

The Preaching of John the Baptist

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[0 : 0 0] Well, now we'll have you to God's blessing, and we can turn back to the portion of Scripture, which we read in the Gospel according to Matthew, and the third chapter, Matthew chapter 3. Although I really want us to consider the first 12 verses of this chapter, we can take our text from the first two verses.

Matthew chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, where we read, In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Well, today I want us to consider the ministry of John the Baptist, especially the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist, as we have it outlined for us here in the first 12 verses of this chapter.

John the Baptist stands before us as a New Testament prophet in the Old Testament tradition. Indeed, he is the last such prophet.

We read in Luke that his ministry would be in the spirit and in the power of Elijah, and that is what we see when we see his ministry.

[1 : 0 9] It is accuned in many ways to that of Elijah. He seems even to have dressed like Elijah. We read that he wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt, simple clothing to represent a simple way of life, devoid of the fashions and the frivolities of this world, and a simple diet of locusts and wild honey, to show that the meat of John the Baptist, his food was to do the will of him that sent him.

John the Baptist wasn't a city dweller, that he might enjoy the conveniences and the entertainments of city life. Rather, John the Baptist dwelt in the wilderness, that he might have time alone with his God.

The wilderness here shouldn't be understood necessarily as the desert. It's not always used in that way. Rather, it's a solitary, desolate kind of place, a place where there is no pasture.

It was probably, we know that it was by the banks of the River Jordan, but it was probably in a steep valley where there was no pasture for animals, where there wasn't much grass, where it wasn't as easy to get food to eat.

But it was close enough for the people to come and to hear him. It was close enough for them to come from Jerusalem and from the regions of Judea to hear what he had to say.

[2 : 3 4] And yet, when the people did come to hear him, he stood in great distinction from the bulk of these people. You know, even in first century Judea, this man, John the Baptist, would have come across as stern and old-fashioned and severe because he was a man of God in an evil day.

He was one who pursued righteousness when sin abounded. He was a man who stood up for the truth of God when the truth of God was trampled largely underfoot.

And there's so much in the life of John the Baptist here which is interesting to us. From his birth to his baptism, from his imprisonment to his death, there's so much that we could study, that we could spend time on.

But what is of greatest interest to us concerning John the Baptist, especially today, but perhaps in general as well, is this, his preaching. And you know the narrative as we have it here.

It is so framed that instead of fixing our eyes upon the man, we open our ears to his message, to what he is saying. He is a voice in the wilderness, a voice.

[3 : 45] He is not John the Baptist in the wilderness. He is not a personality in the wilderness. He is a voice. So that in hearing the voice of a man, those who have come out to hear him, that they might discern the word of God.

He has a commission from God to preach. And it is his message, it is his preaching, which is of particular importance to us.

Now, this word, preaching, as you have it in the first verse there, it actually shines a light on this. It's an interesting word. It's a word which means to herald news.

It comes actually from the root word for a herald. Somebody who, in an official capacity, would give news for the king or for whoever was in charge or ruling the country.

And, you know, the work of a herald, more than anything else, was to give an authoritative proclamation of information or of news or of a decree.

[4 : 51] The work of the herald was, he would never give, when the herald came, it was never the bright thoughts of some individual standing on a podium.

That wasn't what the people went out to hear when they went to hear a herald. The people never asked whether this herald was intelligent, whether he was eloquent or whether he had something new to say, whether he was original.

Rather, when a herald came, they asked, what has happened? Or what is going to happen? Or what is required from us as a people? And so, John, he comes as a herald.

He comes not with the excellency of speech nor the enticing words of man's wisdom, but he comes with the authoritative message of God, and he comes in demonstration of the spirit and of power.

He's a herald. It's a lesson to me, it's not a lesson to you. It's a lesson to us concerning what a preacher is, what he's supposed to be, what a preacher does, and what a preacher is supposed to do.

[5 : 56] He doesn't stand in the pulpit to entertain you. He doesn't stand here to show you how smart he is, or to try and endear himself to you. A true herald doesn't open his mouth in order to increase his popularity.

Rather, he opens his mouth in order to do his job, because he's been told to do it. He opens his mouth to proclaim the message that his sovereign has given him.

And you know, friends, it is just so with the preacher. He only has authority to preach the message of God. His great work is to preach, so that in hearing the voice of a man, that you in the pew might be able to discern the word of God.

So that when you leave this church today, when you leave it any day, you don't go home saying, the preacher said this, or the preacher said that. You go home saying, the word of God has said this to me, and what must I now do?

Because it is God, when preaching is true and it is faithful, it is God who speaks. And preachers, ministers are but ambassadors who pass on the message, who herald the truth.

[7 : 12] Well, in the time then that we have today, I want us to notice three aspects, consider three aspects of John the Baptist's preaching. First, I want us to see that he preached repentance.

We see that in verse 2, his message, the summary of his message, was this, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Now, the people, they came from all around to hear him.

We read that they came from the cities. They came from the villages and from the countryside, from the region, round about. They flocked, thousands flocked out to hear him. They came even from Jerusalem, from that center of Jewish religion, the home of the scribes and the Pharisees, the home of the Sadducees and the home of the priests.

But what did they go out to the wilderness to see? What message were they met with? Well, they were told to repent. They were told, literally, to change their minds.

That's in ancient Greek literature, that's what that word, repent, means, to change your mind. It can mean a change from bad to good or a change from good to bad. It means to change your mind.

[8 : 30] But the New Testament, it fills it with new gospel meaning. It speaks of a 180 degree turn from evil to good.

This word, repentance, it speaks of turning from the way of man and embracing the way of God. It speaks of turning from your sin and pursuing righteousness.

To repent is to let the word of God speak into your situation and to change your life accordingly. And John the Baptist couldn't do this without speaking to them about sin.

And that's what we find in John the Baptist's ministry. He spoke plainly about sin. He didn't dance around the issue. He showed sin for what it was. An offense to God and a plague of man.

He showed it to be a crime against God and a disease of humanity. He saw the religion of the Jews of the day. And he saw in it, he saw sin because it was devoid of true godliness.

[9 : 31] They had reduced religion largely to the external, to scoring points with God by keeping man-made laws. And John told them, what did John tell them?

Well, he told them that they had to change. He told them that they had to change. Even those churchgoers who seemed so righteous from the outside, he told them that they were sinners and that they had to repent.

And this repentance, of course, would manifest itself in outward acts. Repentance would be external as well as internal.

If somebody was repenting in his heart, then that repentance, John knew, must be evident from the outside. Because although the change was in the heart, indeed, the change must always be in the heart, in the soul of man, yet it would be evident in the day-to-day life of man.

And that's why in scolding the Pharisees and the Sadducees, is it in verse 8, he tells them to bear fruit in keeping or worthy of repentance.

[10 : 43] To bear fruit. If the apple tree, if an apple tree is healthy, it will bear fruit in its season. Apples will grow upon it. And so will the Christian.

If the Christian is healthy, if he's indeed a Christian, then he will bear fruit. You see, John sees repentance to be a practical thing.

Something which affects the day-to-day. You see, when he preached this message, we know from Luke's account of it, that the people came to him and they said, well, if this be true, we must change, then what ought we to do?

What needs to change in our lives? And he says, well, he that has two coats, give one away. If you've got more food than you need, then give some of your food away.

He says, to the tax collectors to stop overcharging. And he tells the soldiers to stop their violence and to be content with their wages. This is the fruit of their repentance.

[11 : 43] It is something that is measurable. It is something that is external as well as internal. Repentance is something that affects the whole man and that changes his day-to-day life.

John realized this, that repentance was integral to the demands of the gospel. And so, without evidence of it, without confession of sin, he wouldn't admit any to baptism.

You see that in verse 6. And so it is today. The necessity of repentance, the message of repentance, it must be an integral part of this pulpit.

It must be an integral part of the church. For God demands that we change our minds, that we alter our course, that we align our life according to his word unto his law.

God demands even in the Old Testament that the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. But not only that, it is not only turning away from that which is evil, but there is a turning towards that which is good.

[12 : 50] He demands also, Isaiah demands, God speaking through him, that he return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy on him, and to his God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For those who repent, there is a promise of forgiveness. But the question for me and the question for you is this. Have you repented of your sins?

Have you turned away from that which is evil in your life? Because this is what you must do. You must turn away from your sins and then embrace or together to embrace God and his great mercy.

Repentance, friends, it is a prerequisite. to gospel privileges. Repentance walks hand in hand with faith. As one of the Puritans put it, repentance and faith, they are twins.

They are born together. They live together. They look alike. They do similar things together. They are a partnership. They cannot be divorced one from another. With faith, when faith comes into your own experience, there will always be a turning away from sin along with it.

[14 : 00] And so will you, will you, in faith, will you turn from your sins? Or do you love your sins too much? There is no heaven for a man who will not turn from his sins.

But we are told that if we confess our sins, turning from them, that God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And so John, he preached repentance. repentance. But John also preached judgment. You see, when the Sadducees and when the Pharisees came to him out to the river Jordan, some of them perhaps applied for baptism.

It's clear from, I think, John's account that not all of them did. But he says to them, he says, Brute of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

They've come to see his baptism of repentance. But he tells them, well, you yourselves need to repent. You see, these are men, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and they are exalted in the eyes of the people.

[15 : 10] They walk with dignity and they receive praise from all who are around them. And yet, although they are seen to be the holy men of the day by the generality of the people, yet John doesn't see the fruit of their repentance.

He rather sees them to be as snakes who are carrying lethal venom. He sees them to be as deadly serpents who are poisoning the people with a different religion.

That's what he sees. A do-it-yourself religion. A religion that's based on works. That's based on the external. A religion that's based to impress man, but not to please God.

And so John asks him, he says to them, who has warned you? Who has warned you to flee from the judgment, to flee from the wrath that is to come? He confronts them, doesn't he?

He questions their motives. He puts them on the spot concerning their souls. These leaders of the day, they were used to asking the questions. They were used to putting the pressure on. And yet John the Baptist here, he confronts them.

[16 : 14] He suspects that some of them are coming out here because they want to escape the judgment. They want to escape the judgment without having to change their lives. As if this sprinkling of water is going to guarantee them a place in heaven.

But as they are now, John says, without the fruit of repentance, all that awaits them is wrath. Now this word, wrath, this word, wrath doesn't speak of a passionate outburst, a losing control.

There's actually another word for that in the New Testament. And it's always used for men. It's never used for God. But this word, wrath, it rather speaks of a settled and a calm opposition against all that is evil.

And yet, although it is settled and although it is calm, that doesn't reduce the depth of feeling and the depth of purpose in the wrath of God.

You see, God isn't just slightly annoyed at sin. It isn't a small thing to him as it can be to us. God is vigorously opposed to every type of sin.

[17 : 27] Every type of sin, those that we see to be small and those that we see to be big, he is vigorously opposed to them and he is angered by them. Psalm 7 tells us that God is angry with the wicked every day.

He is angry with a divine wrath. But John's message is this, that this wrath is imminent.

This wrath is coming and it's coming soon. Indeed, in verse 10, we read that the axe is now laid at the root of the tree. And the picture here is of a gardener walking around his garden at harvest time and he's seeing what's growing in his garden.

And as he walks from tree to tree, he lays his axe at the root of each tree while he looks for fruit in that tree. And this tree, it has fruit, this first tree, it has fruit.

And so he lifts his axe up and he passes it by. He walks on. It's profitable for him to keep this tree. But then he comes to another tree. The gardener comes to another tree and he lays his axe to its root.

[18 : 40] And he looks at it and despite its good situation, despite the water and the sun that it's received, there's no fruit on the tree. There's nothing on it.

And with the axe laid to the root, he thinks to himself, he thinks, well, I could use this space for a more fruitful tree. I have given this tree its chances.

It has been here many a year, but I have had no profit out of it. There is no fruit on this tree. So what does a gardener do in this situation? What would you do in this situation?

Many of you, I'm sure, are gardeners. When you've got a tree that is not growing as it ought to grow, it's giving you no profit. What do you do with it? What does a gardener do?

Well, he lifts up the axe and he swings it to the root of the tree until the tree falls down. He clears the space where the tree was and every other tree like it and he piles all of these unfruitful trees together and he sets them alight.

[19 : 47] You see, those unfruitful trees, they were cumbering the ground. They were good for nothing but for burning, but for firewood. That's all that they were good for. But you know, friends, the horrific thing about this illustration is this, that it applies to me and that it applies to you.

You see, God is the gardener who walks around his garden. He walks around his garden, he looks at every human that he's created and as he walks around, he lays the axe of his judgment at your root while he studies your fruit.

What does he see when he looks at you? Does he see a Christian? Does he see one who has believed? Does he see one who has faith? Does he see one who has repented and who has turned from his sin?

You know, friend, perhaps the axe is laid at your root just now and God is deciding what to do with you, you, personally. He's deciding what to do with you, whether to leave you for another year, whether to give you another chance, one more chance to grow, one more chance to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance.

Perhaps that's what he's doing, or perhaps his axe has begun to swing, and perhaps it will soon fall down upon you. Friend, if he finds you without fruit, without faith, without repentance, then he will have no choice but to cut you down.

[21 : 29] You see, God must be true to himself. God's justice is immovable. He told you to repent. He gave you the opportunity. You have the opportunity here today, but what did you do?

What did you do? If he cuts you down, then there is no other place for him to send you but into the fire, but into hell itself. What does he say to the unbelievers at their death when they stand in the judgment?

He says to them, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. What a solemn thing to hear. I wonder if your ears will ever hear it.

What a soul-destroying sentence for you, the furnace of fire, the inescapable home of the damned where there is eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth. Friend, if you lift up your eyes in hell as the rich man did, then you cannot blame me for not telling you.

You cannot blame me for not telling you to flee from the wrath to come, because you will have nobody to blame but yourself. After all you have heard, week after week, year after year, you will have nobody to blame but yourself.

[22 : 45] And you will have plenty of time to do that. You have been told that the axe is laid at your root. But it's evident that the Jewish leaders had to put this away from themselves.

We see this in verse 9. And they say, we have Abraham as our father. That was their testimony to it all. We have Abraham as our father.

Let's be honest, when we hear something like this, we want to put it away from ourselves. We want to safeguard ourselves. You see, from their point of view, from the Pharisees' point of view, they were Jews.

They were God's ancient chosen people. Surely they weren't going to go to hell. The people that God had always preserved. They had a godly heritage. They were descended from the famous Jews.

Those were the men who attended church faithfully. Those were the men who were on the door of the church, who would lead the rabbi into the church. Yet God doesn't need them.

[23 : 47] God doesn't need them and he doesn't want them if they don't repent, if they're not true believers. God can raise up believers even out of the stones in the wilderness, he says. God will judge everyone individually.

He will judge them according to their faith and according to their fruit. That's what John the Baptist told these Pharisees and Sadducees and it's so with you today as well.

God will judge you by yourself standing alone with nobody around you. You may have a godly ancestry. You may have an Abraham as your father and a Ruth as your mother.

You may have had an uncle who was a deacon. You may have had a grandfather perhaps who sat in this very pew as an elder. It's all good and well but the fact is this, it doesn't matter.

It doesn't matter. It's not going to save you because just as God judged them individually, he will judge you and me individually. Now how easy it is to content ourselves with formal religion, to tell ourselves, well, I go to church and I'm better than my neighbor who doesn't go to church, so surely God will save me, surely God will bring me into heaven.

[25 : 01] Friend, don't find your hopes on anyone or anything else. Don't find it on your church going. Don't find it on your life or anything that you think that you might be doing well.

Don't find it on anything, save Jesus only. Him alone, as the old song says, all other ground is sinking sand. Thirdly then and finally, John the Baptist not only preached repentance and judgment, but he preached Christ.

John knew that he himself was a forerunner of whom Isaiah spoke when he said, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

See, John's whole ministry was a preparatory ministry. John knew that he himself was not the main event. He knew that he was simply preparing the way of the Lord and making his paths straight.

It was customary in ancient times, even going back to Isaiah's day, for the roads, for the ways to be repaired when royalty was visiting a town. I'm sure that when the queen was last year, I'm sure 15 or 16 years ago, the council would have told the roads department to fill the portals in a round stornway to prepare for the coming of the queen.

[26 : 20] And so John, through his preaching and through his baptism, he was preparing the people for the superior ministry of the king. He was preparing them for something better.

And he realizes this, that Christ's ministry is indeed superior. He says in verse 11, he is mightier than I. He knows that the one that is to come, that he is the incarnate God, that he is the divine Messiah, that he is very God of very God.

And for that reason, he sees himself as unworthy even to carry Jesus' shoes, the most menial of tasks. And this humility, of course, is characteristic of John, is it not?

John is all about Jesus and the glory of Jesus. The first thing he says when he sees Jesus, we're told in John's account is, behold the Lamb of God, behold him, look at him, don't look at me, look at the Lamb that is coming.

When told of Jesus' success, his ministerial success, what does he say? Is he jealous? No. He says, he must increase, but I must decrease.

[27 : 31] Jesus. And what an example to us he is, of one who gave Christ all the preeminence, of one to whom Christ was all and in all. He was all about the glory and the honor of Jesus Christ.

He himself, John, he was called the best of men, by he who knew all men. And yet he didn't speak about that, he laid all of his own greatness aside.

And the Lord knows that he was a great man in many ways. But ought we not to do the same? Ought we not to be humble as John the Baptist was humble? Ought we not to see ourselves in the light of the greatness and the glory of Christ and so to repent in sackcloth and ashes?

And in doing so, ought we not to confess Christ to be mightier than we are, so much so that we're not even worthy to carry his shoes? Friend, if you can say it today, if you can say it from your heart of hearts, Christ must increase, but I must decrease.

If you can say that to yourself, not to other people, in your own heart of hearts, then there is hope for you. There is hope that perhaps a work of grace has begun in your soul.

[28 : 43] But can you say it? Can you put the kingdom of Christ ahead of the kingdom of self? Not many can. Not many in our day can. But can you?

John goes on to say that though he baptizes with water, that when Jesus comes he will baptize with his spirit and with fire. John, Jesus will give his people the Holy Spirit, a gift so powerful and so enduring that it is incomparable.

So though he will leave his disciples as Jesus must through his death, yet he will be with them still by the Spirit. He will grant them the graces and the comforts of that Spirit.

He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. These two, I believe, are synonymous. They mean the same thing. The Spirit is quite often in the Scripture described as fire. In Revelation he is described as the seven lamps of fire.

Why fire? Well, what does fire do? The fire illuminates, it gives life, and so Christ, the Spirit, will shine a light on the truth.

[29 : 51] He will reveal to us the things of Christ. A fire warms, and so that the Christian will know when he has a Spirit dwelling in him, he will know, as it were, his heart burning within him, burning for the seal, for the glory of God.

Fire consumes, it burns up, and so when the Spirit is in you, it consumes your sins, and your iniquities, and your lustful desires, it consumes them.

Fire makes everything it ceases to be like itself, and so when the Spirit, when it ceases you, it makes you to be holy, like he is holy. Fire lifts everything upwards, the smoke goes up, and so the Spirit, when he is in you, he makes you to be heavenly.

And you know, friends, it is that Spirit that we must seek, that Spirit which changes us, that Spirit which makes us less like ourselves and more like Christ's. Let us seek the Spirit, because you see, the baptism of water, which many of you I'm sure have received, it's a great privilege, but the baptism of the Spirit is more important still, because you see, to be saved, in order to be saved, you must not only have the work of Christ for you, but you must also have the work of the Spirit in you.

You must not only have a title to heaven, by Christ's blood, but you must be prepared for heaven by Christ's Spirit.

[31 : 23] No man ever went to heaven unprepared by the Spirit of God. And so he speaks about the greatness of Christ, and he speaks of the baptism of Christ, and that he will give this Spirit.

But there's another aspect of Jesus' ministry, which John shines a light on. Is it his love, or is it his grace? Is it his sacrifice of himself, or is it his preparation for a people to go to heaven?

No, it is Jesus' role in judgment. And again, we're back to that troubling subject, the subject of judgment. Why should we repent?

Well, John tells us that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. What happens when the kingdom of heaven came, it was inaugurated, it was started, as it were, when Jesus came at his first coming.

But the kingdom of heaven will be consummated or completed when he comes again in his second coming. And you know, friends, although there is much for the Christian to look forward to when he thinks of that day, yet an important part of Jesus' work on that day when he comes again will be the work of judgment.

[32 : 42] moment. And this time the picture isn't of the gardener, but it is of the farmer. The farmer with a winnowing fork. You see, when the harvest time came, the grain was threshed by the oxen who would tread out the corn.

And this would shake the grain from the chaff, the wheat from the chaff, or the chaff was like the husk, the useless part of the grain. But it would leave everything together in one pile.

And then the farmer would come and he would winnow it. And he would do that by getting his fork and throwing it all up into the air. And the wheat, which was heavier, would come down quickly.

But the husks or the chaff would come down a lot more slowly and they would be blown away by the wind. And he would do this over and over again with a fork or a shovel until it had been separated.

The wheat was separated from the chaff. This is what Psalm 1, which we sung, which it speaks of, the chaff that blows away. And the wheat is gathered into a barn for use, but the chaff, again, is only good for burning.

[33 : 56] Jesus says John is like a farmer who has a winnowing fork in his hand. And his work, the work of the farmer in this regard is separation.

we love to speak of the Jesus who is meek and lowly of heart. We love to speak of the Jesus who selflessly dies for sinners on Calvary's cross, and so we ought to.

It's right that we talk about the wonder of Christ's love and his sacrifice in the gospel, but we must give the whole picture. We must give the whole picture because Christ is also the just judge of all the earth who will do right.

He is the one who will put the sheep to the right and the goats to the left. He is the one who will put the just to heaven and the unjust to hell. He is the one before whom we must all stand before his judgment seat.

And friends, he knew this, he knew it when he was on earth. And I'm sure you know that nobody in the Bible speaks about hell as much as Jesus speaks about hell.

[35 : 03] And you know it's the worst thing to preach about. It's no faithful minister enjoys preaching about hell. It's tortuous for me to stand here and to tell you that if you die out of Christ, if you die even this evening out of Christ, if you die tomorrow morning out of Christ, then it's to hell that you're going.

And yet I would be unfaithful if I avoided it. I would be as a wolf in sheep's clothing. I would be as the false prophets in Jeremiah's day who cried, peace, peace when there was no peace.

Because friends, it is the work of the minister, it is the testimony of the Bible, that there is a heaven as well as a hell, that there is an everlasting punishment as well as an everlasting life.

And so I tell you today that there is a hell that you will go to if you die as an unbeliever, if you die out of Christ, Christ will make a separation on judgment day.

To some of them he will say, well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into thy rest. To others he will say, depart from me, I never knew you, you sat in my church and yet I never knew you, you listened to my gospel and yet I never knew you.

[36 : 28] Don't think friend that you will squeeze into heaven unnoticed. Don't think that your sins won't find you out on that day because Jesus will judge fairly but he will also judge exhaustively.

He will judge all according to their own works, not the works of others. Whether these works have been good or whether they've been evil and if he finds you to have lived a life of sin and rebellion to himself, if he finds you to have been rejecting his gospel of for week after week, then what do you think he will do with you?

What do you think he will do? What does he promise to do? Like the chaff, he will cast you into that lake of unquenchable fire. The picture is of course figurative, but it doesn't take away from the horror of it, the horror of that mental fire that will torment you and the physical aspect of it it doesn't bear thinking about.

It is an unquenchable fire, that means that it will never go out, that there is no end to the torment, that there is no end to the pain. You know, if hell was temporary, if you knew that there would be an end to it, then you could perhaps try or at least think that you might be able to face up to it.

But hell, friends, is endless. It is uninterrupted misery. It is a permanent home of desolation and depression. And there are eternal days.

[38 : 03] There are eternal days to regret that day that you sat in church, that you heard the gospel, that you heard the very place that you are now in, you heard the horror of it described, you were told to flee from the wrath of it, you will sit and you will remember that day when you sat in the pew that you are sitting in, and you rejected the message, you put it away from yourself.

Let me conclude. Friends, the call of the minister is to herald the word of God. It is to speak the truth in love. That's not always easy.

It's easier for the minister to speak on lighter, more popular topics. There are many glorious topics in the Bible for the minister to preach on.

But if we want to be faithful to God and faithful to man, then we must preach the whole counsel of God. We cannot avoid the difficult things.

I can't let you walk into hell blind. I can't do that. You wouldn't thank me even if I did do it. If you go to hell, you will go with your eyes open.

[39 : 21] You will go with your eyes open. What I want you to know as we conclude today is that it is no light matter as to whether you repent or whether you don't repent, but that it will have eternal consequences for you.

It will have eternal consequences. If you didn't know that before, friends, and you certainly know it now, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and it will soon be here.

Amen. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray.