

A Decision You Can't Avoid

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[0:00] You can open your copy to Luke 12. So I hope you brought your sack lunch with you.

Now, what I am excited about, what God has for us here, and we're going to close out chapter number 12. We're going to pick up in verse number 49 where Jesus says this, I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it already be kindled?

But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am straightened till it be accomplished.

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on the earth? I tell you nay, but rather division.

For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father, and the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother, and the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

That verse is not talking that you can have family feud all the time. Not what it's talking about. We'll get into it here in a minute. Verse 54, and he said also to the people. So he's talking to his disciples, but now he kind of turns to the crowd.

[1:33] When you see a cloud arise out of the west, straightway you say, there cometh a shower, and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, there will be heat, and it cometh to pass.

Ye hypocrites, you discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it that you know that you did not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him, lest he hail thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.

I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite. So Jesus here in this final kind of closing section of Luke chapter 12, he's really bringing us to a decision point.

And sometimes when we have to make decisions in our life, we say, I'll worry about that later.

Sometimes you avoid decisions at all costs. Okay, just making sure I'm on the same page. But Jesus says there's a decision that you cannot avoid.

[2:41] And we must be ready for it. And he gives us the reasons why here this morning that we cannot delay. So let's go to the Lord in prayer and ask him to bless our time together. Father, Lord, we pray that you would bless this time as we open up your word.

Lord, I know that the context of this is sometimes somber, but Lord, I'm thankful you give us the truth, that you remind us that you are coming back one day, Lord, that you came the first time to seek and to save that which is lost.

But when you come back, you're not coming as a lamb, you're coming as a lion, you're coming as a judge. And Lord, I pray that you would help us to be ready for that. Lord, you didn't give this passage to scare us, to worry us.

You gave it to us so that we would be ready, that we would make a decision today. Lord, I pray that if there is someone here that doesn't know you as their Savior, that today would be that day. Lord, I pray you'd be with me now.

You would empty me of self. You'd cleanse me of sin. Lord, fill me with your spirit. Give me the words to say that it would be a help to your people. And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. Thank you so much for standing. You may be seated. Don't you love all this lovely stuff in the air?

[3:48] It just makes you sleepy. I mean, we're on so much antihistamines right now. We're just kind of trying to stay awake a little bit. You know, and I've sometimes watched like the animal planet, and they're like, and the so-and-so animal hibernates for six months.

Doesn't that sound awesome? I mean, I wish you could just hibernate right now. Like, I just want to go to sleep. I mean, we got hands raised. I mean, we're about to have people running around this auditorium in a second. I mean, especially if you're a mom, you're like, if I could just get a little bit of sleep.

If I could just get a little bit of rest. So let's pretend that you do. You go home, and you go to bed, and you sleep for 30 straight weeks. Wouldn't that be awesome? And you wake up, and as you exit your hibernation, and you kind of work your way back into society, you hear some music that's going.

And it sounds like there's lots of bells in it, and it talks about the most wonderful time of the year. You turn on the TV, and you're trying to find a movie, and every time you turn the movie on, it's the same plot, just a different channel and a different title about some executive from New York that travels back to their hometown to find love at this special time of the year.

It's what it is. It's what it is. Every commercial, every advertisement is about the perfect gift, and I'm still waiting to go out that morning.

[5:14] You know what I'm talking about? There's a giant bow on a \$100,000 car. That's not real life, by the way. Christmas lights are on the houses. Sometimes there's cold weather.

It depends on what Texas wants to do. No parking space anywhere you go. And I say all this as kind of a silly illustration. I doubt you would need a calendar to determine what time of the year it is. You wouldn't see all of these things and say, I wonder what it is. I wonder what time of the year it is. The signs would give it away immediately, and then you would ensue in panic because you're behind in shopping.

Honestly, you're probably behind in shopping right now anyway, so you might as well get started today. What Jesus is doing here as we come to these last little bit of the section in chapter number 12, really beginning in verse number 35, as we looked at quite a bit back, a few weeks back, Jesus begins to teach about the end times.

Jesus begins to teach about his second coming. And let me remind you, he is coming again. The world keeps saying, well, where is he? It's been 2,000 years. No, he will come again.

[6:29] In fact, the second coming is the second most mentioned thing in all of Scripture behind salvation. So it is a, Jesus wants us to get a hold of this truth.

He wants us to be ready. I love when I tell my kids, hey, I'm going to be home in 10 minutes. We want to be ready to go. How many of you think they're ready to go? No.

No, we struggle with that sometimes. But Jesus wants us to be ready. He doesn't call us to get ready someday. No, he calls us to live ready today.

That he is coming back. And since we don't know the time of the day, we should always live ready. But we can know the seasons. We can look at the signs of the time.

And just like we know it's Christmas time, so it is with Christ's return. I think if you just watch a little bit of the news and you read a little bit of your Bible and you kind of see things going on in this world, you're going to realize the sign of a second coming is all around us.

[7:31] I believe like the Apostle Paul when he says, We which are alive and remain shall see the coming of the Lord. I believe that. I believe we should live with the imminent return of Christ in our life.

But when we start talking about the end times, we start talking about Christ coming again, again, sometimes if we're just being real, that scares us. We think, well, I'm not sure. And there's a lot of kind of things we don't know.

But don't let that scare you. I think these are amazing and exciting times which we can live in as Christians. I mean, the world is changing in extraordinary ways.

Things you read in the book of Revelation, you think, how would that even be possible? I bet John was writing some of those things down thinking, how is the whole world going to see? I mean, now we're connected to the whole world like that. And we got this AI and we have the Internet.

We have all of these things. And the world's changing in this extraordinary ways. And the Bible is playing out in front of our very eyes. And yet, people are missing it.

[8:35] I mean, people can read the culture. They can check the weather. They can determine the weather. They can read the economy. But can completely miss what God is trying to do. What he is trying to get across.

And as we come to our text this morning that we read in verse 49 through 59, Jesus is continuing his teaching on being ready for his return.

And the reason that Jesus is pressing so deeply into this, and really, he's bringing us to a decision point. You read those verses, you think, man, Jesus, calm down a little bit.

No, he wants us not just to be looking, not just to be aware. He wants us to make sure we've decided how we're going to approach this day.

How we are going to be when he comes again. And the key truth in these final verses is that readiness for Jesus' return is not optional. You will respond one day.

[9:32] You can respond either now or then. But the reality is you are going to stand before the Lord one day. That it is appointed unto man once to die, the Bible says, and after this the judgment.

And so Jesus, he's not saying this to scare us or to be mean. He's saying this so we can be ready. That we're not shocked by it. That we're not shocked that he is coming again. Again.

Because here's the truth. Delay, when it comes to this decision, is extremely dangerous. You cannot afford to delay your response to Jesus.

And so as we walk through this text this morning, Jesus is going to show us some realities that why delay is dangerous. The first thing we see in verse 49 through 53, it's dangerous because Jesus calls for a response.

He lays out all the situation and he comes and he says in verse 59, I am come to send fire on the earth. Now when you hear that, you're thinking, that doesn't sound like stuff Jesus says.

[10:39] That doesn't sound like the loving Jesus of the Bible. Isn't God love? He is. In this statement, maybe when you read it, it kind of maybe rubs you the wrong way. I'd submit to you that this statement would have shocked his disciples as well.

That's not what they were looking for. That's not the Messiah that they were thinking was coming. No, they thought the Messiah would bring peace and he would bring unity and he would bring deliverance.

That's what they were looking for. And now Jesus is saying, I'm come to send fire on the earth. Why would he do that? Because he wants us to understand this.

Before there can ever really be peace, there must be purification. That's the thought behind it. And really what he's talking about in this verse is a purifying and judging fire.

Listen, fire all throughout scripture is never casual. I'll just say this. Fire's not really casual today. You don't look at a fire and say, oh, that fire looks casual. Let me just put my hand in there.

[11:42] You don't mess around with fire. It can do some extreme damage. And really throughout scripture, it represents God's holiness confronting sin. It represents God's judgment exposing what is false.

But it also can represent God's refining work, purifying what is real. We see it in Malachi chapter 3. It talks about a refiner's fire. In 1 Corinthians chapter 3 as well, our works one day will be tested by fire.

If we're going to stand before the Lord, if we know him as our Savior, all the things that we've done is going to be tried. See, whether it's gold, silver, and precious stone, or wood, hay, and stubble.

See, fire just reveals what something really is.

Gold and precious stones, they don't fear the fire. Why? Because it just improves it. It removes it of the impurities.

But what is false and what is empty and what is worthless cannot survive the fire. So what Jesus is teaching here, we're going to see as we walk through this text, he's saying this.

[12:51] When I come again, it's going to expose everything. When he comes, everything is going to be set right. Anybody ever thought life's not fair? Yeah.

You think, well, Lord, I'm doing this and I'm trying to live for you. And it seems like I'm in the negative. And these people are living for themselves and living for the world. And it seems like they have everything. Listen, there's coming a day where it's going to all be set right.

It's not our job to keep score. It's not our job to judge. No, that's what Jesus is going to do. That he will expose everything. And what is true will be seen.

And what is false will burn. That's what he's saying. That it's not going to last. But this fire, this judgment, is not something Jesus is just talking about.

No, here's something we need to really lean into. It's something that he himself would experience. Notice what he says in verse number 50. But I have a baptism to be baptized with.

[13:52] I just want to make sure we understand this. He's not speaking of water baptism. He's not talking about when we have here and we fill up with water and we have a glorious baptism.

Somebody puts their faith and trust in Christ in a public profession saying, hey, I want to follow the Lord. That's not what he's talking about. No, the idea here is this. He is speaking of suffering. The word baptism has the idea of being overwhelmed. Immersed. Immersed. Engulfed. See, the disciples are struggling.

But really from this moment on, Jesus is moving at a rapid speed towards the cross. That's always been the goal. And he's saying, listen, guys, I want you to understand. I'm coming so that people can be ready.

But in order to be ready, I have to suffer. For the Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.

[14:51] And so that's what Jesus is talking about. And I want to remind us that the cross of Calvary is not just an event. It's not just something that we celebrate on Easter that Jesus died on the cross and was buried and rose again.

No, no, here's what the cross is. When you think about the cross, when we sing about the cross, it's the place where the fire of God's judgment fell. Because you know whose cross that should have been?

This guy. It was my sin that held him there. In his body, he bore our sins that we might be made the righteousness of God. What Jesus did on the cross of Calvary is he took the wrath of God for all mankind on himself.

And he's going there and he's marching towards the cross. And I just want to, instead of falling on us, it fell on him. He who knew no sin took my place.

And notice what he says. I had this baptism to be baptized with. How am I straight until it be accomplished? What Jesus is saying is, until this day comes, until the pain and the suffering of the cross comes, it's pressing on me.

[16:08] We've all experienced that, haven't we? I mean, I know sometimes when you get a project in school and it's coming up, anybody got a big project due in the next couple weeks? Yeah, you do. Better get started. I know he's my son, so he may have not started yet.

But you know, like sometimes when it's a far, you know, at the beginning of the school year, they pass the syllabus out. And then like the teacher says, next week that's due. You're like, nobody told me that. Yeah, you just kind of put it off.

But then you start feeling the pressure. And you got that work project due and you're feeling that pressure. It's pressing against you. And I know that's a silly illustration, but the closer it gets, it just weighs and it weighs and it weighs.

That's the idea here. When he's straightened until it happens, that he's constrained, that he's burdened. And it's going to be that way until it's finished. That's what Jesus is talking about.

Listen, the cross of Calvary wasn't an accident. It was always the plan of God. It was how we are to be saved. Jesus was moving towards the cross with purpose and with urgency.

[17:11] And he's saying, listen, you need to be ready. Because I'm doing this for you so that you can have hope. That you can have life. That you can have all of these things. But we kind of get a glimpse here.

And we'll see it later when Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. That the Lord was hard pressed between the suffering and the purpose. Listen, was he God 100%?

Yes. But he was also 100% man. And he knew the purpose. He knew why he came. But he also knew the suffering that was coming. He would have been pressed between the pain and God's plan.

He would have been pressed between enduring the cross for the joy set before him. And that desire to be restored to the glory and set at the right hand of God where he was before he came to this earth.

You realize we're all trying to get to heaven? And Jesus left that for us. He came all the way down and he humbled himself. And he became like a man and as a servant and became obedient unto the death of the cross.

[18:13] We see here in this text that Jesus is pressed. That he's burdened between his own will and his father's will. And yet, he never wavered.

He never moved off the plan. He didn't turn back. He didn't hesitate. He didn't compromise. He pressed forward. Why? For the glory of God the Father and the salvation of sinners. And I'm thankful for that. Because I'm the chief of sinners, as Paul says. That's why Jesus kept going forward. And his disciples are all worried about, hey, can we sit on your right hand and left hand?

And Jesus says, that's not the problem. That's not what you should be looking for. And he says, because of this mission. Because of what I'm about to do. Because of this fire that's going to judge. Because of this baptism, this cross that I'm going to endure. However, you have to make a decision. You cannot remain neutral about Jesus Christ. And here's the rub, though.

[19 : 15] When we make a decision concerning Christ, you know what it often causes? Division. It causes problems. Even within families. That's what we see in verse 52 and in verse 53.

Jesus asked this question in verse 51 to the disciples. Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on the earth. I tell you, nay. I hope one day we can see the disciples' face.

Like when Jesus asks questions, it's like YouTube. We can go back and watch it. And he like asks this question. They've got to be so confused. Like, what? What are you talking about? And then Jesus begins to talk about like these families kind of falling apart.

What does he mean here? Here's what Jesus is teaching. Before peace with God can take place in your life, there has to be a decision about Christ. We don't just, we don't just don't have the peace of God because we're here on this earth.

No. We can experience the peace of God and the peace with God when we make a decision about God. About who Jesus Christ is. About his death on the cross of Calvary.

[20 : 18] And I'm sure many in this room have experienced it. You made that decision to follow Christ and it divided you. You believe, someone else rejects.

You surrender, somebody else resists. And it takes place even within the closest relationships of our life. I mean, you might be here and your husband might have gotten saved and you see it in lives and a wife doesn't understand.

A teenager chooses to follow Christ and maybe at school, they don't understand that decision. They begin to pull away and maybe a family member takes a stand for the Lord and others push back on it.

Some of you have walked through that. Some of you are walking through it right now. Every time you show up to a family function, they're like, oh, here's the holy roller. I mean, that's sometimes the reality of it. Jesus says, listen, that's going to happen.

Because there's no neutral ground when it comes to Christ. Why is that? Because Jesus forces a response. And you cannot follow Jesus, is what he's reminding us, without it costing you something.

[21 : 25] But I do want to remind you, if you were here Wednesday when Brother Dan preached, is it worth it? Absolutely. It's always worth it. It's going to all pan out in the end. That he's going to make all things new.

He's going to make all things right. But just, I want to bring it down to where we live. Because sometimes we look at it and say, well, I understand what he's saying, but what does it look like in my life? Maybe at work you've chosen integrity instead of cutting corners.

Not everybody's going to appreciate that. They think, oh, you think you're better than us. You know, well, that's not what the boss wants us to do. That's not what he asks us to do. But listen, you have to do what's right no matter who's watching and who asks.

Maybe with friends and in relationships, sometimes it's easy to laugh at what dishonors Christ. You don't want to stick out like a sore thumb. You don't want to say, hey, let's not say that.

Let's not talk about that. Oh, what's your problem, man? I mean, these are things that we deal with. Sometimes even in our own home, when your priorities begin to shift towards God, instead of comfort, your kids are thinking, what is mom and dad doing?

[22 : 33] Here's what mom and dad are doing, trying to live for the Lord. And sometimes we don't understand that. Sometimes it makes life a little different. Listen, sometimes social media, we'd rather blend in than stand for the truth.

But let me just mention this. If you're standing for the truth, do it in love. I just want to say that. I think it's a good thing. Sometimes I think things on Facebook, I'm like, don't tell him you come here. It's a joke.

You know? You're like, hey, come to my church. Please don't tell him you come to this church if you're so mad about it. And I'm like, I don't want to go to that person's church ever. But here's the reality. The moment that you take Jesus seriously, some people in your life will not understand it. They won't. And you know what's going to make you feel? Awkward. Like, maybe I shouldn't have said that. It's going to make you feel misunderstood. At times you're going to be even rejected. Like, hey, if that's how you're going to live your life, hey, nice knowing you, bud. We don't want to be around you anymore. But don't miss this. The tension is often not a sign that we're doing something wrong.

[23 : 35] Sometimes it's saying, hey, we're doing what's right. Because if we're going to live by this book, Peter tells us in 1 Peter, we're going to be peculiar. That doesn't mean weird. God's not calling you to be a weirdo.

But he is calling you to be different. That our life should look different from the world around us. And so if Jesus demands a response, the question is this.

Why do so many people delay in responding to Jesus? Jesus. Here's why. They ignore the signs. Because going back to Christmas, I hear the music.

I see all the commercials. And guess what I do? I wait until the last minute to get presents. Because I'm a man and that's what you do. You know?

Yeah. Praise the Lord for Amazon. Like, what can get here in two days that seems like I put effort into this? I can say this because she's in the back. It's just what it is. Kenzie had a birthday Friday and we opened presents.

[24 : 36] I said, I cannot wait to see what we got you. You know what I'm talking about. Listen, I knew her birthday was coming. It's on everything we were talking about.

I know Christmas is coming. But you know what I do so many times? I ignore the signs. And here's what Jesus reminds us in these verses. You cannot ignore the signs. That's what he begins to talk about in verse number 54.

When you see a cloud arise out of the west straightway, you say, there come with a shower and so it is. And we're going to experience this verse in just a couple weeks probably. When you see the south wind blow, you say, there will be heat.

When that south wind starts blowing, it's here. The grass is about to wither. I mean, we know all these Bible verses because we live in Texas. But what Jesus does is he's teaching his disciples these first truths.

Because he's saying, listen, you're going to deal with this. And we don't know all the disciples' background. But maybe some of them that have left all and followed Jesus, their family didn't understand it. Like, hey, what are you doing, man?

[25 : 33] Why would you leave your successful fishing business and follow Christ? But he's reminding them, hey, listen, you're doing what I've called you to do. And you're preparing yourself for a coming day. But now he kind of looks out at the crowd that was gathered around him.

And he says, listen, you can see all of these things happening. They didn't have weather observation equipment. But they knew how to read the sky. He said, you look and you see the clouds gathering and they're dark.

You're going to realize rain's coming. You're going to feel the wind blow and the heat's going to come. And you're dead on about that. But then in verse 56, he uses some strong language. He says, ye hypocrites.

Listen, Jesus didn't say this because they didn't know what was happening. No, he said this because they saw Christ standing in front of them. And they refused to acknowledge who he was. Even though every single sign pointed to the truth. That he was not some rogue rabbi. He wasn't some carpenter with a ragtag group of followers.

[26 : 36] No, he was God in the flesh. And when he spoke and when he talked and when he worked miracles, everything pointed to all the prophecies. That he was Emmanuel.

And he's saying, how did you miss that? You want to say that you're all about and you love God, but you can discern the face of the sky and of the earth. But how is it that you do not discern this time? He's like, you should have seen this coming. It's been predicted. It's been forecasted. But they could not see the Son of God standing right in front of them. And what he's calling out, he said, this is not ignorance.

This is willful blindness. Because when Jesus showed up, they thought he was just going to pat them on the back and make life easier. But here's the hard truth.

Here's what Jesus called them to do. Follow me. He tells them things like this. Take up your cross and follow me. We see all throughout Scripture that following Christ many times is not a life of luxury.

[27 : 41] It's not a life of comfort. No, it's a life of compromise and leaning on him. But it's going to be worth it. But when they started seeing like, hey, I'll show up when he feeds me, feeding of the 5,000.

But when he asked me to do this, we're going to say, whew, that's a hard saying. I don't know about that. You know, you go to somebody's house and you start, you go there to eat and then they start working. You think, yeah, okay, I got to go.

Boss just called me. I got to leave. You know, we'll show up when it's easy. But sometimes when hard times come, we run the other way. That's kind of what was taking place here. And let me remind you that this willful blindness still happens today.

We live in a world that is obsessed with information but is absolutely starving for the truth. I mean, it is unreal.

Some of you people, I admire you so much. I don't know how you made it through school without Google or ChatGPT. I mean, how did you do it? Like, did you have to, like, read something?

[28 : 46] I mean, because when you type it in, if you type it in Google, you look at the thing, it says 30,000 answers in .00008 seconds. So much information is at our fingertips.

Even information about the Word of God. And people can spend hours checking the markets and watching the news and predicting the trends of the time but won't give five minutes to consider their own soul.

When it comes to eternity, we just kind of shrug it off and say, hey, I'll deal with that later. I just want to remind you what Jesus is saying here. Ignoring the truth does not eliminate judgment.

Here's what it does. It guarantees it. Because judgment's coming whether you ignore it or not. That deadline at work is coming whether you ignore it or not. That project at school is coming whether you ignore it or not.

And Jesus Christ is coming in whether we ignore it or not. And if we're honest, I think we're really good at paying attention to what feels urgent.

[29 : 42] You know what I was watching very closely last night? The weather. Not that I could change anything, but I was at least going to go hide. Praise the Lord we didn't get a lot. But I have some friends that live out in White Wright.

They don't have any windows this morning. I mean, it knocked everything out of their house. Hail, the size of softballs coming down. I was watching that weather real closely because I didn't want any part of that.

We pay attention to the news headlines because a lot of times it affects our financial things. I'm thinking, when are they going to open this Strait of Hormuz so the gas will go down? That affects me.

So I'm paying attention. I feel like that's urgent. But how often do we ignore what's eternally urgent? Like, where's our soul going?

What's our relationship with God look like? What's your standing before Him right now? Listen, we can be saved. We can know Him as our personal Savior, but we can still be distant.

[30 : 42] We cannot lose our salvation, but sometimes we allow sin in our life. We allow things that shouldn't be in there. And here's what it does. It creates a wedge in that fellowship. Maybe we can think about it like this as a practical way to think about it.

You know, every Sunday, I guess, I don't know if your phone does this, my phone says, here's your weekly iPhone usage. You know what I did? I turned that notification off.

I don't need it to tell me how much I looked at my phone. But I think it's shocking how much we look at our phone. I mean, it has all these kind of stats in there. It is wild. It's like you spent four hours and 57 minutes on the phone, and you picked it up 300 times in a day.

I was like, golly. I didn't realize that. How much time did you spend watching the news, scrolling social media? It's so easy to do that, isn't it? Compare that to the time you spent in God's Word.

In prayer this week, examining your heart, following Him. I know, it's convicting. But that just kind of shows how we're wired.

[31:51] We're so ready to kind of do the things that feel urgent. But Jesus is saying, this is more urgent than that. You have to be ready. And even if we know Christ is our Savior, we still need to be ready.

It's not, salvation's not the end. Listen, it's just the beginning. That we begin to live for Christ. That when we see Him, I don't want to see Him and say, man, I know I wasn't doing what I was supposed to.

I'm still going to see Him as my Savior. But that's the exact thing Jesus is saying. He's saying, listen, I'm coming again, and there's no time to delay. How can you not discern the times? It's all around you. And He's reminding us, He's challenging us not to be informed in every other area of our life except the things that eternally matter.

That we let those go by the wayside. So maybe we just need to ask ourselves, what am I paying attention to? And what am I ignoring? Sometimes our priorities can get swapped real easy.

[32:51] That's what Jesus is teaching. So if you cannot ignore the signs, what should you do about them? Here's what we should do, number three. We have to settle them now. We have to settle them now. Verse 57.

Yea, and why even yourselves judge ye not what is right? When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou may be delivered of him.

Lest he hail thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. So what Jesus does in these last few verses is He kind of moves from observation. He's saying, listen, you can see the times.

You can see all the situation. You've got to take care of it. But here's what it looks like. He gives a picture they would have understood. It's a man on his way to court with an adversary. He's been subpoenaed. He's got to go stand before the judge.

And he knows he's guilty. He knows he's not in a good situation. And in this culture especially, once you reach the judge, the verdict was final. There was no court of appeals that you could tie up in litigation for years and years to come.

[33:50] There's no second chances. Hey, when the judge comes, it's final. When he drops the gavel, it's the end. And what Jesus is saying is He says this, that's exactly what judgment will be like when I come again.

Listen, people want to say, well, God is a God of judgment. You know, actually, He is a God of love as well. He is just, and He is righteous, and He will judge. But you know the only reason He hasn't come back yet? He's not slack concerning His promises.

Some men count slackness. But He's weather and reeling that all should come to repentance. You know what He's waiting on? He's saying, listen, I want them to be ready. That's what Christ is doing. And since that is true, here's what we need to do. Verse 58 says this, give diligence. It has this urgency of reconciliation. It's saying, hey, make every effort.

Do what it takes. Settle it now. Because once you stand before the judge, it's too late to negotiate. I think we understand this. That's why you see when things go to trial, you know what the lawyer is trying to do?

[34:51] They try to make a deal before it gets to the judge. Because they think, I don't want to stand before the judge because when he drops the hammer, I don't want that to be the final verdict. And Jesus says, listen, this is not something to take lightly.

Verse 59 tells us, I tell thee that thou shalt not depart thence till thou hast paid the very last mite. You know what Jesus is saying there?

You're never going to pay the debt. You want to make sure that debt is settled before you stand before the Lord. And that is a terrifying statement. And Jesus makes it clear that this debt cannot be paid off quickly.

It's a consequence that cannot be escaped. But He doesn't say this to scare us. He says it because here's the great news. The debt has been paid. On the cross of Calvary, Jesus said this to Teletai. It is finished. That word means this, paid in full. Sometimes you might be here this morning carrying a debt that has been paid for.

[35:55] I would imagine if somebody paid off your house, you'd say, you know what? I still want to pay off this house. I'm going to keep paying the payments. No. You would celebrate. You would accept that gift and say, hey, praise the Lord. Somebody paid off a debt.

Listen, you had a debt much greater than that. We were buried in a mountain of sin. And the question is simply this. Have you accepted the payment? Because we've all sinned. And we've all come short of the glory of God.

And Jesus is saying, listen, there's only two options. You either trust that I paid it at the cross. Or you can pay it when you stand in front of the judge. And Jesus is the judge. And I know we're going a few minutes in overtime, but it's okay.

We're going to make it. Here's the common misconception. I do this in my life on a lot of things. I'll take care of this later. I have a honey-do list that is so long, I'll never get done with it.

So if something happens to me, Brother Garrett's going to come and just fix all things in my house. And we know that's not going to happen. But how often do we say that in our life?

[36 : 58] Well, I'll get to that later. I'll do. Some of you have been dealing with those things for next week since like 2005. I'll deal with that next week. I say this.

When it slows down, when does that happen? I don't think it does. And sometimes it might work in life, but here's the reality. It doesn't work spiritually.

That's what Jesus is saying. See, because delayed obedience becomes prolonged disobedience. And over time, something dangerous happens. What convicts you right now may not bother you anymore.

What once felt urgent now feels optional. And you start telling yourself, I've got time. We don't know how much time we have.

We don't like to talk about it, but this could be our last day. I mean, it's just the reality is. And so let me ask you this. What has God already shown you that you've been putting off? Maybe there's a sin that you just keep.

[37 : 58] It's like a pet sin and you just keep it in your life. Confess it. Maybe there's a relationship in your life that needs to be made right. Maybe there's a step of obedience that God is calling you to.

And you just keep pushing back. And you keep pushing back. Maybe it's salvation itself. You're all around the things of God. But you don't know Him as your Savior. Take that step. Don't delay if God is pressing to your heart.

What you delay now might become impossible. Because when He comes back, it's done. The time is at hand. So we'll finish with this.

How do you settle with God now? First thing we have to do is we have to see our sin clearly. Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those that realize they are bankrupt before God.

That they have no hope. That they have no option. Because a lot of people say this, Well, I'm not that bad. I'm a good person. The Bible says otherwise. The Bible says that we are, Our righteousness is as filthy rags.

[38 : 58] Maybe we need to ask questions like this. What sin in my life have I been minimizing? Is there something I know is wrong, But I keep justifying it? I don't know about you, But I can justify almost anything in my life.

Until the Word of God presents itself. Have I become more comfortable with sin than convicted by it? Get it settled. You can't get ready until you get honest.

But not only do we have to see our sin, Number two, we have to turn completely from it. When the Bible talks, We talk about repentance all the time. Here's what repentance is. You're going one way, And you turn around and you change directions. It's easy to recognize our faults.

You know, we say, Oh, I'm a sinner. I'm a bad person. But you can't just keep going the same direction. You've got to turn the other way. You've got to make a U-turn, Because that's what God is calling you to do.

It looks like when God is convicting you on your speech, And in your habits, And in your influences, You start speaking differently. You start cutting things out that shouldn't be in your life. You start changing what you allow in.

[39 : 59] Because here's the reality. Real repentance shows up in real life. It's going to show up in how you live your life. And that change leads to one final step.

Trust Christ fully. We mentioned the verse already, Hebrews 9. It's appointed a man once to die. And after this, the judgment. I know this is not the most popular kind of preaching, But your appointment is already set.

You do not control the timing, But here's the wonderful news. You can control the response. That's why Jesus gave this text. He's not trying to scare us. He's not trying to get us fearful of all the things.

No, he's trying to get us ready. He says, settle up before that day comes. Because before that day comes, And when that day comes, The opportunity is gone. And this is the most important thing you will ever decide in your life.

To trust Christ for your salvation. Or to let it just play on out. It's a dangerous place to be. Listen, you're not saved by trying harder.

[41:04] You're not saved by being better. You're not saved by cleaning up your life. You are saved by putting your faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

And His death and His burial and His resurrection. So I'm just going to ask you real plainly. Have you trusted Christ as your Savior? That's the only way you're ready.

Not I grew up in church. I believe in God. I'm a good person. No. Have you placed your faith in what Jesus did for you? Because there is a difference between being ready and being unprepared.

This passage is not about information. It's about a decision. And it's not any decision. It's a decision you cannot avoid. Philippians 2 tells us there's coming a day where every knee shall bow.

Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Why not here? Why not now? This is the time. This is the day of salvation.

[42:10] The worst decision you can make about Jesus is not making a decision. Because ultimately you will one day. Would the Lord make sure that we're ready?

Would we respond as He spoke to our hearts? Would you stand with your heads bowed? Thank you.