

Our Compassionate Judge

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[0 : 00] There is an unseen odorless threat to families in our city. It's called carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is a gas produced by fossil fuels, burning fossil fuels, whether that's a car or a kerosene heater or your gas grill.

If you've got a furnace or a boiler in your basement that uses natural gas, it produces carbon monoxide. And what you need to know about carbon monoxide is if a furnace or a boiler isn't vented right, the carbon monoxide gas can build up in your home, it can make you sick, it can even kill you. And so they've invented these carbon monoxide alarms. There is another unseen odorless threat to your family and to our church family.

It's called hypocrisy. In 1995, DC Talk, they were around back then. DC Talk released Jesus Freak. And on the fourth track of that album is a song called What If I Stumble. And it starts with the recording of Brennan Manning saying this.

[1 : 20] The single greatest cause of atheism in the world today are Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, but walk out the door and deny him with their lifestyle.

He goes on to say, that's what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable. But it's just not those...

Our children find our hypocrisy unbelievable. Study after study has recently documented young people who have grown up in the church, churches which profess Jesus as the risen Christ, churches that hold to the authority of the Bible, churches, children from these churches who are leaving the churches in droves.

The question is, why? Why are we losing our children? Well, one Christian sociologist has made this convincing argument that young people are leaving because they're being taught a different version of Christianity than what the Bible teaches.

And he calls it moralistic, therapeutic deism. What that means is, be good, be happy, make sure you pray before your meals.

[2 : 49] And what it does is, it empties Christianity of the risen Christ. And so for us, it's hypocritical to profess Jesus as the risen king, and then to functionally practice some other version of that.

Be good, be happy, just make sure you pray before you eat. The scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus' day were professing one thing and then practicing another thing.

Their unacknowledged, unrepentant, hypocrisy, misled people and it resulted in their judgment. And that's what we're reading in Matthew 23. Matthew 23, the whole chapter, is like this giant carbon monoxide detector for your soul.

It sounds an alarm. Matthew 23 could very well sound an alarm in your heart this morning. It's detecting hypocrisy in you.

[4 : 00] And if it does, if the Holy Spirit should use His word to expose hypocrisy in your heart, that's a good thing.

That's God's kindness to you. That's to help you see something so that you can turn to God in humility. God wants to remove hypocrisy and build in us an integrity between our profession and our practice.

So this morning, I'm guessing you may walk away feeling sobered, but you're willing to be humble. When we come through Matthew 23, be sobered, but be willing to humble yourself.

Matthew 23 can be divided into three sections. Jesus makes a contrast between the hypocrites and the humble in verses 1-12. And then Jesus drops a bunch of woes on the hypocrites.

He condemns them in 13-36. Seven woes. And then at the close of the chapter, in verses 37-39, Jesus speaks this compassionate lament.

[5 : 20] Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem. This morning, I'm guessing you're going to be sobered by your own hypocrisy.

But you should be willing to come under your wonderful Savior. He delivers us from our own hypocrisy. If you would open up your Bibles now to Matthew 23, I want to point out some things in verses 1-12.

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do.

For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and they lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others, for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love their place of honor at feasts and best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one father who is in heaven.

[6:47] Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant, whoever exalts himself and will be humbled will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

In this passage, in these 12 verses, Jesus makes a distinction between the hypocrites and the humble. And notice who he starts talking to. So remember, he is in the temple right now. This is Passion Week.

He's a couple days out from being crucified. And so God incarnate is in the temple, and he's speaking words of judgment. And so he says to these crowds and his disciples, there are two groups of people.

There are the hypocrites, and then there are the humble. And what characterizes the hypocrites is if you look at verse 3 at the end, for they preach but do not practice.

Have you ever heard the expression, do what I say, not as I do? Have you ever heard that? That's what the Pharisees were doing. Hey, do as I say, just don't do what I do.

[7:49] And Jesus is saying, hey, insofar as they preach God's word, hey, observe it, just don't do what they say. Don't do what they're doing. There's a huge credibility gap with that.

And so he points out these hypocrites, the scribes and the Pharisees, and then he talks about this other group, the humble, and we see that in verse 8. But you, he's speaking to his disciples, but you are not to be called rabbi.

And what marks these disciples are in verse 11, that the greatest among you shall be your servant. And then in verse 12, whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Followers of Jesus are marked by humility. And so he distinguishes between two groups of people, the hypocrites and the humble. Now there's a couple things I want to draw to your attention.

Things that Jesus says here that kind of heighten the contrast. What makes them different? And so the first thing I want you to notice is attention.

[9:07] Verse 5, the hypocrites, they do all their deeds to be seen by others. They want to be seen. Phylacteries were these little boxes with scripture in it that they would tie on their heads and they made big ones.

These fringes, these tassels, they wore on their robes, they were really long to get your attention. They wanted the best seats at the feasts and in the synagogues because they wanted to be seen. They want to be said, greeted as rabbi. In Hebrew, rabbi means great one. Rabbi means my great one. They wanted to be known in the most basic sense as great, impressive, seen, larger than life. Wanted to be known. Not so the humble. The humble, man, they're servants. They lower themselves.

They don't want to be seen. They want to be in the background. They want to help other people out. The Pharisees were tying up burdens and not lifting a little pinky to help.

[10:18] Servants don't operate that way. Servants bear burdens. They release burdens just like the servant said. Come to me, all you are weary and heavy laden. I'll give you rest.

He bears our burdens. And so, there's a distinction, a contrast here of visibility. And just to press that home a little bit more, I want you to look at verse 8 and 9 and 10.

But you are not to be called rabbi for you have one teacher and you are all brothers. So, this is what Jesus does. Hey, disciples, don't consider yourself a great one. You've got one teacher.

And he draws their attention to the teacher. Don't call someone father for you have one father. He draws our attention to the one father who is in heaven.

He says, don't be called instructor for you have one instructor, the Christ. And so, he draws our gaze to the one instructor, the Christ. And so, our attention goes from being on ourselves to being on the one.

[11:26] See those repeated ones? One teacher, one father, one instructor, the Christ. You know the difference between a hypocrite and a humble person is?

You're focused. Hypocrites say, look at me. Humble people say, look at my God. There's also another difference here in terms of the contrast, a contrast of authority.

The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. It's a position of authority. It's like, it's like the chair of the English department over at Carthage or the chair of the biology department over at Parkside.

It's distinguished positions of influence. They want the chair of Moses. They want to be the ones who speak authoritatively.

They want to be the ones who are saying what matters. Servants, they are saying, the humble say, no, it's not what someone says, it's what my teacher, my one teacher says, my one father, my one instructor, the Christ.

[12:37] So, what the Pharisees were saying, hey, we're the authorities on here. What the humble, the followers of Jesus say, is like, Jesus, you are our authority. Our one authority. We're all brothers and sisters.

He is our authority. We go on to see a contrast in greatness.

In verse 11, Jesus says, the greatest among you shall be your servant. And what we get a sense from these hypocrites is they consider greatness in terms of lording it over others.

what other people think about them. There's a huge difference there in terms of what greatness is.

God's kingdom values a different kind of greatness than the world's kingdom.

Kingdom greatness is in servanthood. It's not lording it over others, it's coming under others to serve them. And so where the hypocrites were very interested in position and what people said of them and being recognized and having the authoritative word, those who are humble, they're like, it doesn't matter, that stuff doesn't matter to me because my king has the greatest position, Jesus.

[13:58] He is my authority. It's his place that I come under ultimately. And it's just not a contrast in terms of greatness.

If you look at verse 12, there's a contrast in terms of outcome. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Those hypocrites who exalt themselves now will be humbled then.

And those who are humble, who bring themselves low, now they'll be exalted then. And so what we see going on here in verses 1 through 12 is Jesus saying, hey, there are two groups of people.

There are hypocrites and then there are humble and there are some significant consequences for who you are. And what we see happening in verses 13 through 35 is Jesus says, now here's what's going to happen to these hypocrites.

So we've looked at the contrast between the hypocrites and the humble in verses 1 through 12.

Let's turn our attention now to this large section in verses 13 through 35 where Jesus speaks seven woes on these scribes and Pharisees.

[15:16] He is condemning them. Have you heard the word hangry yet? I'm so hangry right now. It's a combination of you're hungry and you're angry at the same time.

It's one of these loaded words that you're like, yeah, I get that. The word woe that Jesus repeats seven times here, it's a loaded word.

It carries the sense of regret, it carries the sense of sorrow, and it carries the sense of judgment.

And so what you need to understand is that when Jesus speaks these woes, he's not like, and I'm giving it to you and he's got a smile on his face.

You take that and you take that and you take that. This is grieving him. And we see that come out more fully in the lament he speaks in verses 37 through 39.

But what I want you to see is he speaks seven woes upon these scribes and Pharisees. We see it in verse 13, but it's Total and Pharisees hypocrites.

[16:21] We see it in verse 15, woe to you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites. We see it in 16, woe to you blind guides. Woe to you. Verse 23, woe to you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites.

Verse 25, woe to you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites. Verse 27, woe to you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites. Verse 29, the last woe.

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. He's speaking this woe on the leaders of the Jewish people who were teaching the people. And he's calling them hypocrites.

Those people who make a profession and then their practice doesn't match up. These seven woes can be paired together.

Woes one and two have a common theme. Woes three and four have a common theme. Woes five and six have a common theme. And then woe seven stands all alone because it's to stand all alone.

[17 : 35] So let's walk through these woes so you get a sense of what Jesus is saying to these hypocrites. And I'm going to try to bring it to bear on our lives today. Woe number one in verses 13 and 14.

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces, for you neither enter yourself nor allow those who would enter to go in. And then woe two is woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, for you travel across the sea and land to make a single proselyte, a convert.

And when he becomes a convert, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. How are these scribes and Pharisees shutting the door of the kingdom on people's faces?

Verse 13 and 14. Here's how they're doing it. They are denying that Jesus is the Christ. That's how they're doing it. Remember, the kingdom of heaven is God's saving reign.

To enter the kingdom of heaven is to be saved, to be rescued, to come under God's gracious reign. And what these scribes and Pharisees were doing was they were shutting the door of the kingdom on people's faces because they were denying Jesus as the Christ.

[18 : 51] They're false teachers in that sense. And the hypocrisy of it is they actually think that they're teaching the kingdom of heaven. They think they have the right teaching.

And Jesus says, No, you're misleading people. It's like this. Could you imagine walking up to a house and Jesus, it's dark outside and Jesus, the door's open and there's this glass door and Jesus is standing there with this kind of warm glow behind him and you're walking up and like, Man, I want that guy.

And as you're walking up to the door, this Pharisee walks in front of you, reaches inside and closes the door and say, No, Jesus for you. Slamming the door of the kingdom on people's faces.

Woe to. They go to extreme measures to make a convert. And what they're converting them to is not the true meaning of the Old Testament, but their Pharisaical version of it.

Pharisaical version that denies the true fulfillment of it that's found in Christ. And so they pile up burdens on people and they do nothing to help them.

[20 : 07] They were making converts to their version of Judaism and as a result, they're making their converts twice the sons of hell as themselves. They're teaching people how to shut the door of the kingdom on other people.

Both woes are hypocrisy. And what it is, is it is the hypocrisy of leading people, and you're supposed to be leading them to the truth, but you're leading them somewhere else.

Beware, brothers and sisters. This destructive effect of hypocrisy is not limited to the first century. It's a 21st century problem.

It's a 21st century parenting problem. Why our children walk away from the church? Could it be that Christian parents are professing Jesus as Lord with their lips, but Monday through Saturday they're denying Him by their lifestyle?

So mom and dad, I've got a question for you. What version of Christianity are you teaching your children? What are you calling your children to?

[21 : 24] Are you actually calling them to Christ? Or are you calling them to a Christless version of Christianity? Are you just calling them to live up to a certain way of being?

Or are you calling them to the living Jesus, who alone can change them? We don't want to be training our children in a moralistic, therapeutic deism because we're going to slam the door of the kingdom on their faces.

But do you know what's even worse than people, children, leaving our churches? It's if what we model to our children actually, which is some kind of version of Christianity, they actually buy into it and then propagate it.

And it's not true biblical Christianity. We don't want any of that. We don't want our children holding on to this Christless tradition of religion.

We want to call our children to the living Christ. So woe to the scribes and Pharisees for the destructive effect of their hypocrisy on others.

[22 : 48] And we must be aware of the effect of our hypocrisy on our children. And you know what the solution is to that? We enamor ourselves with Jesus.

We deny ourselves and follow the living Christ ourselves. He is our all in all. And when that happens, you have a parent who's generally trying to follow Jesus living out in front of their children and it actually adorns the gospel.

It's like, okay, they may not be perfect, but they're trying. They talk a lot about Jesus and it drives me nuts, but I'll tell you what, they're legit. We want to avoid the whole to do as I say but not as I do business.

We want to humble ourselves in front of our children and live out the faith. You know what that becomes? A living apologetic to our children.

Jesus is really changing us. Woes 3 and 4 focus on another effect of hypocrisy. We see that played out in verses 16 through 22.

[24 : 01] Woe 3 that is. Jesus is exposing a majoring on the minors to the neglect of what matters most.

It's classic hypocrisy. I'm going to major on the minors for my personal interest. I'm going to bring in what's on the peripheral and make it central because that's my thing.

It's majoring on the minors and Jesus exposes it. In the first woe, as you will see, he's talking about swearing and taking oaths.

Woe to you blind guides who say if anyone swears by the temple, it's nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he's bound by his oath. So here's what Jesus is doing here. The Pharisees were teaching the people about the difference between binding oaths and non-binding oaths.

A binding oath is an oath that you swear that you've got to follow through on. A non-binding oath is an oath that you say, but it's not really, you know, important that you follow through so much.

[25 : 06] And what Jesus says in this section is what determines whether an oath was binding or not is how you worded it. So if you swore by the temple, non-binding, but if you swore by the gold of the temple, binding.

If you swore by the altar in the temple, not binding, but if you swore by the gift on the altar, that's binding. You feel the load that would have been building the pile up happening.

If you're carrying a backpack, you're just getting dropped rocks in it. The hypocrisy is that the Pharisees were actually training God's people not how to be truthful, but how not to be truthful.

How not to follow through on your word. That's the hypocrisy on it. And what God wants of his people is that they do what they say.

They're faithful to their words. They're true to their words. And so the whole point Jesus makes early in the gospel is, hey, if you speak truthfully and follow through on it, you don't need to speak oaths.

[26 : 21] So what the Pharisees have done is they built this elaborate scaffolding around God's law, which they end up serving instead of God's law. And they lose the whole side of being truthful.

So they neglect the weightier matters of the law, truthfulness, because they're trying to get into the minute details of making sure you're saying the right thing.

Jesus says, just be truthful. In verses 23 and 24, we see woe for. And just like giving oaths had all this detail to it, the issue in woe for was tithing.

The Old Testament required God's people to give 10% of all their income, which would include the produce of their farms. So what we see the Pharisees doing in verses 23 through 24 is that they are tithing off the smallest of items.

For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law. Does anybody have a basil plant in their yard? Basil plant? I see that hand. I see that hand.

[27 : 34] Could you imagine when harvest time comes for your basil plant, you collect all the leaves off it, and you've got 1,200 leaves. And so what you would do in keeping with the Pharisees is you would want to make sure you get 10% of those 1,200 basil leaves and then give it unto the Lord.

So that would be 120 leaves for just your basil plant. And so what the Pharisees were doing is they were so preoccupied with getting down to the very nitty-gritty of their areas and applying the tithe to

it, they were totally neglecting the weightier matters of the law is what Jesus said. Justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Those are all outworkings of loving your neighbor as yourself. They were missing it. They were so detailed on making sure they got their tithe right, they were neglecting their neighbor who needed justice and mercy and faithfulness. What Jesus is saying here is that, hey, I desire you to show mercy and justice and faithfulness love your neighbor more than you tithe your basil plant.

[29 : 02] Tithe away, but not at the expense of the bigger stuff. And so, here's what these two woes come, they are neglecting the major things for being preoccupied on the minor things.

They are majoring on the minors at the expense of what matters most. That's what these woes are. That's what these hypocrites were doing. And that's how they're misleading the people. They're training God's people to do the same. And Jesus is saying, no. Now, there's a warning for us here.

We can become preoccupied with matters of secondary importance too. We can take things on the peripheral and try to make them central. We major on the minors.

We can insist on finer points of doctrine to be necessary for someone to be a Christian. I remember this one time a Christian sister came up and we met for the first time.

[30 : 03] She found out I was a pastor and she was like, so what do you think about the rapture? You know what was behind that? Are you in or not? Where do you come down on this?

Maybe you know people who adhere to a KJV only-ism that the King James version is the only inspired English version of the Bible. And within minutes of meeting them they're looking at the spine of your Bible to see what kind of version you're reading out of.

Does it matter about final things? Oh yeah, it does. Does it matter what version of the Bible you read? Yeah, it's important. Is it of first importance? No. Those things aren't first important.

Here's some other things that we can bring in from the periphery. We can make first importance matters out of how you educate your children. Whether they are homeschooled or whether they are publicly educated or they go to a Christian private school.

That can become a lightning rod between Christians and we put a lot in on it. Here's another thing. Your entertainment choices, your vacation destinations, your car purchases, what you wear, how you worship.

[31 : 21] All these things can come in and we can make fights out of them while neglecting the bigger things. Justice, mercy, and faithfulness, loving your neighbor as yourself.

And Jesus says, woe to the scribes and Pharisees for the neglect of what matters most. It costs them the kingdom. them. And may it be a warning to us to steer clear from making mountains out of mole hills.

You want to know how to do it? How to keep from making something minor, major? You keep the major things major.

And you know what the major-est thing of all is? Jesus. Jesus is the main thing. And what we're going to do as a church is keep Jesus in all of his glory at the center of all that we do.

He is our engine. And we're not going to let anything vie for that. When you keep Jesus at the center of all things, you're enamored by him and you die to yourself.

[32 : 35] to follow him, including your pet projects. Woes 5 and 6 focus on yet another effect of hypocrisy.

It's the effect of prioritizing the external to the neglect of the internal. And we see that in verses 25 through 26 and then 27 through 28.

In both situations, what you see is this. there is this external value at the cost of what's internal. It's a putting the external first and the internal second.

And so in Woe 5, in verse 25 and 26, Jesus compares the Pharisee to dishware. Just as a cup has an outside and an inside, a Pharisee has an outside and an inside.

And the Pharisees spent a lot of energy making sure their outsides were squeaky clean. But what Jesus says here is so important.

[33 : 42] He says, you blind Pharisee, verse 26, first clean the inside of the cup and the plate that the outside also might be clean. Who likes chili? I like chili.

Let's say you come over to our house for chili this afternoon. Our dishwasher is busted, so we wash it. And what we do, we wash just out the outside of our chili bowls and then we put these chili bowls back up in our cupboard.

In a week, what's going to happen? It's going to be stinky. And if I serve you chili out of that messy chili bowl next Sunday, you'd be like, I don't want this chili. Okay. Jesus says, hey, start with what's inside and then the outside will follow suit.

Jesus' point, we start with the heart. Gospel ministry starts with the heart. You change the heart change will follow through with life change.

What controls your heart controls your life. But only God can change your heart. Woe 6, Jesus compares the Pharisees to whitewashed tombs that had this outward beauty.

[34 : 56] Here's the story behind that. Remember, this is taking place during Passover week. And so you'd have all these Jews coming to Jerusalem to observe Passover together.

And so what would happen a month before is that people would go out and whitewash the tombs surrounding the city of Jerusalem. Do you know why? So that those people who were not familiar with the city, they would be able to see tombs and avoid them because if a Jew had contact with a tomb or with a dead body, they would be unclean for seven days and they would be out of the party happening in the city.

And so what the practice is, is they would whitewash these tombs so that people could see it to avoid it. And the whitewash was a really nice whitewash. You could see them from the distance. It was just a really quality whitewash being used. And Jesus' biting irony here is that they are whitewashed monuments to dead people.

It's beautiful on the outside, but on the inside, it's rotting death. It's rotting death. It's rotting death. Jesus is saying that these Pharisees, hey, you guys look great on the outside, but inside, you see what he says there?

[36 : 23] Here's what he says. So you, verse 28, so you also outward appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

You're full of deadness. And when a Pharisee would have heard a criticism for being lawless, that's like chief offense.

Jesus is saying, hey, you think you're observing the law, but your observance of the law is actually lawlessness, you hypocrite. You're like a whitewashed tomb, dead inside.

Biting irony. They were blind to this. So the hypocrisy of thinking themselves clean and alive when actually they were internally unclean and dead is what Jesus is exposing.

And then calling people to not pay attention to the sin within them. It costs them the kingdom and it cautions us. What Jesus is emphasizing, what he emphasizes over and over again throughout his teaching, we see it very much in the Sermon on the Mount, is what matters is your internal posture towards God.

[37 : 37] The real aim of the law is to expose our hearts and to aim our hearts at God to show us our need to be cleansed of our greed and our self-indulgence and to reveal our internal deadness to God.

We're all dead to God. But here's what God has done. By his grace, he offers spiritual life to the spiritually dead through the risen Jesus.

At the heart of Christianity is a living Christ who gives new life to dead hearts. And so woe to these leaders for their hypocritical focusing on the external at the cost of the internal.

These blind guides were training their people in moralism, in behavioralism. Behavioralism. And they lost the kingdom as a result.

And we're cautioned to say, hey, let's pay attention to what's going on inside. And we cry out to our God to change us from the inside out.

[38 : 49] The seventh parable, the seventh woe, excuse me, the seventh woe is unpaired with another. It stands out and it's meant to stand out.

Let me just read it for you. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, saying, if we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in the shedding of the blood of the prophets. Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of

Zechariah, the son of Barakiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary, the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. This is the climactic woe. This is Jesus' last sentence to statement to these Pharisees.

[40 : 02] And what he's basically doing is this. He's saying, you think you are not murderers because you're fixing up the tombs of the prophets that your fathers killed, but you are murderers not all the same.

You are serpents. You are brood of vipers. How will you escape the judgment to come? That line is almost identical to what John the Baptist says to them in Matthew 3, 7. Now it's Jesus saying it to them. And what he's saying is, you hypocrites, you don't think you're prophet killers, but you are.

He says in verse 32, fill up what your fathers began. Finish what your fathers started. So when Jesus talks about in verse 35, this blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, he's talking about the first man that was killed, Abel in Genesis, to the last man that was killed, Zechariah, and that's found in 2 Chronicles.

But in the Hebrew Bible, that's the last book of their Bible. And so it's from cover to cover, first to last. All this blood that's shed, it's on your head. And not only their blood, it's these prophets and scribes and godly people that I send to you, their blood's on your head too.

[41 : 31] See what Jesus is doing? He's putting on them. Fill up the measure of your fathers. Finish what you're doing.

Ultimately, this is going to result in Jesus' death. In Matthew 21, Jesus speaks the parable of the tenants. The vineyard owner sends his servants to these wicked tenants to gather the harvest, but they would kill servant after servant.

And then that owner sends his son because he thinks surely they'll respect my son, and then he killed the son. Here, Jesus is at the vineyard speaking to the wicked tenants, and they are about to kill him.

And Jesus says in verse 36, truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. All of it's going to happen. All of it. Truly, truly.

This last woe is such an indictment, and it's got this promised punishment. And these scribes and Pharisees, they will not have any of it.

[42 : 48] They're not going to respond. They're not sobered by it, nor are they willing to humble themselves in hearing this. These seven woes of regret and sorrow and judgment.

There's this finality. God incarnate is declaring this judgment upon the leaders of Judaism at the time, and they don't respond.

And so in verses 37, we read, Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones, and stones those who are sent to it. How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would have not.

There's a play on words here. Jesus was willing. He was willing to gather the children to Jerusalem to himself. He was wanting that, but they were not willing.

They were not willing. He sent prophet after prophet, godly person after godly person, righteous person after righteous person. Every time was his invitation to say, come and I'll gather you to myself.

[44 : 04] I'll bring you under my reign. I'll show you my goodness. But after time and again, they would not have it. They were unwilling for it.

Verse 38. They would not, excuse me, seven. You would not. What strikes me about this compassionate lament here is that Jesus likens himself to a hen.

He's in the midst of judgment, and he compares himself to a hen. He's gentle. He's willing. Even speaking to those who rejected him.

So here in this lament, even in judgment, we see a compassionate lamenting Jesus. Saying, only if you would have allowed me to gather you to me, but you wouldn't.

And as a result, verse 38, he says, your house is left to you desolate. I am abandoning you. And in verse 1 of chapter 4, he walks out of the temple.

[45 : 20] God has left the temple. And he's left it abandoned, and it will be destroyed. We've covered a lot of ground this morning.

We've seen the contrast between the hypocrites and the humble. We've seen Jesus bring down woes on the hypocrites, and we've spent a brief time on this lament in verses 37 to 39.

Jesus' compassion on display. How does this find you? Does it sober you? It should sober you. But it should also have the opposite effect on these scribes and Pharisees. They were unwilling to humble themselves. But you must be willing to come under his gracious reign. There's more that can be said, but let's leave it at this. Let's not be a people who say, do as I say, not as I do.

[46 : 30] Let's be a people who say, come. Come with me to a willing, living Christ who will change your life forever.

Let's pray. God in heaven, we see a passage like this, and we are sobered by it. God, we thank you for work you're doing in exposing our own hypocrisy.

God, we are not unrepentant and unwilling to admit that. We acknowledge that there's a gap between our profession and our practice. God, would you fill the gap by your grace?

Would you conform us to the image of Jesus? Would you help us to bear witness to those around us that, yes, Jesus, you are real and that you're changing our lives?

God, would you help us to be forewarned by this and to move forward in humble faith in you? Pray this in Jesus' name.

[47 : 31] Amen.