

The Terms of Following Jesus

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[0:00] But for this sermon this morning, initially, those of you who may recall this, last week in the bulletin we foreshadowed that I entitled it Corporate Resolutions 2017.

! And I think in a short while you will see why the sermon title is different from what was foreshadowed in last week's bulletin. For a few years now, what I have sought to do on the Sunday after Corporate Consecration is to share with the church the resolutions that we believe that the Lord would have us to pursue as a local church.

And last year, our resolutions as a church were prayer to grow in praying together, gathering to grow in gathering together, community to grow in living in community, evangelism to grow in reaching the lost.

And the last one was discipleship, to grow in being disciples. And I shared these resolutions last year on the 24th of January.

And if you were here, you might recall that I made what I believe was a very important and somewhat surprising statement.

[1:34] That's what I said last year. Instead of the five church resolutions, this one, discipleship, the fifth one, is the eldership team's greatest concern and burden.

And I went on to say that perhaps it's because to some degree the other four resolutions are all connected to that one, discipleship.

And then I ended by saying this. So if we get discipleship right, we'll get the others right. And that was true then.

And that is true now. And that will always be true. When we get discipleship right, the other concerns that we tend to have in a local church, they tend to fall away.

And so for 2017, rather than listing church resolutions in several areas in which we'd like to grow as a church, for this year we will simply list one single resolution.

[2:51] And it is this, discipleship. To grow in being and making disciples. And if we do, if we grow and we improve, if we grow and we improve in being disciples and making disciples, we will find that that will bleed into the other areas of the church.

It will affect prayer. It will affect how we gather. It will affect how we build community. It will affect how we reach the lost. And since discipleship is about following Jesus, this morning I want to bring a foundational message for our church.

But this is not confined just to 2017. This message really is foundational and it transcends time. It applies for every day that the Lord gives us on this earth until the day that he calls us home or he returns.

Because we are a community of people who are following Jesus together. So, if you have not yet done so, please turn in your Bible to Matthew chapter 16.

And this morning our attention will be focused on verses 21 through 27. Matthew chapter 16. We begin in verse 21.

[4:31] From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed.

And on the third day, be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him saying, Far be it from you, Lord. This shall never happen to you.

But he, meaning Jesus, turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me.

For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. And Jesus told his disciples, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever will save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?

[5:52] Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father.

And then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Let's pray together. Father, we give you thanks this morning for your great mercy and your great grace that you have abounded to us.

We thank you, Lord, that we are able to gather in this place and to sit under the preaching of your word. And Father, I pray this morning that you would have your way with us, that you would cause us to posture our hearts to hear and to hear your word.

Lord, I ask that you would pour out your spirit upon me afresh this morning. I pray that you would enable me to faithfully proclaim the truth of your word to your people.

Lord, those you have called to yourself, you have called to be disciples. And I pray this morning that we would all hear that call afresh or even for the first time.

[7:12] And we would hear above my voice, Lord, we would hear your voice calling us to the road of discipleship. So, Lord, have your way and do your work in our hearts and in the preaching of your word.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. As I mentioned earlier, on Thursday, I flew into Grand Bahama to attend a memorial service for Pastor Wilbur Outen, a longstanding pastor in the city of Freeport who passed away.

As I was flying back on Friday morning, I was coming through the airport. And as I came to the airport and waited outside for a bit, I was overhearing a conversation of a group of men.

I presume they were taxi drivers. And as is normally the case in some conversations, you have this one person who's kind of guiding and directing the conversation.

There was this man, he was talking, and the others were looking to him, and he was talking loud, and I think he was talking, I guess, so others could hear who were not a part of the circle. And he was talking about something that I knew about.

[8:21] And what amazed me was the others didn't seem to know what he was talking about, and they were all heirs. And this man was misleading them. And he was just saying things, and you could verify those things that he was saying.

They just were not accurate. They weren't true. You could have gone to the Internet and checked to see that what he was saying was not true. And more than likely what was going to happen is those men, the other four who were in that group, were going to take what he said, and they were going to go, and they were going to repeat it to other people, as authoritatively as he repeated it to them.

And some parts of it I actually found humorous. But I'll tell you what I don't find humorous. I don't find humorous when the same thing happens as it relates to God's Word.

There are many people who have taken secondhand what the Word of God says about who Jesus is and what it means to follow him.

They have heard popular ideas that following Jesus is all about what he gives you and what he does for you, and he is there at your beck and call, and he offers you the best life you can possibly have.

[9:51] And he will cause you to be the best you that you can possibly be, and he does all these things for you, and he will be at your beck and call.

And many of these people accept what they hear without really going to God's Word and verifying it for themselves. And what happens for some people is when they do one day pick up God's Word and they read about who Jesus is and they read about what it means to follow him, they are shocked.

And some are even angry because they have been so misled about who Jesus is and what it means to follow him.

One of the things they find out immediately when they begin to read, in particular, if they begin to read the Gospels, is that there is a high cost to follow Jesus.

And it's a cost that Jesus did not hide. Jesus did not falsely advertise, as some of the commercials do, when they are telling you about these medications or other things and they will tell you all the things you can do and then they'll just say in words you can't hear or in print you can't see about all the other things that may go along with it.

[11:16] Or some of those products that people are told to buy and you go and buy them and they never work the way you're told they would work. No, Jesus did not do that. Jesus could not have been clearer and plainer that there is a cost to follow him.

And any honest survey of the New Testament will show that the accent and the emphasis in the Christian life is not on the blessing but on the cost of following Jesus.

That is the true witness and faithful account and emphasis of the scriptures. Not on the blessings, there are blessings. But the emphasis is not on the blessings, the emphasis is on the cost.

And the passage of scripture that we have come to this morning that we have just read lays out in very clear terms terms that Jesus said are necessary for all those who will follow him.

In essence, in these verses that we have just read what we see is that following Jesus has a high cost. But the reward is far greater than the cost.

[12:40] Following Jesus has a high cost but the reward is far greater than the cost. And so in our remaining time this morning I want us to consider these terms of following Jesus.

But before we do that I think it's important for us to consider what I would say is a natural hindrance that all of us face in following Jesus.

And in order to overcome it we need God's help. And we see this hindrance in the earlier section of this part of Matthew's gospel which I did not read.

It's the setting of a very pivotal moment in the ministry of Jesus when Jesus came to this place called Caesarea Philippi.

And when you read it it is interesting that it seems that Jesus intentionally waited to come to this place to ask that question. He came to Caesarea Philippi and he asked the disciples who do men say that I am?

[13:51] And the reason he did that is that Caesarea Philippi was the place where they worshipped Caesar as God. They worshipped the emperor they worshipped the king as God.

And Jesus asked them who do people say that I am. And they began to answer the question not based on what they said but based on what people said and they said well some say that you are John the Baptist and others say you're Elijah and Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

And Jesus said what about you what do you say? And they didn't know. None of them knew. None of them really knew who Jesus was.

They walked with him they followed him but they did not know who he was. Until God the father intervened and revealed to Peter who Jesus was.

And Peter said you are the Christ the son of the living God. And Jesus blessed Peter and he said Peter don't be beside yourself.

[15:01] Flesh and blood did not reveal that to you but my father who is in heaven he revealed it to you. Now we pick up in the text that we read and you would notice in verse 21 it says from that time.

from that time Jesus began to teach and show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

And Peter took him aside and said not so Lord. Peter no doubt he is the one that Jesus just blessed and he probably felt very special that he had the authority to do that.

And so he takes Jesus aside and the picture is they're standing side by side and he is rebuking Jesus and saying this will not happen to you. And Matthew tells us that Jesus turned so that's why I say they must have been side by side because Jesus turned evidently to face Peter and Jesus says to this man who he just blessed who he just gave the keys to the kingdom who he just told that on the rock of the revelation that he gave that the church will be built on that on who he is.

Jesus says to Peter get behind me Satan you are a hindrance to me for you are setting your mind on the things of God but not on the things of man sorry let me read that again for you're setting your mind on the things of God you are not setting your mind on the things of God but on the things of man Jesus rebuked him because his mind was wrongly set he was set on the things of man not on the things of God and so immediately the lesson for us should be that in order for us to follow Jesus in order for us to go after him we need our minds set on the things of God and not on the things of man and notice that it is not automatic even for a person who sees who

[17:40] Jesus is who gets this revelation that Jesus is the Christ even he did not have his mind set on the things of God and so Jesus rebuked him and Jesus actually referred to him as Satan because he was a hindrance to him brothers and sisters we cannot and will not truly follow Jesus if our minds are not set on the things of God now let us consider what Jesus says about the terms of following him Jesus tells us that there is a cost and a reward to follow him and first let's consider the cost the cost of following Jesus Jesus lays out the cost for us in verses 24 through 26 notice how he says it starting in verse 24 he says if anyone now this language is universal language this language means that it applies to everyone when he says if anyone it means really without exception he says if anyone will come after me or follow me and this language is the language of discipleship we could say if anyone would be my disciple or if anyone would follow me as a disciple

Jesus lays down the first term of discipleship or following him and he says it is a cost you must deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me that's the first term the first term of discipleship is a cost it is a denial of self a taking up of a cross and following Jesus now exactly what does this mean what is Jesus saying when he says you must deny yourself take up your cross and follow him for most of us our minds probably go to the cross of Jesus most of us but that's not where the disciples minds would have gone they would not have gone to the cross of Jesus because first of all they did not even believe that Jesus would be killed they thought he was their Messiah who was going to rescue them from

Roman oppression so they had no death in view for him and even if one would say well they thought he would die there's no reason to believe from what we see in scripture that they thought he was going to be crucified Jesus the fact that he would be crucified was not revealed until really right at the very end of the gospel so they did not know he was going to be crucified so it was more natural when Jesus said you must take up your cross that what they would have thought about was just regular ordinary Roman crucifixion which would have been commonplace that would have been as commonplace as we could envision right now buses blazing through the streets coming from Fox Hill taking men to the courts it was a common it was a regular thing it was the way that common everyday criminals were dealt with in Rome it was a familiar sight so when

Jesus said you must take up your cross and follow me I believe that what came to their mind was just ordinary Roman crucifixion they would have envisioned how these condemned men would take their cross and they would be paraded through the street and there would be people who would be glaring and jeering and mocking them as they were humiliated on the way to the place of their death but I wonder this morning when you read this apart from what I just said what comes to your mind and what came to your mind more than likely what would have come to your mind obviously would have been the cross of Jesus but perhaps there's some of you this morning you have questions and you're wondering what does he really mean is he speaking figuratively is he speaking literally what is he really mean what is he saying maybe that's the angle that you're thinking about that's what probably came to your mind more than whose cross it was but you know is he speaking literally is he speaking figuratively and this question has occupied a lot of people wondering how is Jesus speaking is it literal is it figurative and I think it is an important question to consider and to answer and I believe that the correct answer is that Jesus is speaking both figuratively and literally I believe that Jesus is speaking figuratively and we can conclude that because none of the disciples at this point or any point that we are aware of walk behind Jesus carrying a literal cross they didn't do that and clearly Jesus didn't intend them to do that he did not intend for them to come behind him dragging a cross as they followed him but at the same time Jesus was speaking literally Jesus was telling his disciples that they were to follow him on the road to death in other words the road of

discipleship the road of following him was the road to death and here

[24:05] Jesus was addressing our natural tendency towards self preservation and he said to follow him is to lay our lives down and to willingly embrace the road of mocking and ridicule and even death that is where the road leads us so here again remember that this is a progression in this text it says in verse 24 then Jesus told the disciples this is after this encounter with Peter after Peter says to him no Lord you're not going to die that's not going to happen to you and Jesus rebukes him and Jesus says you're not setting your mind on the things of God and what Jesus was essentially saying was the death that Peter was trying to save him from was the things of!

his disciples he is really addressing this situation that Peter was trying to save him from and in essence what Jesus is saying is you want to save me from death?

You want to prevent me from going to the Father's will? Well the truth is anyone who will come after me will take up his own cross and follow me with the reality that it could very well end in!

death this term of discipleship is a ceasing to value one's life and a willingness to lose it in death for the cause of Christ and that's the contrast that we must not miss that Jesus is literally addressing us concerning what Peter was trying to prevent him from and he says if you're going to come after me this is the road you must be willing to walk this road and you see brothers and sisters when we make this commitment when we commit to this initial cost and term of discipleship it makes all the other sacrifices easier it makes the lesser sacrifices easier it makes the lesser sacrifices pale in comparison and we don't complain about making them because we are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice we've counted our lives as nothing and we have laid it down to follow the

Lord Jesus Christ we literally give our lives in his service and so the things pertaining to our lives we don't hold them as dear and as precious can you imagine if on our police force they recruited police officers and they never told them that they could lose their lives in the line of duty so that these men would not be in a position to say to their families that they could lose their lives in the line of duty that there could be a day that they leave home and say see you later and later never comes that would be a serious neglect Jesus makes no such neglect he tells us that to truly follow him begins with death to self it begins with the laying down of our lives and a willingness to embark on a journey that could cause our very lives now this is truly our commitment do you think that we have a hard time to shrink back in the

[28:08] Lord's service being stingy with our time being stingy with our resources being stingy with our abilities and the material possessions that God has given to us sacrifice would not be a bad word to us sacrifice would be a word that we would embrace because it's a part of the journey that we have committed to we would not shrink back from it notice in verse 25 Jesus gives us a sober warning he says for whoever would save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it this is the irony of discipleship those who embrace discipleship and die to self and count their very lives as loss for the cause of Christ and in his service will actually find it again and before we wonder how we need to just embrace that promise before we try to think how do

I gain my life back when I lay it down in that way and I give it in Christ service don't go there yet the first thing is to accept that promise from the Lord who cannot lie that those who follow him that those who lay their lives down in his service those who lose it for Christ's sake as it were they'll find it again the witness of scripture is that if we count our lives as nothing and follow Christ we gain eternal life which we begin to experience in part now and we will experience in full when Christ returns for those who reject discipleship and its cost because they want to preserve their life Jesus says you're going to lose it you're going to lose it in this life because you're not going to attain what you're going after and in the life to come you will lose that as well in verse 26

Jesus helps us to see what the issue is for all of us notice what he says he says for what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life what shall a man give in return for his life see this is the issue this is the issue of hindrance or the hurdle over which many have a difficulty it is this world and what the world has to offer and Jesus raises it he brings it to the fore what would it profit

a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life what shall a man give in exchange for his life and what we see Jesus doing is Jesus helps us to see that the human soul is valuable and it is at stake in our willingness or our unwillingness to follow him so this morning we all need to seriously consider these words of

Jesus I want to ask you this morning what is it what is it in this world that is holding you back from committing to Jesus in this way and coming after him what is it Jesus says the issue is the world he said that is the obstacle for many and so the question this morning if we are not pursuing Jesus and following him in this way a counting our lives as nothing and it's not that they're nothing because Jesus tells us our lives are worth more than the whole world our soul is worth more than this entire world if you want to think about it there's a lot of wealth in our little country but our little country is a strand of here in terms of wealth compared to the wealth of the world Jesus says if you gain the whole world if you gain it all and you lose your soul you've lost big and truth be told there's none of us in this room that will gain even the strand of wealth that is in this country so our souls are incredibly valuable and when we take our lives and we lay it down for

Jesus to follow Jesus and to pursue his purpose we are counting our lives as nothing to ourselves but it is valuable in the service of Jesus but to ourselves we count it as nothing and we lay it down to live for him and to serve him and to follow him and so we all need to consider what is it that in this world is so compelling and so valuable that we would say no I choose this rather than taking the invitation that Jesus gives to anyone who would come after him and follow him what is it what Jesus says whatever it is you need to reconsider it because it's just not worth it it's just not worth it you're not going to get the whole world if you did it's not worth it so whatever it is it is not worth it this has been a hard message to prepare it's been a hard message because the implications are so huge and

[34:24] I imagined many of your faces as I prepared and some of the questions that you probably are wondering in your context as a student as an employee as an employer as a retired person what does this mean for me and really and truly it means the same for all of us it is no different for any of us and the same for all of us it is the same message that our lives are valuable Jesus tells us that they are however instead of trying to hold on to our lives as precious we need to count them as loss and we need to lay them down in service for Jesus following him and embracing a willingness to even die if our journey takes us there that's the implication for all of us that is the mindset that we must embrace whether student or employee or employer or retired person or whoever you are this morning and see what it looks like is this this is what it looks like for the student

Jesus is not saying to you quit university he's not saying to you stop studying because it doesn't matter no you continue to study continue to be a student but what following Jesus is is for example there may be times when you are called upon to pay a price to stand in a way that is consistent with what it means to follow Jesus Christ may cost you a grade a professor who may be calling you to compromise truth that you know to be true and you know that at risk is a grade a grade that you would prefer a higher grade than the one that you know you would get if you stood for the truth and following Jesus says that you must be willing to die in that rate of that higher grade that you want that you would be true to him following

Jesus for the person in a job he's not saying quit your job and go on the mission field but instead he's saying follow me on your job and it may be that you may be called upon to make some unethical decision that your boss expects you to falsify some information that you know is wrong and that you would be willing to part with that job and falsify that information and betray the one whom you claim to follow as a business person it may be that you watch your competitors evade customs!

duty you watch them falsify invoices you watch them do all kinds of unethical business practices and they are gaining more market share than you and your business is suffering while theirs is flourishing and it is in your hands to do what they do but you are following Jesus and following Jesus means that you would be willing to let that business go rather than compromise in your convictions that you know to be right That's what it means to follow!

Jesus in that way and I can go on this morning and I can give various scenarios that's what he calls us to do he calls us to live our lives following him in whatever station we find ourselves in in that given moment!

[38:38] because ultimately we are willing to lay our very lives down and we cannot say I'm willing to lay my very life down and so unless something in my life changes at this particular stage of my life

I have never suffered real persecution I read about people who are undergoing persecution I read about pastors who are being put in prison for preaching the gospel I read about people who are being put in prison for hosting a non-licensed church in their homes in hostile cultures to Christianity.

I've never faced any of that. Those people have faced a higher cost than I and you and therefore they no doubt will receive a greater reward because they have paid a higher price.

Here Jesus is referring to rewards when he returns, but this does not mean that there are no rewards until he returns. There are rewards. There are rewards for serving Jesus Christ.

The greatest reward that we can have is to have peace with God and to have our consciences cleansed. And to know that whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

[43:49] It's the first and foremost and most important reward. But there are other rewards that we have in this life. Where the Lord watches over and keeps us as his dear children.

And even when we would exit this life, Scripture says, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the saints.

It's not of everybody. That's the death of the saints. Many people die. That's not true of them. That's true of the saints. There are blessings in this life.

But none of those blessings begin to compare to the blessings and the reward that Jesus is referring to in verse 27. And maybe one of the reasons that Scripture doesn't elaborate on the reward so much is we would be fixated on those rewards.

And sadly, many people are fixated on the few blessings that we receive right now. The implications are also very serious for those who do not follow Jesus.

[45:04] Because their punishment is far greater than anything that this world can offer. Jesus says, if you gain the whole world, and you won't. And lose your soul, you don't profit.

Brothers and sisters, verse 27 is not a fairy tale. Verse 27 is a promise from our sovereign Lord who cannot lie.

And he says that one day, one day, and the witness of Scripture is it is a day that we would least expect. It is the kind of day that we would not predict.

It says one day he is going to return with his angels. And he's not going to be like Jesus who walked the earth. He is going to return in the glory, the awesome glory of his Father.

And he's going to repay each person according to what he has done. And for those of us who have followed Jesus, those of us who have gone behind him, laid our lives down, willingly embracing the road of death to self, and even literal death itself, it will be a glorious day.

[46:25] But for those who do not, it will be a terrifying day. One of the things that should encourage us is that after all this, the disciples still didn't get it.

Still didn't get it. We followed the account of Peter and the other disciples, and it took them a long time to understand what Jesus taught.

The night that Judas betrayed Jesus, Scripture tells us the other disciples, the eleven, they fled. Scripture tells us that Peter denied him three times that night.

But after Jesus was raised from the dead, you see the grace that he extended to his disciples. You see the grace he extended to these deserting disciples. He appeared to them, and he convinced them, Scripture says, by many proofs that he was alive.

[47:32] And then he specifically sought Peter out, and he restored him. And then at the end of his ministry, he gave them a great commission.

It's recorded in Matthew 28, verses 18 through 20. And Matthew writes, And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. But Jesus not only gave them a great commission, Jesus gave them a great commandment.

We don't see it in Matthew's account, but we see it in Luke's account. Luke tells us at the ascension that Jesus told them something else. He gave them a great command. He records it in Luke 24, 49. [48:40] It says, And behold, Jesus says to them, And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

He gave them this great command. He commissioned them to go to the world, but he says, Don't you go until this happens. You stay until you are clothed with power from on high.

And the reason is that Jesus knew that it would require more than just these instructions. Jesus knew that it would require more than these teachings where he laid down the terms of discipleship. The disciples proved that. They walked with Jesus. They had him as a friend for three years. Heard all of his teachings.

And yet at the end, they fled and they deserted him and they denied him. And Jesus knew that they needed the power of the Holy Spirit to do what he was calling them to do.

[49:50] And brothers and sisters, what they needed, we also need as well. See, it's so easy to think that we could grit our teeth and we could flex our muscles and we can follow Jesus.

No, we can't. Not on our own. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to follow Jesus in this way, to lay our lives down in this way.

If we don't, we will fall flat on our faces every time. We will be like Peter and we will deny him over and over and over again.

And we would be bitterly like Peter because we want to do it but we just can't do it. And so he says, I'm going to send the Holy Spirit to empower you in this great commission that you will be my disciples and you will make disciples.

And the commission that was given to the 11 disciples was not just given to them, it was given by extension to all other disciples.

[50:59] And that would be lived out and obeyed in the local church. And that's what we see in the book of Acts and the remaining books of the New Testament.

In the book of Acts we read how the Holy Spirit came with power upon that waiting group of disciples, some 120 of them in the upper room.

And how they went out and impacted their region and their world and they proclaimed the gospel and made disciples. We're told that of the original disciples, every one of them died a martyr's death except John.

And about Peter we're told that when he came to the moment of his death, which was by crucifixion, he said to those crucifying him, I am not worthy to be crucified like my master.

Crucify me upside down. And they did. Here's a man who was trying to save Jesus from his death.

[52:19] Here's a man who did not understand what it really meant to follow Jesus, denied him three times, had gone back to fishing. Jesus restores him, sends the power of the Holy Spirit, sends the Holy Spirit to live in them, to abide with them.

And he comes to the end of his life, having spread the gospel, having poured it out, and he willingly crucifies, submits himself to the death of crucifixion.

if we think about the terms of discipleship, in particular, the costs of discipleship, without the awareness that we get the help of the Holy Spirit, we'd be discouraged and probably try to get all the world that we could get because we know we just couldn't, just couldn't do that.

but this is what we're called to. We're called to follow Jesus as disciples, we're called to make disciples, we're called to do it with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Much of this is an issue of sight, it is an unveiling of our eyes, it is to see our lives and life and the life to come for what they are. And when we see things for what they are, we can make right decisions.

[54:09] And this morning, if in some way you are still conflicted and you're probably wondering, is it worth it to follow this Jesus to lay my life down, I say to you, pray and ask God to open your eyes, that you may see what your life is, that you may see what this life is, that you may see what the life to come is.

I trust this morning that you're able to see why I made this statement about our church's resolutions. If we can get discipleship right, those other things will get right.

If we would be a community of people who are willing to follow Jesus along these lines, in accordance with these terms, we will be committed to prayer, personally and corporately. we will be faithful to gather with brothers and sisters on the Lord's day as we're doing today, as much as we're able to do that.

We will pursue and we will live in community with brothers and sisters because the reality is some of the courage and strength that we need for the journey will come as we do it in community.

[55:27] It wasn't designed to be lived on our own. and we will reach out and share the gospel with others who are lost and who are dying and we will make disciples.

And the reason we'll do these things is because they're clearly in God's word and it's what he calls disciples to do. And that's why for 2017 we have one resolution.

It's the resolution of discipleship to be and make disciples of Jesus Christ. Let's pray together.