

Following Jesus As Lord

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[0 : 00] Well, here we are. The last Sunday of 2020, and what a year this has been. This year has been disruptive in a lot of different ways, and I think one of the most important ways it's been disruptive is that it has disrupted church life, as we have been accustomed to.

Prior to 2020, the only times that we got disrupted was when we had the occasional tropical storm or hurricane, and we probably could not meet for a Sunday, but we were back to our normal routine of meeting together, of spending times of sweet fellowship together, hearing God's Word preach together, praying together, being able to shake hands and hug necks, and this year changed all that.

Literally, the hands we have not shaken and necks we have not hugged in about nine months. And truth be told, a lot of our spiritual life prior to this year has been together.

And whatever spiritual life we have had in this year, largely, apart from the times we've been able to connect online, much of it has really been private.

And I think that one of the blessings in disguise of 2020, from a spiritual point of view, is that we all had an opportunity, I think, in some ways, to really reflect on our spiritual lives, reflect on whether we had more of an institutional faith than a personal faith, and just to evaluate where we are with the Lord.

[2 : 24] And so I believe that as we are considering this year and as we evaluate this year, I think we should not overlook that one blessing in disguise that this has been a time where we could have seen our need to draw nearer to the Lord and to build and strengthen our personal relationships with Him.

And as we are poised to enter into a new year, I thought, this is the sermon that the Lord has laid on my heart for us as a church. It is a sermon that's going to help us to continue to do that spiritual evaluation.

And for that, I would ask you to turn to the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 6. And we're going to consider verses 46 to 49.

The Gospel of Luke, Chapter 6, verses 46 to 49. Please follow along as I read.

Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not, and not do what I tell you.

[3 : 49] Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like.

He is like a man building a house who dug deep and laid the foundation in the rock. And when a flood arose and the stream broke against that house, I could not shake it because it had been well built.

For the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation.

and the stream broke against it. Immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.

Would you pray with me? Father, we thank you that the comfort that we can draw from this difficult and at times uncertain year that we have just about come through has been the reminder that you're sovereign over it all.

[5 : 09] Indeed, Lord, we know that nothing comes to pass except you ordain it. Lord, that has been our comfort.

May that continue to be our comfort. And I pray this morning that you would help us to see how you are at work in the life of this church and in our lives individually.

I pray that you would speak to our hearts this morning in this final sermon on a Sunday morning for 2020. Lord, in and of myself I have nothing to say but only that which you will say through me and I ask that you would do that.

Would you give us all ears to hear and would you keep me from error and from access and may I be faithful to care for these the whom Christ has died and these whom I love.

Speak to us now, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. The context of this passage that we have just read is the largest sermon that Jesus preached.

[6 : 28] It's often referred to as the Sermon on the Plain to distinguish it from the Sermon on the Mount which we find in Matthew's Gospel. Gospel. And when we consider the context of it what we see is in the earlier verses for example in verses 12 and 13 when we go back in chapter 6 that is we see that Jesus had been praying all night and he then chose his disciples.

He chose 12 to be apostles from the group of disciples who were following him. And then we are able to see in verse 17 that Jesus came down from the mountain and he stood on a level plain and with him were three groups of people.

There were the twelve apostles, there was the great crowd of disciples and then there was a multitude of people who were assembled. people. And we see in verse 20 that Jesus began to teach them many things and his teaching is generally referred to as a sermon.

And the three verses that we read just a moment ago are actually the conclusion to that sermon. Jesus had preached and now he concluded the sermon.

We just read the conclusion of the sermon. And as we're saying, Jesus began his conclusion with a very challenging question. He asked the question, why do you call me Lord, Lord and not do what I tell you?

[8 : 20] Those who were gathered around Jesus that day needed to humbly hear and respond to that question. Jesus didn't ask that question in a vacuum. Jesus asked that question because it was relevant.

And brothers and sisters, it's relevant to us today. Because the same reality that Jesus faced and spoke to is still a reality today that there are those who say Lord, Lord and do not do what he says. Jesus directed that question to a specific group of people. And truth be told, any of us this morning who would just dismiss the words of Jesus out of hand for not being humble, all of us, need to be asking ourselves, is the question of Jesus directed to me?

Am I one of those who is hearing Jesus but not obeying what he's saying?

And so I pray that all of us out of humility this morning would ponder this question that the Lord Jesus has posed. And here's how I would like to summarize what I believe that Jesus is seeking to teach us in these concluding verses from this sermon on the plain.

[9 : 50] I believe he's saying to us the true disciples of Jesus are those who come to him, listen to him, and obey him.

Those are the true disciples of Jesus. Those who come to him, those who listen to him, and those who obey him.

And remember there were three groups of people in front of Jesus. There were the apostles who he prayed that night, and he selected them.

And then there was the larger group of disciples from whom he chose them, and then there was the multitude. And I think it's easy to think, well, you know, maybe the twelve, they would have been straight.

They wouldn't have been the ones to whom he was speaking. But let's not forget that Judas was one of them. Judas was one of the apostles whom the Lord chose that night after he had prayed all night.

[10 : 52] And so brothers and sisters, no matter where we stand this morning, let us hear the words of Jesus, and let us respond to them. Jesus addresses three activities in this parable, and this morning I want us to take a closer look at what he says, so that we can all better assess whether we are true disciples of Jesus, especially at this time when church life has been disrupted, and we are being afforded an opportunity to evaluate our personal relationship with the Lord.

And so from these words of Jesus, I want to consider three particular activities, beginning with the first one. true Christian discipleship begins with coming to Jesus.

Look at what he says in verse 47, everyone who comes to me, everyone who comes to me. That's the first step of discipleship. It's not the only step, but it's the first step.

And here we're thinking about coming to Jesus in a visible sense, in an outward sense, sense, in a broad sense, in an attractional sense.

Jesus was a magnetic figure. In his earthly ministry, all kinds of people were attracted to Jesus for all kinds of different reasons.

[12:26] Luke tells us that. He tells us in verse 17 that there was a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon and they came to Jesus to be healed of their diseases and many who had unclean spirits so that they may be cured.

And Luke further tells us that all the crowds sought to touch Jesus because power came out of him when he was touched and he healed them all. But it was not only these people who came to Jesus for these obvious needs that they had.

There were other people in Jewish society who came to Jesus, who were interested in Jesus, who were intrigued by Jesus. One of them was Herod. Herod the Tetrarch.

We read about him in Luke chapter 9. And here's what Luke records in verses 7 through 9 of chapter 9. Now Herod the Tetrarch heard about all that was happening and he was perplexed because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen.

Herod said, John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things? And he sought to see him. Herod sought to see Jesus.

[13:56] And Herod eventually got us the opportunity to see Jesus. We read about it in Luke chapter 23. And Luke gives us an account of that meeting that Herod had with Jesus.

It's in verses, well he tells us in verses 1 through 5 how he came to be before Herod, Pilate had sent him. And here is what Luke records of that encounter in verses 8 to 11.

When Herod saw Jesus he was very glad for he had long desired to see him because he had heard about him and was hoping to see some sign done by him.

So he questioned him at some length but he made no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by vehemently accusing him and Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him.

Then arraying him in splendid clothing he sent him back to Pilate. Now though Jesus was brought to Herod Herod got his wish he had long desired to see Jesus and so in a sense we can say that Herod came to Jesus.

[15:19] He came face to face with Jesus. He got his encounter with Jesus that he wanted. But when Jesus didn't respond the way Herod wanted him to respond then Herod rejected Jesus.

And you know what it'll be staggering for us to know if we could know the number of people who have come to Jesus. The number of people who have considered Jesus, the number of people who have maybe in the moment of crisis or some other life situation have picked up a Bible and began to read it.

They come to Jesus for all kinds of reasons and all kinds of circumstances and different seasons. They come to Jesus.

Jesus. And in a sense, as we're gathered here this morning, we've come to Jesus. Because this is all about Jesus.

And we're hearing his word. And it's not the first time that we've done that. Every time we gather, this is what we do. We are coming to Jesus. We are hearing his word. Whenever we open the Bible, we are coming to Jesus.

[16:40] We are hearing his word. And it doesn't matter what the circumstances, it doesn't matter what brings us to him, we still, in that sense, we come to him.

It's an outward, visible coming. And as wonderful as this is, that we have gathered this morning, as wonderful as it is to read our Bibles, that's not enough.

That's not enough. Coming to Jesus is the first activity, but it's not the only activity, and Jesus addresses more in this Bible. The second activity he addresses is listening.

And that's my second point, listening to Jesus. Again, look at what he says in verse 47. Everyone who comes to me and hears my word. everyone who comes to me and hears my word.

And Jesus is not just talking about what's written in the red, if you have one of those, red letter Bibles. He's talking about the whole of Scripture, because all of it is his word.

[17:58] And from the context that we see in this sermon, we can tell that these were people who would come to Jesus time and time again. They had heard his preaching. They'd been following him from the outset of his ministry.

And they had heard sermon after sermon, and they just heard this last one that he preached. And they were listening.

But the listening that Jesus is getting at is not just mere listening because we have ears that work and we can pick up sound. The listening that Jesus is referring to is a listening that is intent on obedience.

It's a listening that postures to obey. And therefore, this really is the most critical part of what we need to be considering this morning.

Jesus was not interested in crowds. As a matter of fact, if you follow the ministry of Jesus, every time just about there were large crowds, he would say difficult things as he is doing right now.

[19 : 20] Many of us would have been so happy to have the large crowds that we would hardly want to say anything hard to cause them to disappear. But Jesus did that often. Jesus was not just interested in crowds.

He was interested in disciples. He was interested in those who would come to him, those who would truly listen to him, and those who would obey him. And therefore, this aspect is really right in the middle and it's the most important one because if we don't listen to Jesus in the true sense of listening, we have no hope of beginning to obey.

obey. Because it is how we listen that will determine whether or not we obey. Clearly, Jesus is not talking about just disengaged, distracted listening because we all know that we could be present physically and somewhere else in our minds.

We could be thinking about the next thing we're going to do. We could be on the phone talking to someone on our computer surfing with music in the background of the television.

We can do all kinds of distracting things. That's not the kind of listening that Jesus is referring to. Disengaged, distracted listening will never position us to hear in order to obey.

[20 : 49] We just wouldn't. The kind of listening that Jesus is calling us to is active listening. It's soul-searching listening. It's not the kind of passive listening where we can say, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, I'm not connect to see, you know what?

What's in my lips is not connecting with my feet. I'm not living what I am actually saying. And so active listening is the goal of applying and obeying the word of God.

And so here we are this morning and only the Lord knows the degree to which we are listening, posturing our hearts to really obey, whether we are just doing so passively and we're probably thinking about the next thing we'll do, waiting for the sermon to be over, or even hoping that it is sewn over.

But if we're listening actively, perhaps we're taking notes, perhaps we're being convicted about how the Lord might be speaking to us, and that's a good thing.

Conviction is never a bad thing. Conviction is a good thing. Conviction is the kindness of the Lord to us. when the Lord doesn't correct us, Scripture says if you're not corrected, you're not being treated as a son.

[22 : 23] And so conviction is a very kind act of God in our heart. And so how are you listening this morning?

Because how we're listening is critical to the very next thing that Jesus addresses and he addresses the third and final activity of discipleship and that is obeying Jesus.

And again, look at verse 47. Everyone who comes to me and hears my word and does them. I will show you what he is like.

And interestingly, he doesn't say I'm going to tell you, although he does tell us, but he gives us a picture. He gives us a picture of what it looks like to come to him, truly come to him, listen to him, truly listen to him, and obey him, truly obey him.

And from these verses, these two particular verses, verses 48 and 49, Jesus helps us to see what it means to truly obey him.

[23 : 39] him. Now, we know that Jesus is speaking figuratively, and when he's talking about building houses, he's actually talking about us living our lives. He's talking about us building the house of our lives.

And he's saying that the house that we build, the lives that we live, have some connection to how we come to him, how we listen to him, and how we obey him, or not obey him.

And what we see right away is obedience to Jesus involves time, it involves effort, and it involves personal cost and investment. Just like building a house. Living for Jesus will cost us.

Living for Jesus has a price associated with it. And obedience to Jesus demonstrates wisdom, it demonstrates an awareness, that the storms of life come, and only those whose lives are soundly built on his words will be able to endure the storms of life.

The person who hears the words of Jesus and does not obey the words of Jesus is building on a foundationless life, and in some ways, you know what they're really saying? I'm smarter than Jesus. [25 : 02] I think we all know a little bit about building a house, especially in our context, where one of the first things you have to do before you can build that house is you need to take some time and cut a foundation and spend money on that.

It's amazing how much money goes in the foundations. Some will think, well, I'm wiser, I don't need to spend all that money on the foundation, and they just go, and they just build right on the surface, cut the cost of that investment.

And so I want you to think for a moment, imagine that these two men who Jesus describes in this parable were building side by side two different lots, but lots adjoining one another.

And you're passing through and you just observe the houses go up. From a distance, you probably won't notice any difference. They may look pretty much the same, and they may stay that way for quite some time until what Jesus talks about.

And the storm that Jesus is talking about here comes to both houses. The winds blowing, the storm, the sea raging, comes to both houses, and it's only the one that is built on the rock, that is cut deep into the rock that's going to build.

[26 : 27] And Jesus likens that building on the rock to obeying his word. That's the foundation that we cut for our lives, where we build our lives on the word of God, on the unchanging word of God.

And when the storms of life come, and notice there's no exemption. Jesus doesn't say, and if you build your house on my words, the storm will come, it'll go around your house.

No, it comes against the house. it batters the house, just like the one of the person who is building in a disobedient way. It comes to both.

And the difference though is the house that is built on the rock of the words of Jesus, the house that is obedient, the life that is obedient, will stand.

it wouldn't be like we have the classic story of Job in scripture, where when the storms of life came against Job, and we would say, well, Job, his house blew down, but no, it didn't, because in the midst of it all, Job was still able to say, so we slay me, yet I'm going to trust him.

[27 : 48] His wife says, curse God and die, but Job stood, his life stood, he lost things. And see, this is what we must understand. The Lord doesn't promise us that we will not have adversity in this life, but he does promise us that if we build our lives on him, in the midst of it all, we will be able to stand, and we will stand, and we will be true, because our lives are built on Christ, the solid rock.

Brothers and sisters, this reveals to us how precious the word of God is, how precious the word of God is, and how much we need to build our lives on the word of God.

And how, when we think of this year, and this great disruptive pandemic that we have seen, we are reminded of the need to ensure that our lives are built on the Lord Jesus Christ.

friends, we don't just come to Jesus for the cosmetic things that he can do for us. We come to Jesus because heaven and earth will pass away, but his word will never pass away, and we are to hold on to those words.

Remember Peter when all the disciples had left, and Jesus said to them, he said, are you all going to leave to what did Peter say?

[29 : 20] He says, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words to eternal life. And so brothers and sisters, may we take this as a wonderful privilege that we can hear the words of Jesus and we can hear the words of Jesus and we can build and stake our lives on the words of Jesus.

I think this morning when we consider these words from Jesus, this question in particular, I think we need to remember that Jesus is not addressing the person who claims to be an atheist.

That person has not come to Jesus, not coming to Jesus. Jesus is addressing, again, those of us who, for whatever reason, whatever attractional reason has brought us to him, whatever circumstances caused us to be exposed to his words, to hear his words, Jesus is addressing us.

And friend, this morning, if you in the depths of your soul know that the Lord in a sense has put his finger on your chest, as it were, and is saying to you, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and you don't do what I say?

Why are you doing that? I think this merits a very honest response. I remember a few months ago, watching the news, and there was this very, very long, confusing, and congested line of people at NIB trying to get assistance, and it was not organized, and people were not being served, and they were interviewing people, they were interviewing this one lady, and they interviewed her, and every other word was a curse word, and they were bleeping it up, and you couldn't just make, she was cursing so much, you really couldn't make sense of what she was saying, and then, she's just complaining about how hard it was, and the reporter said to her, how do you make it?

[31 : 48] How do you make it? Only the Lord, only God, and I'm thinking, where does this woman live?

How do you, see, this is what James says, James says, brothers, how can bitter and sweet come from the same fountain? And see, friends, this is, if there is one gripping concern that I have, is that those who I would preach to Sunday after Sunday would be deceived to think that that can be the case, that we can say, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, and not do what he says, especially when we hear the warnings of Jesus when he says, not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, and he tells about the painful story of some who will be saying, Lord, Lord, on that day, and he says, I never knew you.

And so, brothers and sisters and friends, we need to hear these words of Jesus, and we need to respond to them, we need to hear this question, Jesus, why do you do that? Why do you say, Lord, Lord, are you not doing what I say?

Jesus is not addressing perfection, Jesus is not, if he were, if he were, we're all guilty, we're all hopeless. None of us obeys perfectly, none of us, on our best day.

But what he's getting at is he's asking this question, whether our lives are marked in an ongoing way, more by obedience than disobedience, obedience, that we are truly seeking to hear his word and obey his word, and if someone were to evaluate our lives, they'd say, yes, that's what marks that person's life, as opposed to quite the opposite, where our lives are marked by disobedience.

[34 : 08] And so this morning, if your life is marked by general obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, yes, you fail at times, but your life is marked by Jesus' words, and your heart is desirous of pleasing him, and when you fail, you are convicted, and you have sorrow, thank God that God is at work in your heart.

Thank God that you have come to Jesus, you've heard Jesus, and you're seeking to obey Jesus. Jesus. I can't close this sermon without mentioning two things, one of two things.

One, although this parable is certainly about this life and how we live this life, one of two roads, listening to Jesus and obeying Jesus or disregarding Jesus and doing our own thing, and how the storms of life will come and how we will be affected depending on what we're doing, this parable also points to a future storm, the greatest storm, the storm of the judgment of God, the wrath of God that will be poured out one day on the ungodly, and those who do not repent will experience the fierceness of his judgment and of his wrath.

And so this is to be a sober warning to us from the Lord Jesus. that it's not enough to say, Lord, Lord, if we're not doing what he's saying.

And the second thing I want to say to us this morning is, a sermon like this, we could make the mistake of walking out of here and looking more at ourselves than we look at the Lord Jesus.

[36 : 03] A sermon like this, we could be so focused on what we must do and what we need to do, that we're looking at ourselves more than we are looking at the Lord Jesus.

You know, I think this question of Jesus, when he says, why do you do that? Why are you with your mouth full of me? Are you not doing what I'm saying?

I think for the person who really does business with the Lord in hearing that question and trying to deal with it, I think if they do, they'll come up and say, well, you know, I'm trying.

And I think what he would say to them is you cannot do it on your own. Brothers and sisters, we need grace. We need the grace of God to do what Jesus calls us to do.

We need the grace of God to transform our hearts so that we truly come to Jesus for Jesus. See, that's where it starts. And that's the difference between the two groups of people.

[37 : 20] If we just come to Jesus in a cosmetic way, in an outward way, and not in an authentic way, and in the authentic way, he has to be at work in our hearts in some real way to transform it, to give us a desire to want to obey him, and then to enable us to obey him.

Because if Jesus folded his arms and just told all of us to do this, we would all fall flat on our faces. And so I'm saying to us this morning, when we hear this message, I've heard it said this way before, for every one look at ourselves, we need to take 10,000 looks at Jesus.

Because he is the one who will give us the grace. He is the one who will enable us to truly come to him, truly listen to him, and truly obey him.

And he is the one who will convict us when we fail. He is the one who will help us, enable us to repent.

And so brothers and sisters, let us leave today remembering that. We need grace. We need God's grace to be able to do what he says.

[38 : 34] And if you're here today and you would be honest with yourself and say, I'm saying Lord, Lord, or listening by live stream, and I'm not doing what the Lord is saying, I say look to Jesus.

Look to Jesus for grace. Only he can transform the human heart. Only he can cause us to truly come to him for him, and not for what he can give us.

And then to cause us to listen as we should and then to obey as we are. And may God work in all of our hearts in this way for the glory of his great name.

Let's pray. Oh Lord, we bow our hearts to you this morning. Would you help us to faithfully engage the question, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say.

But for those of us whose lives are marked by obedience to you and your word, may we rejoice in the grace of God that has come to us through Jesus Christ.

[39 : 50] And for those who find themselves still saying Lord, Lord, but not doing what you say, oh God, have mercy on them. Open their eyes to see their need for Christ, the only one who's able to transform their hearts, cause them to come and to hear and to obey in authentic way.

Would you work in our midst this morning we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.