

Jesus Speaks About Discipleship

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[0 : 00] Well, this morning before the sermon, I have the distinct pleasure to introduce you to one of the newest citizens of the New York City.

And many of you probably didn't know that Rojay was not a Bahamian. And I thought that I would have Rojay to come and just share with you briefly this morning.

So Rojay, would you come and just share with us for a few minutes? Good morning, everyone. My last time here was, I think, last year, March, right before the COVID hit.

And I've been dealing with a lot, especially since I left high school in terms of just navigating the country as a non-Bahamian, not being allowed to work, not being allowed to obtain any scholarships regardless of my PTCSEs or my GPA.

It's been tough. And a few times I was pretty upset with God about it, if I'm being completely honest. Like, why would you allow me to go through this?

[1 : 26] Because I've been here since I was three, right? So I've been here for a total of 24 years. I felt like a Bahamian. I felt like a citizen of the country. I don't know anything about Jamaica.

I was born there. Don't know nothing about it. You asked me to say national anthem, and I got to tell you, my English is no good. Like, I don't know what you're talking about. But I wasn't treated that way here.

I went through a lot of prejudice, discrimination, and a lot of depression. Seeing my friends, like, just live their lives and being able to move out and start a family and, you know, get a job.

Just live a normal adult life, and that wasn't in the works for me. Or so I thought. But I started coming to Kingdom Life, like, late 2019, like, around December.

And that was when I started to come back to Christianity, because since 2015, I was no longer a Christian. I felt like that wasn't the right way for me.

[2 : 31] And everything went horribly wrong. Like, I was away in school. I lost my scholarship. I had to come home. And come back. And I knew I wasn't going to be able to work.

So, like, I was depressed. I had suicidal thoughts. I actually tried to commit suicide. It didn't work. 2019, I came to Kingdom Life. And I started to realize that I couldn't do this without God.

No matter how I felt about his plans for me or the timing of his plans for me, it wasn't going to work without him. Regardless of how I felt. I would have had to have played in accordance to his plan.

And just hope that it worked out in a timely manner. So, along this journey, I learned that my time is irrelevant. Like, and I said that in my sworn-in speech when I got my citizenship this week, Thursday.

Last week, Thursday. Sorry. My time is irrelevant. Like, everything works on God's time, regardless of how you feel about it. And every single thing he puts you through, and the time it takes for you to get to where he wants you to be, is for a lesson.

[3 : 40] It's for a reason. You weren't ready for whatever it is that you thought you wanted. And I felt like if I had gotten my citizenship when I was younger, like in my 20s, I probably would have had a baby by a woman that I no longer speak with or something more.

Just being wild. And like, I know I would have been doing some stupidity. I wasn't ready. I didn't know where I wanted to go in life. I didn't have a good understanding of God. I had a very Santa Claus understanding of God.

I pray, and you give. And if you don't give, I'm upset. And that's not how he works. So, I learned a lot along the journey. It was painful. But it was satisfying to see how he worked.

Like, every single thing that happened, especially this year, I had to learn a lot this year. I had to understand a lot that I can't half serve God.

I can't speak about him, but then not live like it. You don't get, you don't, you just, it just doesn't work out that way. You can't, you can't hide from God. I wasn't really living right at all.

[4 : 48] I know I'm never going to be perfect, but I wasn't living right. I wasn't consistent with my relationship with God. I wasn't coming to church. I wasn't praying as frequently.

I wasn't reading the Bible as frequently. I wasn't, like, connecting with the people of the church like I was supposed to. I don't think any of you saw me until, since, like, last year. So, it just showed me a lot.

It showed me a lot that, as a man, especially as a man that wants to be a man of God, consistency and faith are very, very important.

You can't hope and not put in the work. Like it says, faith, faith without works is dead. I had a scripture, a specific scripture I wanted to read from Proverbs, but I forgot it.

Being an airhead. It was something about a man without self-discipline. It's like a city who's been robbed and its walls, like, torn down. Meaning that, like, pretty much whatever temptation comes your way, because you have no self-discipline, you're going to fall victim to.

[5 : 52] I mean, you fall victim to those temptations on a regular basis. You become that same temptation that you always fall victim to. You become that person. And I think the reason God placed me on this journey, this 10-year journey, because I was supposed to have my citizenship 10 years ago.

This 10-year journey of not being able to operate at all was because he knew I wasn't ready. I wasn't prepared to live in this country like a man of God.

And I felt like, he felt like now I was ready. So, he allowed me to obtain my citizenship. And now I can live like a citizen of the country, do what I need to do.

All my accolades from high school now matter, finally. And, yeah, my mom was elated about it. I was elated about it because she had to pay school fee for me.

She had to pay UB school fee for me. And then \$2,000 to stay in the country. So, it was a lot on her. Because I didn't know my father. So, it was just her doing every single thing.

[6 : 59] And it was a lot. It was depressing for me not being able to assist her. Especially as she gets older in age. And I get older in age. Like, I know that now because my knees don't feel good.

You know? I started to ask my mother to get me to remote. I don't really feel very youthful. But I'm just happy that God decided to guide me.

And continue to guide me. So that I didn't completely give up. And turn my back on the church. And turn my back on God. And now we're here. Thank you.

Roger, thank you very much for sharing with us. Well, I asked Roger to share with us for three reasons. One, it's a big deal. Getting your citizenship is a big deal.

And especially after a 10-year wait. It's a big deal. And the other reason I wanted him to share is I thought it would be good for us to hear firsthand from someone who really is a representative of tens of thousands of young people in this country.

[8 : 19] And I think it's a big deal.

And I think it's certainly a conversation that we as a country need to have in terms of what are we going to do with this increasing problem that is in our midst.

And I really do think that we all need to help these young people who are here for no fault of their own. It's their circumstance.

It's their circumstance. And we need to embrace them. We need to enable them to be a part of our society. It makes no sense to have them here as Roger was doing nothing when they can be contributing to the country.

So that was the second reason I wanted us to hear from Roger. Just so that we can put a face to that dilemma that so many young people face.

[9 : 38] And the third reason I wanted to share is that Roger's experience is a vivid illustration of this morning's sermon.

And if you've not yet done so, I'm going to ask you to turn in your Bible to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 14.

And we will be reading verses 25 to 33. And this sermon is the conclusion of a five-part sermon series that we've been in.

And the series has been titled Jesus Speaks. And first we began with Jesus Speaks About Greed. Jesus Speaks About Worry.

And then we went on to Jesus Speaks About Sin. Last week we heard Jesus Speaks About Grace. And this morning we conclude with Jesus Speaks About Discipleship.

[10:42] Please follow along as I read. I'm reading from the English Standard Version. Luke chapter 14, beginning in verse 25.

Now great crowds accompanied him. And he turned to them and said, Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish.

Or what king going out to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000?

[12:09] And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

So therefore, any of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Let's pray. Father, we're grateful that we are able to gather in this place this morning. We're grateful, Lord, that we are able to now open your word and to have you to speak to us through your word.

Lord, would you give us a sense, O Lord, and an awareness that we are not here by accident or chance, but that you have brought us to this place.

And so would you speak to our hearts right now, knowing where each of us is. I ask, Lord, that you would grant me grace and your spirit to faithfully proclaim your word to your people.

[13:25] And Lord, would you use all that is said and done this morning for the glory of your great name. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, this passage that we have come to this morning is one of the more neglected passages in the New Testament.

And the reason it's neglected is because it is about discipleship. Sadly, although discipleship is the work of the Great Commission that the church has been called to, it is largely ignored in so many quarters of the church.

It's reduced to getting converts. It's reduced to getting people to pray a prayer or sign a card and promising them that in so doing, their lives are going to be blessed and they will be prosperous with no limit.

And for this reason, many who call themselves Christians don't know what discipleship is and they don't know that it is front and center of the Christian life.

And so I think it is fitting as we conclude this series, Jesus Speaks, that we hear him speak to us about discipleship. Luke begins this account by telling us that there were great crowds of people accompanying Jesus.

[15:02] And this is the dream of so many pastors and religious leaders that they would have great crowds accompanying them. But unlike a lot of pastors and religious leaders, Jesus is never impressed by crowds.

When we study the life of Jesus, we would see him doing something repeatedly when he has large crowds. He would repeatedly say things to them that are difficult to hear.

And this is one of those occasions. Jesus turns to them and he challenges them with difficult words. And what he says to them is merely accompanying me doesn't make you one of my disciples.

And Jesus goes on to lay down two prerequisites right up front, two requirements right up front that must be met by all who will be his disciples.

And here's how I would summarize what Jesus says to those who were associating with him then and what he is saying to all of us who associate with him now.

[16:17] Becoming a disciple of Christ requires a willingness to lose everything because it might cost everything, including our very life.

That's what Jesus soberly and clearly communicates to those who would be his disciples.

That in order to be his disciple, there must be a willingness to lose everything because it might very well cost everything, including our very life.

And so for the remainder of our time this morning, I want us to consider these two requirements, these two things that Jesus lays down right up front to those who were accompanying him as terms of discipleship.

And first, he calls those who would follow him as disciples to know the cost. Look again at what he says in verse 26.

[17 : 28] If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Why does Jesus say this? He clearly has something in mind, has this large group of people with him, and of all the things he could say to them when he turns to them, he starts here.

Why does he start at this point? Why does he bring up the issue of family? Well, he does so because being a disciple of Jesus Christ is a relationship of love and loyalty, and it calls those who would follow him to love him and be loyal to him above everyone else and everything else.

And the strongest relationships that we have as human beings, generally speaking, would be the relationships we have in our families.

Love and loyalty are primarily seen in the context of family. That's why we hear people say blood is thicker than water. And so Jesus begins here.

[18 : 50] He begins by addressing the strongest relationship of love and loyalty known to human beings. And he says, if anyone will come to me and be my disciple, if he does not hate his or her own family, they cannot be my disciple.

Now again, here's what is clear. What is clear is that merely accompanying Jesus, merely associating with Jesus, is not enough.

If it were, Jesus would not have had to say anything to them. He would have been happy to have this large crowd with him. But Jesus turned to them and he lays these requirements on them.

Now exactly what is Jesus saying? First, we know that he's not saying that loving our families and being loyal to our families is bad or wrong. He's not saying that at all.

Instead, Jesus is using a figure of speech that we call hyperbole. He's exaggerating to make a point. And essentially, what he is saying is that if our love for him and our loyalty to him does not exceed that of for our families in such a way that it's like love and hate, we cannot be his disciples.

[20 : 21] And Jesus is saying that because he understands what it entails to follow him. He understands that conflict is very likely when we choose to follow him.

And that conflict will be strongest at those points of greatest loyalty and love. Those relational ties that we have with family can many times come into conflict with the requirements of following Jesus Christ.

And so, for a lot of people, hearing these words, it's really something that they stumble over.

But really, that's not the hardest thing that Jesus says. And a lot of times when people hear that, they hear these requirements of Jesus, they don't hear anything else he says.

But he goes on and he says something even stronger at the end of verse 26. He says, and yes, even your own life. I think we all love our families, but I think we all know despite our best desires to do otherwise, we, by nature, are selfish and we would love ourselves in the end even above family.

[21 : 44] And so, Jesus says, even your own life. Again, using hyperbole, he is saying that those who would be his disciples must develop an attitude towards their life that will enable them to lay it down in his service, not holding it back, not doing whatever they want to do to pursue it in this life.

He says, there must be this willingness to lay it down. and so, what he says in verse 27 elaborates on that. He says, whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Now, when we hear bearing a cross, that doesn't speak to us the way it would have spoken to the original audience listening to Jesus. Jesus, they knew what it meant to bear a cross.

They would have observed crucifixions. And one of the things they would have observed is that the person being crucified carries his own cross. He carries his own cross to the place of crucifixion.

And the whole sense is that there must be this willingness to die to self, this willingness to suffer, this willingness to, at a minimum, die to self.

[23 : 07] It may, literally, as it has for some, and will for some, end in literal death. There are people who have died because of their decision to follow Jesus Christ.

But the reality is that that is not the lot for most of us. it's not very likely that we who are gathered in this room this morning will be called to literally die for the Lord Jesus Christ.

But all of us who would follow the Lord Jesus Christ will be called to suffer in different ways and in many ways die to self, die to our own ambitions, die to our own agendas, die to things that we may desire to do at a given point in life.

And there must be this willingness to voluntarily take up that which is a symbol of death, a cross symbolically, not the person who gets on your last nerves, but this willingness to die to self. And he says, you must do it. You must take your cross and you must follow me if you want to be my disciple.

[24 : 26] The cross then is a symbol of self-sacrifice. And truth to follow Jesus is to suffer a thousand times and to die a thousand deaths in an ongoing way.

In Luke's account, in Luke chapter 9, Luke records Jesus as saying that if you want to follow me, you must take up your cross daily. He adds that word daily.

and there's the sense that we who would follow Jesus Christ must consciously every single day remind ourselves, I will die to my own desires and agenda and wishes that are contrary to that which Christ would have for me today.

That's an attitude of embracing a life of obedience to Christ. Matthew records similar words from Jesus that state even more plainly what Jesus is driving at in this account in Luke.

In Matthew chapter 10, starting in verse 34, it will be projected for you. Matthew records these words from Jesus, Do not think that I have come to bring peace on the earth.

[25 : 46] I have come not to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a person's enemies will be those of his own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. That's the point that Jesus is making in this passage that we are considering in Luke's gospel.

He's talking about degrees, and he's saying the degree must be so great that when you compare it, it's like love and hate. He says, if you're not willing to do that, if you're not able to do that, then you cannot be my disciple.

Now, these words land on us this morning differently than they would to a Muslim or to a Hindu or to a Jew, because in those cultures, to follow Christ in many instances, will result in the loss of the dearest relationships we know in family.

[27 : 25] Some will be disinherited, they will be disowned, and even in some cases, some would feel, some family members would feel the need and the right to actually be a part of ending their lives.

Jesus. And so when you hear about individuals in these cultures, in Hindu cultures or in Muslim cultures or in Jewish culture coming to Christ, you can recognize that that is someone who is consciously choosing to pay an enormous price to follow Jesus Christ.

And so brothers and sisters, that is the cost of being a disciple, and Jesus makes it plain for all to know. And we see Jesus was no politician.

He was not doing a bait and switch. He's the Lord, and he soberly and clearly lays down the cost of discipleship right up front.

And what a betrayal it is when we misrepresent what it means to follow Jesus by calling people to terms that he never called them to, by calling people to pray a prayer and just change their behavior.

[28 : 57] It's a fraud to do that. it is a con act to do that. Because Jesus plainly and clearly up front says, hey, if you want to be my disciple, here's the cost.

And he wants people to follow him with their eyes wide open, understanding what it is they're signing up for. He's saying it's not enough to just associate with me.

It's not enough to just carry my name. It's not just enough to accompany me. If you don't love me more than your deepest and strongest relationships, you cannot be my disciple.

In addition to calling us to know the cost of being a disciple, Jesus calls those who would follow him to count the cost of discipleship, which is my second and final point, count the cost.

And counting the cost is different from knowing the cost. We need to know the cost to count the cost. We need to know the cost of something to be able to figure out, do I have the resources to pay for that?

[30 : 22] But they're two different endeavors. numbers. And Jesus explains what it is to count the cost by two illustrations.

Look again at what he says in verses 28 to 32. For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build and was not able to finish.

Or what king going out to encounter another king in war will not first sit down and deliberate whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000.

And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

[31 : 32] So Jesus gives us two illustrations to illustrate his point. The first one is the illustration of a person building a tower. And notice what Jesus says.

He says, what you need to do is you sit down. This is a very unemotional endeavor of counting the cost. He says, you sit down and you consider, do I have enough to complete it?

Otherwise, you run the risk of making a less than thorough decision. It costs more than you actually think.

And then you get started and say, hey, I'm not able to finish this. You abandon it. And then you face mockery. And then he says the second one, very similar, king going out to war.

Again, what does he say? He sits down and he deliberates. And the whole idea is Jesus wants us to see that being a disciple is kind of a king.

[32 : 44] kind of like having 10,000 troops and you're looking at 20,000 facing you. He's really saying it's not a cakewalk.

And so you have this king, he has 10,000 troops and he is considering going to battle with this other one with 20,000. Now, we all know that having more troops is no guarantee that one could win a battle.

There are a lot of very important wars that have been won with very small numbers of soldiers and weaponry. And Jesus said he needs to sit down and he needs to consider and count the cost, deliberate, do I have what it takes to do this?

And I think the common feature between these two illustrations that Jesus gives us is there needs to be thoughtfulness. This is not emotion.

And this is why this whole idea of getting people to make an emotional decision to come to Jesus or to accept Jesus, it is foreign to scripture. Scripture does not know it because they're signing up for a life of sacrifice, signing up for a life of laying your life down every single day in the cause of Christ, recognizing that we're not our own.

[34 : 11] We belong to the master and he is not called Lord for nothing. And so Jesus says this needs to be a conscious and a deliberate effort that one actually engages in.

Don't you appreciate the honesty of Jesus? To lay it out right up front. Say this is what it entails, this is what it involves. On one occasion when Jesus made a very similar difficult statement, the Bible says many of his disciples left him.

Many of those who were following they left. And he turned to Peter and said, Peter, you're going to go too? To the others, you're going to go too? And Peter was able to say, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life. And so what we see Jesus saying in conclusion to all of this in verse 33, he says, so therefore, anyone of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

So what's the cost of following Jesus as a disciple? It'll cost us everything. It'll cost us everything.

[35 : 46] But remember what Jesus says. He says, it is in losing our lives that we find it. And it is in holding on to our lives that we will lose it.

we sing this song that we it is only at the cross where we are called to come and die that we find that we truly live.

And this is what being a disciple is that we begin to see things in perspective and we are willing to put a gulf between relationships and allegiance that we have on this earth and the love we have for them and the love that we have for the Lord Jesus.

this. As I look around the room I see husbands and wives and fathers and mothers and business owners and employees and students and co-workers and neighbors and we have multiple aspects to our lives.

Our lives are multifaceted and Jesus says we must lay it all down. We must renounce it. We must renounce our claim to it if we are going to follow him.

[37 : 15] We must entrust it all to him and our lives to him and we must be willing to go wherever he leads and do whatever he says.

some of you might remember or have read about the Enron scandal some 20 years ago. Enron was one of the largest corporations in the United States and it was an accounting scandal that brought Enron down and one of the largest accounting firms at the time Arthur Anderson dissolved over it and it was because they were just dishonestly falsifying accounting records and Enron and the auditors were making so much money that they were overlooking a lot of things that they ought not to have overlooked.

I recently came across an article titled Where Did Enron's Executives Go to Church?

And the company was large enough that many of them probably did go to church. And I guess you could ask the same thing about a very large firm like Arthur Anderson.

[38 : 42] Where did the partners who were involved go to church? And I think oftentimes one of the mistakes that we make is we tend to have this wall in our lives where we jump over for our spiritual life and we jump over for what we call our secular life.

But Jesus said, no, you lay all of your life down and you come to follow me. and so when we think about what it means to follow Christ in our lives, what do you do when your boss comes and tells you to do something that you know is wrong?

Or maybe your largest client comes and calls upon you to do something that you know is wrong. Well, see, if we're disciples of Jesus Christ, then there must be a willingness to do what he says and allow the chips to fall wherever they may.

Following Jesus Christ may cost you a relationship because the Lord does not leave us to ourselves to choose relationships.

And there must be a willingness to even lay that down. And so the words of Jesus are sobering, the words of Jesus are far-reaching, and you will not serve Christ for too long until you are called to make good on these claims and requirements prerequisites of discipleship.

[40 : 37] You will not serve Christ long in truth before you come face to face with the cost of discipleship and you are being asked, are you willing and able to pay the price?

These are sobering words, brothers and sisters. Imagine some of you are probably wondering, well, how does Roger's experience tie into all of this?

Well, the way it ties in is that I would dare say that other than perhaps one other person, nobody else knew that Roger was not a Bahamian.

He was here for 24 years, he went along, looked like a Bahamian, acted like a Bahamian, did every single thing that we did, but he wasn't a Bahamian.

And to become a Bahamian, Roger had to renounce his other citizenship. Roger had to pledge allegiance to this country. And God forbid that we would have a conflict with Jamaica, but if it comes to that, he has pledged, I will place my lot and lay my life down in this country against that country.

[42 : 12] But as much as he had all the trappings of being a Bahamian, until he became one actually, in truth, he was not.

And so it is with hanging around Christ, hanging around the people of Christ, that's not enough, brothers and sisters. It's not enough to be identified as a Christian because we grew up in the Bahamas.

it must be a personal relationship through a personal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and an informed one at that, that we understand what we're signing up for and that we are laying our lives down in service to Jesus Christ.

You may have already experienced this, but one of the reasons that Jesus tells us that this is what we must do before we will be his disciples, that we need to count this cost right up front, know the cost and count the cost, is the last situation that you want to find yourself in, counting the cost, knowing the cost and counting the cost, is when that moment of truth comes to you.

When the moment of truth comes to us, we need to know what we had already decided to do, and we simply do it. We can't wait to say, well, when I get there, I'll cross that bridge. It doesn't work like that.

[43 : 35] Jesus says, you need to know it up front, you need to count it up front. You know, one of the best illustrations I think we have in scripture of what it looks like to count the cost is Daniel and his three friends.

They were in the University of Babylon. They were going to be tested and they were going to come before the king and they were being prepared and groomed and fed for that occasion.

But what they were being called to do was contrary to how they had been raised. And they asked for a favor to not have to conform to those rules.

And the thing is, they weren't concerned that at the end of the day they were going to be better off. They simply wanted to be faithful. And they did. And God honored them.

When the three Hebrew boys were thrown into the fiery furnace, before they were thrown in, they told the king, look, you can do whatever you want to do, we're not going to bow. They were willing to pay that price.

[44 : 49] They already made up their minds. If you wait to get in front of the fiery furnace and decide what you're going to do, my friend, it's so easy to just walk away and say, you know, I'll bow, I'll do whatever you want me to do, but we need to decide it right up front.

What enables us to sit down and soberly count the cost of following Jesus Christ?

What enables us to turn our backs to the world and turn our faces to Christ? and say, wherever you lead me, I will go. Whatever you say, I will do.

What enables us to do that? Friends, there's only one thing that enables us to do that, and that is to see the beauty and the value of Jesus Christ. The reason people turn their faces to the world and their backs to God is that they overestimate the value of the world, Christ.

And they underestimate the value of Christ. In Matthew 13, Jesus tells the parable of the merchant who was in search of fine pearls.

[46 : 07] He was in search of fine pearls. And when he found one of greatest price, the greatest value, we're told that what he does is he hides it.

and he goes and he sells everything that he has and he comes and he buys it because he knew in that moment he didn't have what it took to buy it, but he was willing to sell every single thing because he knew he had found a pearl of great price.

Friends, Christ is that pearl of great price. And I pray this morning that if our eyes are not open to his beauty and his value, that God will open our eyes, that we would willingly, not reluctantly, we will willingly say yes to Jesus, we would willingly lay our lives down, we would willingly say yes, I give you my total allegiance and I will love you with my whole heart.

I pray that God will open our eyes. And when he opens our eyes, we realize, you know what, I gain by, I choosing Christ. Why?

This world and all that's in it is passing away. For those who do the will of God, they will abide forever.

[47 : 32] And so, friends, while on the face of it, this may seem, oh, the hardest thing to do, it only seems that way if we're not seeing as we should. God, I am going to in living for Christ that I truly live.

And so, may God help us all to do that this morning.

Let's pray. Father, we pray that you would help us to recognize that we've been called to not just associate with you, but to follow as disciples.

And I pray this morning that you would help us all to, in the first instance, rededicate our lives as disciples of Jesus today. God, I pray that if there's anything that we are considering valuable and precious or that competes with our love and affection for Christ, God, open our eyes to its true value.

And most of all, would you open our eyes to the value of Christ. I pray, Lord, for any who have not yet trusted in the Savior. Lord, have mercy on them.

[48 : 59] Help them to see the beauty and the majesty of the of Jesus. And would you grant them faith and repentance in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray in his name. Amen. Let's stand together for our closing song.