because the law that they loved so dearly, that they studied so intently, they had given their life for, it had this one goal to lead people to God.

When you look at the Old Testament, you look at the law of Moses, it wasn't a bunch of laws and rules that you had to follow. It was pointing to Jesus. It was pointing to there was a coming Messiah that would change their life and it helped them live their life in such a way that they could come and have fellowship with God.

Listen, when you read through Leviticus and you read through some of these books, you think, man, this is so weird, it's so boring. No, you know what it should do? It should encourage your heart that God wants to be close to you. That he made a way and that he brought it down together and you have an opportunity to know God.

That's what the whole word of God is. It's so we might know him. It's his love letter to mankind, his redemptive narrative because that has always been the plan that Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Not to give us a hundred million rules so we can work our way to heaven. There is nothing you can do. He already did it. That's what the cross is about.

[11 : 30] That's why he gave his life on the cross of Calvary. But instead of leading people to God by the word that they knew inside and out, they were actually using it to weigh people down.

To get them kind of in a place where they thought, this is not possible. And as we walk through this text today, what we're going to find is Jesus exposes three dangers of legalistic religion.

We hear that term thrown out all the time and I want us to hang on and we're going to see exactly what he's talking about. Here's the first danger of legalistic religion. It loads people with burdens but offers no help with them.

Look at verse number 46. And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers, for ye laid men with burdens grievous to be born, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

When Jesus gets in these conversations, we'll say, with these Pharisees and these lawyers, he doesn't really beat around the bush. He said, Here's the problem that I have with you, you lawyers, is you pile rule upon rule upon rule.

[12 : 50] You pile expectation upon expectation and standard upon standard, and there's nothing wrong with rules and expectations and standards, but here's what they did.

They demanded perfection and offered no grace. They acted like, Well, we keep these, and what's wrong with you people? Here's the truth.

They didn't keep them either. On the outside, they looked real good in public. They looked real good in certain situations, and when Jesus said they were loading these people down with burdens, he was not exaggerating.

I'm not going to bore you with it, but they really had taken the law of God, which was good and holy, which was good and holy. Don't misunderstand that. We're not throwing the law away. Jesus didn't come to destroy the law.

He came to fulfill the law. He's the one that made the way for us. No, it's a good and it's a holy thing, but they built this extra crust of rules around it to protect it.

[13:52] And that may have been the heart at the beginning, but as we said last week, by this point, it's all about them keeping control. It's about their ability to rule the people, and over time, that crust grew thicker and heavier.

And by this time, there had been thousands of additional regulations. Just to give an example, so we understand kind of what Jesus is saying. Exodus chapter 20, there in the Ten Commandments, he said this, Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.

And he goes on to say, Thou shalt not do any work. And really what they did is they said, That's a great law. Obviously the Lord gave it. But we're going to protect that law. And so they took that law of keeping the Sabbath, and they created 39 categories of forbidden work, and then endless subcategories under that.

Sounds exciting, doesn't it? You know, I have a hard enough time with the speed limit. And I'm like, Does it really mean 75? You know, I want to, we've got all these subcategories under it.

You know, they took something that was obvious, just do this, and they said, Well, we need to help people understand exactly what this means. To give you an idea of how ridiculous it was, one of the rules said that you couldn't carry anything more on the Sabbath than a dried fig.

[15:10] Obviously it doesn't weigh very much. So if you carried, if it weighed less than a dry fig, you're okay. But if it weighed more than a dried fig, then you were carrying a burden, and you broke the law.

Here's what they said, If you carried something less than a dry fig, you put it down, and you picked it back up, now you've doubled the weight, and now it's a burden. Isn't that stupid?

Now we're not probably supposed to say that in church, but I just did. That's what it is. And I just want us to kind of put ourselves where they are. They even debated how you should carry something.

Well, if you carry it in your hand, then you're working, but if you put it under your arm, you're not working. You know, if you carry it on your back, and what's the situation there? Can you imagine living like that? I mean, you have to walk around with a scale.

How much does this weigh? Oh man, I can't carry that. I mean, you're constantly calculating. You're constantly anxious. You're constantly wondering, did I just break another rule? And by this point, some people just got to the place where, who cares?

[16:11] Well, I'm not even going to follow this, if this is what God is about. I want no part about this. And the idea with these lawyers is they had made religion exceedingly exhausting.

They think, man, I'm not going to church if that's what it's about. I'm not going to synagogue. I mean, what's the point of all of this? Why is it so difficult? And here's what made it worse in Jesus' estimation.

At the end of the verse, he says, and you won't even touch it with one of your fingers. You make all these rules for everybody else to follow, but you make all the loopholes. See, they had a loophole to get around all of this.

Well, we can do this because of this, this, and this. You couldn't walk a certain amount of feet from your house. So what they would do is they would tie a rope on their ankle, and they would walk around, and they're still connected to their house so those feet don't actually count.

But they're lawyers, and so they know. You know, has anybody ever tried to read lawyer speak today? I mean, it used to be like, you know, my grandpa's like, I'll just shake somebody's hand, and that was all you needed.

[17:08] Now you like, you just go and try to buy a meal. You've got to sign a contract. You're like, what does this all mean? That's how they lived their life when it came to serving God. That's the burdens that they had been placed on.

And the very men who made the rules did not help the people carry them. They didn't walk beside them. They didn't encourage them. They didn't show any ounce of compassion.

They just demanded compliance as they said, we love you. We're here as shepherds of Israel. We love the law of Moses. We love Moses.

We love David. We love all these prophets that we're going to see in a second. They weren't shepherding. They were controlling the people. And that's why when Jesus showed up, he had compassion.

He saw them as sheep without a shepherd and he called them to himself and he was taking those burdens because that's what a good shepherd does. You read John chapter 10.

[18:04] Jesus just lays into him. He says, here's the problem. You're a hireling. You're in it for the money. You're in it to get what you can get out of these sheep and then you're going to leave them on the side of the road. I'm the good shepherd.

I'm the one that loves the sheep and I will lay down my life. And that's what Jesus is showing us right here. And I want to just remind us today that legalism is still alive and well and it still adds weight.

Because you know what it does? It makes following God feel impossible. It replaces the joy that Jesus offers and reminds us that's available for all that are in him.

It replaces that with pressure. It replaces relationship with performance. Listen, your Christian life is not based on all the things you do.

God doesn't love you more the more you do. Should you serve the Lord? Should you do things? Absolutely. You know why? Because he loves you. Because he died for you.

[19:03] Because he changed your life. And you look at your life and you think about that song Brother Cliff said and you realize this, God's been good. And you think of that, if God's been this good to me then you know what, maybe I can help somebody else see that God's good to them too.

And that's why we live the life that we live. And if people feel crushed instead of encouraged by our faith, something is wrong. It's wrong.

We need to know that your coworkers, your friends at school, need to know that Jesus is in there just to throw a whole bunch of rules at you. You ever ask somebody, hey, you go to church, I'm just not into all those thou shalt nots.

But you know what? When you really see the heart of Christ, John tells us in 1 John, his commandments aren't grievous. They're not burdensome. You know, you begin to realize the closer you get to Christ, actually the law was given because God loves me.

Because he wants me to know him more. He wants me to trust him more. And that's why Jesus said later on, come unto me all you that are labor and heavy laden and I will give you rest. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

[20:08] That's not the Pharisees' law. That's not the lawyers that said, hey, you come on, we're going to make sure you're doing everything right. Jesus said, that's not how it goes. That's not what he was searching for.

Listen, Jesus didn't come offering more rules. He came offering rest for your soul. And the same is true today. Jesus didn't call us to weigh people down.

He called us to point others to him and say, he's the way, he's the truth, he's the life. Go to him. Run to him. If you're looking for rest. And Jesus shows us that it wasn't just about these heavy rules they placed on him.

It was about their hardened hearts. Because legalistic religion, number two, it does this. It honors the messengers, but ignores the message.

That's what we see in those verses, in verses 47 through 51. We won't take time to read it again. But here's the idea. Jesus is saying, listen, you build all the tombs for the prophets.

[21:08] You make sure their graves are looking real pretty and you decorate them and you honor the men that God used in the past. But don't miss what he said. He said, you're the sons of the very people that killed them.

We think, well, it's not their fault. And here's what Jesus is saying, and you're just like them. You want to act like you're not because you're honoring them. You celebrate the dead prophets and you resist the living truth.

Because you know what the prophets were speaking of? You know what they were teaching about? You know what they were reminding the people? Jesus is coming. There is a prophet coming.

There is the Messiah coming.

And Jesus says, I'm here and you're resisting me. All the things Moses talked about, all the things David talked about, all the things you find in the Old Testament, it's just a shadow of what is coming.

And he says, I'm here. And they said, we don't like it. You know, we love Moses. We love Abraham. We love all these men. But listen, let's just keep them there.

[22 : 12] Let's just honor what they did. You see, they admired the message, the messenger, but rejected the message. And when you read these verses, it seems like Jesus is being really, really unfair to them.

Like, why wouldn't you honor the prophets? Because Jesus, what he's showing us, he was exposing something deeper. He said, listen, the monuments are beautiful.

I mean, we go all around, you can go all around the world and you see all these monuments, but it's not about what's on the outside. He says, you build them to keep the prophets safely in the past.

You want to act with your lips. You got a bunch of lip service, but you don't really believe anything they said. You don't really believe Abraham and Moses because if you did, you wouldn't leave their life like this.

You wouldn't be following like this. I love how one commentator said, he said, your fathers killed the prophets and you make sure they're dead. That's what Jesus is telling them right here.

[23 : 12] See, kind of what Jesus is saying is this, you honor them where they can't confront you. You know what they would say? They would lift up all the laws of Moses they followed to a T, but they wouldn't speak of the other ones.

They wouldn't talk about mercy and grace in the Old Testament. They wouldn't live there. You celebrate them because they can't correct you in certain areas. You remember where they can't tell you to repent of it.

The idea is just this, they honored the messenger, but murdered the message. Listen, the word of God is not something we can say, well, I love this in the past and let's celebrate this.

No, here's what we live by. The word of God. That's what Jesus is saying. He said, you're so worried about tradition and monuments and you got everything in order and this is for David and this is for Moses, this is for Abraham.

He said, what about the truth that's in front of your face right now? That's kind of what Jesus is saying. And he's reminding them, you can't really defend yourself because your present actions are proving what is true.

[24 : 18] They weren't about the word of God. Even though they were so-called experts in it. See, the very, what he's saying is the very ones who claimed to love God's word were the ones silencing it.

They had locked it up. They had made it where it's only by their interpretation. They weren't different from their fathers. In fact, Jesus says, you're just partners in crime with them. That you've made the word of God difficult to reach.

And he says, because of that, you're going to have even a greater condemnation. Because you remember, it's been a while, but a few weeks back, he said, listen, you have a great light.

Think about all the things they've had. They had the word of God. They had the Old Testament. They had the prophets. They had John the Baptist. They had soon to be the apostles. Their responsibility was even greater.

And these self-proclaimed guardians of the word of God were the ones killing the word of God. That the everyday person in Jesus' day, they didn't really know what God's word said, but they know what the lawyers said.

[25 : 20] That's why Jesus comes and says, listen, I know you've heard it said when he's preaching. He's preaching to common people like me and you. I know what you've heard it said from the lawyers and Pharisees, but I want to tell you what the truth is.

I want to tell you how you're supposed to live your life. You think, well, how does this really apply to us? I think sometimes in our own lives, it's easier to honor spiritual heroes of the past than obey God's word today in our own life.

It's okay to honor people and be thankful. I'm thankful for men and women that made this possible that we can gather here at a beautiful church building. But we can't live in the past at Central Baptist Church.

We can't live in the past in our own life. No, what does the word of God say today? You know why God used these men and women in our own church all these years ago? Because they obeyed the word of God. That we have to do the very same thing.

We can love revival stories. We can listen to famous sermons. We know great men of faith and all of those have their place. But God is still speaking today and obedience still matters.

[26 : 23] That's what Jesus is saying. We can build great monuments about how awesome it used to be. Listen, the same God is still working in your life today. Listen, I'm thankful for revivals that happened in the past.

I'm thankful for great sermons that I can go online and listen to from great men of God. But I'm thankful that God still wants to use my life. That God still wants to have a revival today. That God still is saving souls and changing lives and restoring relationships and mending marriages.

I'm thankful God still does that. Why? Because the word of God is still alive. It's still powerful.

Listen, we can celebrate the truth so often without submitting to it.

And when we do that, it's just modern day tomb building. Then we say, well, we love all these things. Well, you should love those things. God used them in your life. But what are you doing right now?

How are you letting God work in your life right now? See, then Jesus, he exposes the deepest danger of all when it comes to legalistic religion.

[27 : 26] We see it in verse 52. Here's what it does. It blocks people from God instead of leading them to him. That's really what it does. Look at verse 52.

Woe unto you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge. Ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered.

I mean, really what's been taking place since verse 37 of this chapter, I mean, Jesus has been throwing haymakers, and he's landing them. They don't like him. He kind of throws one final haymaker, and he's saying, listen, these experts of the law, they didn't just unlock the truth for the people.

They completely complicated it. They had no idea what they were supposed to do. They begin to wonder, does God even love me? I mean, how can God love me? I failed how many laws this week?

I can imagine living in this time frame. I mean, I would just be like, I couldn't, there's no way I can, I mean, 10, we have a hard enough time with 10. I mean, just think if there was 39 categories with subcategories and this and that, I mean, you wouldn't even know you're breaking the law.

[28 : 36] And you would think to yourself, there's no way God can love me. How can God love somebody like this? Because their job was to point people to God, but here's what they were doing, standing in the doorway and blocking the way.

Hey, you can't come in here. Only the lawyers and the Pharisees, only the people that really love God, only the people that follow all the laws of Moses are allowed to come in this door.

That's why Jesus, if you kind of hope you're piecing together, he says, I am the door. That's where you're supposed to enter in. That these men knew what the door was, but if people walked through it, then they would lose some power.

They would lose some ability. They would lose some sway over these people. Think, how are they blocking the door? Many of these laws weren't the law of God. They were man-made rules. They were blocking the door through their own pride and their own spiritual control.

These men had laid burdens on God that made God feel unreachable. Listen, God's not unreachable. In fact, for God so loved the world that he came, that he sent his only begotten son, that Jesus made a way.

[29 : 41] In verse 52, he says, listen, you had the key of knowledge and you took it away. You say, what's the key? What's Jesus talking about? This right here.

Listen, you should be so thankful that you have one of these right here. I mean, you study even history. This doesn't even, after the first century, you know what? It was really difficult to just find the word of God at times in history.

Think of the dark ages and they would lock it up and only the priests could do that. Listen, thank the Lord you have your own copy. And you should bring it and you should study it yourself. And sometimes if I say something, you're like, preacher, what did you say?

Listen, study it yourself. I don't have the corner of the market of the word of God, by the way. You all have the ability to do that and we should love it. We should be thankful for it. I mean, you can have it on your phone.

Isn't that awesome? Don't be texting your friends right now. I mean, it's so accessible to us. Do not ever take that for granted. That you have the word of God. That you don't have to wait and say, wonder what the priest says, wonder what the lawyer says.

[30 : 45] No, what does the word of God say? You can go right to it and you should be so thankful for that. And instead of opening the word of God to people, they buried it under traditions and under interpretations and under a religious system.

And Jesus says, listen, the tragedy is twofold. Number one, he tells the lawyer, you have the word of God and you're not even entering into the kingdom of heaven. He said, you have the map and you missed the turn.

And not only did they not enter in, they were making it harder and harder for others to enter in. He said, that's a dangerous place to be. See, the warning especially speaks to those who teach the word of God.

Not everybody's called to be a pastor. But as a pastor, I am not called, I just want to make sure we understand this, I am not called to preach my opinions about the Bible.

I don't think you came here to hear my opinions. And you shouldn't have. If you did, I feel sorry for you. I'm called, as your pastor, to open the word of God and preach the word of God.

[32 : 02] Because you know what, there's times in my life, my opinions, the Bible has to correct them. When I start studying for a message, there's things I'd like to, I mean, I'd like to tell Brother Jerry what to do.

I say that because we're friends and I can say that. But I don't, I just want you to understand, I'm just, be transparent. I know it's Sunday morning. I don't sit in my office and think, you know what, I'm going after so and so today. Because you know what, when I open the word of God, the Holy Spirit speaks to me.

And it's my job just to preach what the word of God says. You think, preacher, why are we just walking through Luke all the time? You know what, because I'm going to preach what the word of God says. I'm not going to pick and choose.

Sometimes there's going to be a really fun message in these last two weeks. These haven't been the most fun messages. Just to be honest. But you know what, we need it, I need it. And that's why we're going to walk through it like that.

That as your pastor, I just want to remind you and I want to promise you that I'm not here to preach a hobby horse or a personal agenda or a cultural or a political idea. My goal, my aim, honestly, my life's passion is to preach the word of God.

[33 : 11] That's what God has called me to do. And I just want us to understand that because Jesus is saying, listen, that was their job and they said, we don't like that. It doesn't help us. And we're going to do what we want to do.

But I also want to remind, I think there's a warning here for everybody. You don't have to be a preacher. That we don't need to replace the word of God with books about the word of God. Don't misunderstand that. I read, I said to all my Sunday school class, all I do is read books about the Bible. But listen, we can get so enthralled about all the things out there.

Sometimes we study all about the word of God, but we don't actually study the word of God. And I'm the same way as you. I listen to podcasts, I listen to sermons, all these things, but we cannot replace the scripture with a podcast or a sermon.

Listen, you need to be involved in a local New Testament church with other believers that are trying to do the same thing that is centered around the word of God. Because anything that makes salvation seem earned instead of received is blocking the door.

[34 : 15] And I know this is a hard thing to understand in our world. Not everything on the internet is true. But everything in here is.

You can find helps. I use commentaries. I read other great men. I listen to other sermons and kind of see. But ultimately, when it comes down to it, what does the word of God say? Because my job is not to act like I have the key and y'all got to come get it from me.

No. I'm just reminding us we all have the key. That we all have the scripture and we can all apply it and use it. And anything that replaces grace with hoops to jump through is hiding the key.

Standards and expectations and practices and things, they have their place. but they should be pointing to the word of God. Why we do what we do is based on what the word of God says. He's reminding them, listen, you are called to lead people to Jesus, not make it harder. He said, woe unto you. How dare you do that? And when truth confronts a hardened heart, it produces a reaction.

[35 : 30] That's what we see in verse 53 and 54. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently and provoke him to speak many things. They didn't want to learn anything. They said, hey, keep talking.

We need some more ammo to come after you. Why? Because they were lying in wait and seeking to catch something out of his mouth that they might accuse him. See, their reaction tells us everything about their hearts.

But instead of listening, they plotted. Instead of repenting, they just resisted what God said. Instead of humbling themselves, they hardened their hearts.

And here's the truth for us today. That when God speaks to our heart, he convicts us. That's a beautiful thing. You should be thankful. But conviction can either lead us to repentance or drive us to rebellion.

Sometimes the word of God meets us where we are and we don't like it. They say, well, I'm not doing that right now. Be careful because that's exactly what they did. They hardened their hearts to the word of God.

[36 : 37] Their response was tragic, but it doesn't have to be our response. Maybe there's some things in our life that we need to look at. That when God speaks to us today, we still have a choice.

We can defend ourselves or we can humble ourselves. Back to that opening illustration, sometimes somebody starts to help us say, who do you think you are? We laugh about that, but sometimes the word of God speaks to our heart and we think, who do you think you are?

I'm just trying to live my life. I'm a good person. You know why God speaks to our heart? You know why he challenges us? Because he loves us. Jesus is not trying to bury these guys.

You know what he's trying to do? He's trying to show them their heart. He said, come to me. You know what he's saying? You're miserable and you know it. Why don't you come to me? I'm here for you. I love you.

I love you so much I'm telling you the truth. I'm telling you something you don't want to hear. And yet they refused it. The Pharisees were focused on outward appearances. The lawyers were focused on control.

[37 : 37] Both missed God. Don't be in that boat. Jesus did not come to burden people. He came to free them.

John tells us in John 8, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Who is he talking about? Himself. He's the way. He's the truth.

He's the life. As we kind of close it down this morning, I just want to just kind of bring it to where we are. I think sometimes we can be here, maybe somebody here today is carrying a burden Jesus never gave you to carry.

You've kind of put it on your own self. Some of us have maybe placed burdens on others that God never intended. It's okay to have standards and have convictions and have priorities in your life and we all should.

We have to remember that we're growing and God is the one that does the growing. God is the one that does the work and Jesus is offering grace instead of pressure. He's offering this relationship. He's offering rest.

[38 : 40] Come to him. Maybe you're here and you spent your whole life trying to earn God's approval. trying to be just good enough and trying to clean yourself up just a little bit.

Maybe you're carrying some spiritual weight you were never meant to bear. I want to remind you salvation is not found in a bunch of rules. It's found in Jesus Christ.

That's where it starts. That's what God wants us to know. He carried, listen, He carried your sin to the cross and nailed it there. He paid a debt you couldn't pay.

He offers forgiveness and new life today. Sometimes, maybe you're running around and you've got all these burdens on you. Give them to the Lord. The Bible tells them, Peter, cast all your cares on Him.

Why? Because He cares for you. Maybe you've been told and you've been taught wrongly, you have to do this and you have to do this and you've got to do all these things so you can make it to heaven one day. No, here's how you make it to heaven.

[39 : 43] You call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You place your faith and trust in Him. You realize that you're a sinner. That all have sin and come short of the glory of God and the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It's not about keeping the Sabbath holy and making sure you're not carrying too many dried figs and all. It's not what it's about. But maybe you're here today and you love Jesus and you know Him as your Savior but you kind of drift sometimes into that heavy religion.

Listen, Jesus came that you might have peace but maybe your life feels like a whole bunch of pressure. Maybe your Christian walk feels a lot more like out of duty instead of delight in the Lord. Maybe it's fear instead of freedom. It's not what Jesus came. You know what He's doing today? Maybe He's calling you back. Back to that intimate relationship about resting in Him.

Maybe you've added burdens to your own life. Maybe you've placed expectations on others that God never placed on them. Lay Him down.

[40 : 54] Get at Jesus' feet. Let Him work in your life. As we leave today I just want us to take this truth home.

This one truth. Jesus never adds burdens. That wasn't His mission. It was to lift them. Doesn't mean we live our Christian life like the Wild West.

We don't have time to go into all that. But your life in Christ should not feel miserable. That's not what Jesus came. These men were miserable.

And they were making other people miserable. Listen, the joy of the Lord should be our strength. In thy presence is fullness of joy. Is that your life?

It should be. Because that's what Jesus offers.