

Tie Up Your Shoelaces

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Preacher: Steve Brown

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 24th of February 2002. The preacher is Stephen Brown.

His sermon is entitled Tie Up Your Shoelaces and is based on Mark chapter 8 verses 27 to 38.

Dear Lord, thank you for your word and how it informs us and challenges us, teaches us about you. Help us to understand it tonight. Amen.

Well, commitment is a wonderful thing to have. A commitment is a marvellous quality in a person. Commitment is to be applauded. Just like Alyssa Kaplan of Camplin was applauded a couple of days ago when she won gold medal for Australia.

It was fantastic. We all loved it so much because we saw how much she was committed. She showed tonnes of commitment.

[1 : 07] Commitment to a sport that is hardly recognised in Australia. She's committed herself to supporting herself to the tune of more than \$100,000 throughout her career so far.

Her commitment to the Olympic Games cost her a lot. She had to sell her car to raise money for a coach. She has been concussed at least half a dozen times from jumping and gone to hospital ten times.

She has to train in a dirty pool of water with leeches in it because there's no snow in Australia. She had to leave her family and her friends to go overseas to Europe to compete because there's no snow in Australia.

Commitment to this sport had to be absolute. Her commitment was single-minded. She had to be committed or else fail.

Commitment is a wonderful thing to have. It's a marvellous quality in a person. It's to be applauded. And tonight, I wonder what we're committed to. Are we committed to school?

[2 : 25] Committed to doing hours and hours of homework every night? Committed to pleasing our parents because they fund us and ask us to do well?

Are we committed or are you committed to getting the highest possible TER score that you can manage? Are you committed to family tonight? Committed to getting your kids the best possible education?

Committed to raising your children to be respectable members of society? Committed to seeing your family have whatever they need?

Or are you committed to work tonight? Committed to being a perfectionist in everything you do? Committed to long hours of overtime? Committed to making sure the boss is happy?

You see, commitment is a wonderful thing to have. It's a marvellous quality in a person. It's to be applauded. But before we commit, we need information, don't we?

[3 : 29] Before we commit, we need to know what it is that we're actually committing ourselves to. For example, if someone comes up to me and says, Stephen, can you do me a favour?

My usual response is, tell me what it is first. And then I might. You see, I want information before I commit. I want to know before I commit.

One of the first questions Melissa asked Paul and Michelle Dudley when they come down from Sydney was, who are you going to barrack for? Who are you going to commit to?

You're going to barrack for, or you ought to barrack for Collingwood was the next thing. You ought to commit to the magpies. Fortunately, Paul had already made up his mind.

Paul knew a little bit about the Sydney Swans. Well, he knew some of their players. He knew who Plugger Lockett was. That's about it. He knew that they wore red and white jumpers.

[4 : 38] And he knew that they were pretty hopeless and hadn't won a premiership in 70 years. Paul didn't know anything about Collingwood. He didn't commit to them.

Therefore, he didn't commit to them. He knew something about the Sydney Swans. So he committed to them. You see, commitment can be a wonderful and a marvellous thing, but we need to know what it is that we're committing ourselves to.

When Melissa and I were offered the job here at Holy Trinity Doncaster, we were very excited because Holy Trinity has a reputation, I suppose, for being fairly strong in teaching the Bible.

It's got a reputation for being active. And it's an exciting church to be a part of, I think. It's a growing church. We knew that it was a church that was full of potential.

But at our interview, Melissa and I asked a lot of questions about the youth group. We carefully read the job description. We got other people's opinions outside of Holy Trinity about the youth.

[5 : 46] We investigated in order to know what Holy Trinity youth ministry was like. You see, we needed to know before we committed to you. Commitment may be wonderful and marvellous, but we need to know what it is that we're committing ourselves to.

Jesus' disciples needed to know whom they were following, who they were committing themselves to. In Mark 8, verse 27, it says this, Can you imagine it?

You see, these disciples had followed Jesus around for quite a long time now. They'd seen him do amazing stuff. They'd seen him perform amazing miracles. They'd seen him cure sick people.

People who are incurable. People with leprosy and blinds since birth. They'd seen him do that stuff. They'd seen him calm a huge storm with just a word.

They'd seen him do it. They'd seen him cast out evil spirits. Easily. He had power over them.

[7 : 27] They'd seen him feed thousands and thousands of people with just a couple of fish and loaves of bread. And they'd heard him teach with authority like no one else they'd ever heard in their lives.

They'd seen Jesus do all this. And they'd followed him all that time. But now, it's crunch time. It's crunch time.

Who do people say that I am? John the Baptist, Elijah, a great prophet. You see, all these events and these amazing miracles and teachings had led to this point.

You see, from Mark chapter 1 all the way through to Mark chapter 8, halfway through the book, all the events, the teachings and miracles are pushing to this one question.

Forcing us to answer this one question. Who do you say that I am? Who have you followed so far?

[8 : 38] Who are you committing yourself to? This is the crunch, isn't it? They've seen it all. They've seen Jesus do all this stuff. They've listened to his teaching.

They've left their homes and their jobs. Now it's crunch time. Who do you say that I am? Who are you following? Who are you committing to?

Can you imagine the silence when Jesus asks this question? Can you imagine the awkwardness of the moment?

Can you imagine the disciples sort of scratching their heads, glancing at one another? Can you imagine them putting their heads down and shuffling their feet and hoping that the earth will swallow them up? Who do you say that I am?

Can you imagine their relief when good old Peter steps up and he says, you are the Messiah.

[9 : 40] In other words, you are the Christ. That is, you're the one God has sent to save his people. You're the one God has sent to heal his people.

You're the one God has sent to bring in his new kingdom forever and ever. You're the one God has sent to judge the nations. You're the one God has sent to rule as king over all people.

You are the Messiah. You are the Christ. It seems that Peter and his disciples have survived the crunch question, doesn't it? It seems that they've survived that initial hard spot within Jesus' ministry and then following him.

They seem to know who they're committed to. Just like I seem to know what I was committed to when I first started dating Melissa.

I was committed to her and thankfully she was committed to me and committed to making it work. I even told her pretty early on that I'm committed to marrying you.

[10 : 52] I was very pleased to hear that she was committed to marrying me. You see, the commitment was there. That wasn't the problem. But we had to sort out our expectations.

Our expectations was the problem. What exactly was she committed to? What was I committed to? So we started talking about our expectations before we get married and by the way, that's a good idea if you're in a relationship or you ever get married, talk about it first.

We talked about our expectations about family, about raising children, money, career and about the housework.

I see I expected Melissa to do all the dishes. I expected her to tidy the bedroom, to cook me dinner every night. I expected Melissa would do most of the domestic chores.

But I want to tell you, my expectations changed pretty quickly when Melissa told me that she wasn't my mother.

[12 : 05] Sorry, Mum. You see, she expected me to grow up and stop being a mummy's boy. And that was a good thing, I think.

I was committed to Melissa. But my expectations of commitment were different to hers. My expectations had to change in order for our relationship to last.

The disciples had committed themselves to the Messiah. We've just heard them say it. But their expectations of that commitment were a bit different to his.

Therefore, he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.

He said this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, Get behind me, Satan.

[13 : 14] Peter and the disciples expect the Messiah to be glorious.

They're committed to a glorious Messiah. They've committed themselves to the one God has sent to save his people. The one who will come and save Israel from Roman dominance.

They've committed themselves to the one God has sent to heal his people, to heal Israel, but no one else. They've committed themselves to the one God has sent to bring in his kingdom, to make Israel the greatest kingdom on the earth.

They've committed themselves to the one God has sent to judge the nations, the one who will punish the nations for rejecting God and rejecting Israel. They've committed themselves to the one God has sent to rule the nations, to the one who will be king over all the people.

They're going to be a part of this glorious Messiah's takeover and they're going to get a part of this glory themselves. No wonder Peter pulls Jesus aside and has a go at him.

[14 : 41] When Jesus starts to change the expectations, then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the scribes and be killed.

Doesn't sound glorious, does it? And after three days rise again, he said this quite openly. Can you imagine what Peter said?

What are you on, Jesus? What are you on about? What are you talking about? You're the Messiah. Get with the program. Where's your commitment, Jesus?

Where's your commitment, Jesus? But Jesus' commitment, Jesus' expectations are a bit different to his and his disciples.

You see, this Messiah is not committed to glory and to power and to kingship and authority over people. This Messiah is committed to suffering and rejection.

[15 : 53] He's committed to being killed and he's committed to rising from the dead. You see, what Jesus, the Messiah, is committed to is the gospel. He's committed to the gospel.

That is, that he's committed to saving his people through his death on the cross. He's committed to dying for the sins of the world, taking the sins of you and me away and putting them on himself.

He's committed to being rejected so that you and I will be accepted by God. He's committed to rising again so that you and I will rise one day to see him.

He's committed to conquering death so that we don't have to be afraid of it anymore. It has no power over us. That's what the Messiah is committed to.

And nothing, nothing is going to get in his way. Get behind me, Satan. Get out of my way, Satan. Get out of my way, anything that will come between me and my commitment to save this world.

[17 : 08] Jesus is committed. He's committed to the gospel. So committed, he's willing for it to cost him. Cost him suffering, rejection and death.

Tonight, what are you committed to? Are you committed to the Messiah? Are you committed to his gospel? He called the crowd, verse 34, and his disciples and said to them, if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

For those who want to save their life will lose it. And those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel will save it.

For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them, the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

You see, commitment is a wonderful thing to have. It's a marvellous quality in a person. It's to be applauded. Not if commitment is self-centred.

[18 : 39] Not if, or not, it's not a wonderful thing when it's all about ourselves. It's not a marvellous quality when it's about me.

commitment commitment is not about getting the applause and the glory and the pats on the back. Tonight, the hard question is, are you committed to the Messiah, to Jesus, or are you committed to yourself?

Committed to getting a great education for yourself? Committed to a great career for yourself?

Committed to a relationship for yourself? Committed to life and all that it has to offer for yourself? Because I want to tell you, I was.

I used to be committed to myself. Committing, committed to getting everything my own way. Committed to my sport as a teenager.

[19 : 58] I was committed, so far committed to it, because I wanted to be number one. I wanted to be the best. And it was all about me and my ego.

I was committed to running. Because of what I could get out of it for myself. I was committed to myself, not Jesus, the Messiah, and not the Gospel.

But some will say here tonight, oh, Steve, there's nothing wrong with being committed to that. There's nothing wrong with being committed to, I don't know, be to television, school, definitely not school.

Nothing wrong with being committed to your guitar or your skateboard. Nothing wrong with being committed to family or career, running, aerial ski jumping.

There's nothing wrong with being committed to that, Steve, surely. I agree. Until that commitment becomes greater than our commitment to the Messiah, our commitment to Jesus, our commitment to his Gospel.

[21 : 13] Because if you want to be committed, if you want to follow this Messiah, you need to be committed to rejection. You need to be committed to suffering.

You need to be committed to self-denial and dying to self-centeredness. because that's what he's committed to. Committed to denying himself, taking up his cross and dying for you and me.

If we claim to be his followers, if we claim to be committed to Jesus, then there's a pretty simple test for us. And the test is actually in the Scripture.

If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will save it.

For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Do you pass the test?

[22 : 23] Do you pass this test? Are you committed to the Messiah or are you committed to yourself? Are you committed to suffering for him, being rejected for his Gospel or are you committed to feeling safe and secure, comfortable in life?

Are you committed to telling others about him or just playing it safe? Are you committed to learning more about him, committed to Bible study, maybe even committed to coming to a Bible study and having fellowship with people?

Are you committed to that or are you more committed to watching the box? Are you committed to denying yourself, putting others first or are you just committed to numero uno?

Are you committed to taking up your cross daily or are you committed to just coming to church every now and again? Alyssa Campler showed commitment.

She committed herself to the Olympics. She committed her whole life to the Games. She gave up heaps to get there. She sacrificed everything to make it. It cost her pain, tears, heartache, broken bones.

[23 : 46] but it was worth it. She won an Olympic gold medal. That's her reward. Good on her.

Are we committed to the Messiah because it will cost us? It will cost us a lot. Suffering, rejection, taking up our cross, self-denial.

But I want to tell you tonight, it's worth it because the reward is great. It's eternal life with the Messiah in his presence forever.

And that's the best reward ever. We can't even imagine how great it is. One day soon, the Messiah will come in glory and power will come to judge all the nations.

He won't be suffering anymore. He won't be a rejected Messiah anymore. He'll come to exercise his kingship over all people and nations.

[25 : 00] And on that day, everyone's commitment will be revealed for all to see. Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Don't be ashamed of the Messiah. Don't be ashamed of his gospel or else he'll be ashamed of you. Tonight, will you suffer with this Messiah?

Will you be rejected for his gospel? Will you say, you are the Messiah and I commit myself to you?

Amen.