

The Danger of Leaven

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Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

[0 : 0 0] We thank you Lord for the gift we have of having these young folk in church, the great privilege we have of having these boys and girls come each week and come and enjoy themselves, especially enjoy themselves in Sunday school as they are taught carefully and lovingly from your word the great truths of scripture, as they are taught the great wonders of who you are and what you have done. We ask you to bless even today your word to them. We ask that you would encourage us to love them well and to be good examples to them. We give you praise Lord that help us not to take for granted the attendance of the boys and girls. We also pray Lord for our parents and those who bring them out to this place. We thank you Lord for their presence here week after week. We ask that they would be blessed as you bring Lord their children and grandchildren out. Lord that they would be blessed and that they would come to know and come to love you for themselves. We come today and we humble ourselves down before you once more. We confess that perhaps this past week we have had little thought of you.

Perhaps at times we have thought only of ourselves or only of our situations but we come just now this day set aside by you. We humble ourselves down before you. Help us for a short time Lord we ask to have hearts and minds focused on you and on you alone as we think for a short time in your word as to the wonder of Jesus, as to the wonder of his power, as to the insight of his teaching, as teaching that only you can give, a teaching that only God can give, who sees our hearts and minds. We come here before you today as those who are exposed before you. You see all that we are. You know all that we say and think and do. At every second, every element, every part of our lives are exposed and known to you.

That what we do and seek it, but what we do quietly Lord as seen to you. Our good deeds but also those which are not so good. The things we do in evil, these things are seen by you too. And we're conscious we come before today as a holy God. That you are high and lifted up. That in and of ourselves we have no way to approach you. We have no right to approach you. We haven't got the words or the intellect or the sense to know what to say or what to do. But we come today not to a distant, unknowable, cold God. We come today to a God who is close to all who call out to him. We come today to a God you have made yourself knowable. For your word but ultimately through your son. The eternal son, the Lord Jesus Christ who became like us. Who became human in all ways apart from sin.

who lived that real life. Whose very existence was one of suffering and pain and debasement and sadness and hurt and misery all because of his love for his people. We come this day confessing that we worship not a dead saviour. Not a saviour to be found in a grave somewhere. Not a saviour whose bones are whitening over the years. No, we come today confessing a living saviour who ascended to your right hand. Who reigns forevermore. Whose enemies are being put under him as a footstool.

As we come to that reality we come and we bring even this area before you. We bring before you today once more the district, the village that we represent here. We thank you Lord for this place.

[3 : 56] We thank you for times of worship. Times around your word as brothers and sisters. We do pray for the salvation of North Tulsa. Lord we pray that knowing that we feel ourselves so small and we feel ourselves so useless. We feel ourselves so unable to do anything. But as we remember Lord from the Glen all the way across Lord to Gary. We do pray for this area. We pray for every home that is represented here. But we also pray especially for many homes which have never been represented here. There are many families who have zero church connection. We pray just now for those who oppose you. For those who hate you.

For those who want nothing to do with you. Lord we ask you would impact and become part of their lives. And they would see that they are sinners lost heading to darkness in desperate need of you.

They would come and join with us fellow sinners who were once so lost in our darkness. Once heading to our own lost eternity. But you have saved and transformed your people.

Help us Lord this gathering today. Help us to have our hearts and our minds focused on you. Help us to apply what we hear in your word in our own lives. Help us to be witnesses to our neighbours in this place. Our friends. Our family members. We bring just now before you especially unconverted family members. It's often the hardest thing to think about and to pray for.

They're often the hardest to share the good news with. Those who we are so close with. Yet we find the words so hard to bring out. So hard to speak. As we share the gospel with them.

[5 : 46] We pray just now for those who are heavy on our minds. We pray just now for unsaved and uncaring parents. And children. And brothers. And sisters.

Uncaring and unsaved sons. And daughters. And cousins. Family members. Family members. Distant friends who we love. Those who we rub shoulders with in this village week after week.

Lord we ask you would bring them to a saving knowledge of yourself. We ask for days of renewal and revival. First and foremost for ourselves. For your people here. Help us to be filled once more with our real love for you.

Our real care for you. Help us never just to as it were go through the motions. But help us to each time we come before you. To do so understanding we are appearing before a holy and a living God.

As we pray for our community. Lord we pray just now for those who are mourning. Those who are mourning Lord the death connected to this community of recent days. Pray Lord for all that must take place this coming week.

[6 : 53] Lord you be with them and comfort them. Lord we pray for them. Especially in the practical side of things. As we know that in a funeral. And in all the all the business connected to it Lord.

There is so much to be done behind the scenes. There is so much organising. And so many things to be worked out. Lord we do pray Lord for that mourning family just now. As we pray for those who are mourning afresh.

We also pray for those mourning of of years and months ago. As anniversaries. As this time of year especially. Come up. We ask you comfort.

Those who are needing that comfort. As we come together. We remember our wider church. We remember as we said. Our brothers and sisters in Cote Bridge.

As they see the gospel spreading in that area. As they see week after week. More and more people hungry. For gospel work. And eager to know more about Jesus.

[7 : 49] Coming to their door Lord. We ask you. Keep blessing your work there. Bless Ivor and his family. Bless the session. And the deacon's court there. Bless all the workers. And all who give off their time in that congregation.

As we see days of renewal. And days of refreshing in Cote Bridge. We also pray for our brothers and sisters in Dunthouse. Lord as they seek to minister. To a place which seems to have so little.

To almost no gospel interest. We pray Lord for that village. And for that town. And for that congregation in that town. Lord as you have your people there.

As you do your work there. We ask you to encourage your people. And Lord if in due time Lord. You would help them to be in a position. To be able to call a minister. To be able to call one who would lead them.

And who would guide them once more. As we remember ourselves. We also remember our worldwide church. The church which stretches across culture and language.

[8 : 49] We remember to now especially our brothers and sisters. Lord in China. Especially brothers and sisters. In the early reign covenant church. Lord you alone know for many years.

For many years. The almost decade long struggle now. That they have faced with the authorities. Lord we ask you would encourage them. And bless them. We give you praise that regardless of the ongoing onslaught.

Against them. That the church keeps on growing. That congregation keeps on expanding. So much so that they are now church planting. Secretly across the area. We pray Lord for these new church plants.

You would encourage them. As these faithful believers. Are willing to lose reputation. To lose money. To lose their freedom. For the sake of the gospel.

Lord we would have even a sense. Of that same willingness. To sacrifice. What we have for the gospel cause. We pray Lord for this upcoming week for ourselves.

[9 : 49] We pray Lord for the AGM. We thank you that you have given us. A financially viable congregation. That you have. Lord we thank you. Especially for those who give.

Financially. Those who give. Off their own earnings. And off their own savings. Lord we thank you for them. We ask you bless them. That they would know. And they would see indeed this week. That the money they give.

Is being spent efficiently. Is being spent well. And Lord we pray. As the years and months go on. We would see that money being spent. For various more gospel causes.

In this community. Your word will be built up. Your people will be encouraged. I would see those who do not know you. Come to know you for the first time. Lord encourage us.

We ask this day. Help us to. Have a sense of. Awe and the wonder. Of the one we seek to worship. Just now. You're the one.

[10 : 44] Who has made yourself. Known to your people. You're the one. Who has made yourself. Known in scripture. The one who is. Knowable. The one who. Tells and commands.

All. Men and women. To repent. And turn away from sin. And to turn instead. To you. We ask that be the case. Even to this day. For some here. We would come. To repent. And trust in you.

To find their only hope. And peace. In the risen saviour. We ask forgiveness. Of our sins. Of all there are many. Your forgiveness. Is much greater.

In his name. And for his sake. Amen. Let's read. This time. First of all. In the book of Matthew.

The gospel of Matthew. And chapter 16. We're carrying on. Our series. And Mark. But we're going to read. First of all. In Matthew. Chapter 16. Matthew 16.

[11 : 48] That's on page. Seven hundred and seventy. One of the church. Bibles. Page seven. Seven. One. Matthew 16. Let's hear the word. Of God.

And the Pharisees. And Sadducees. Came. And to test him. They asked him. To show them a sign. From heaven. He answered them. When it is evening.

You say. It will be fair weather. For the sky is red. And in the morning. It will be stormy today. For the sky is red. And threatening. You know.

How to interpret. The appearance. Of the sky. But you cannot. Interpret. The signs. Of the times. An evil. An adulterous generation.

Seeks for a sign. But no sign. Will be given it. Except the sign. Of Jonah. So he left them. And departed. When the disciples. Reached the other side.

[12 : 41] They had forgotten. To bring any bread. Jesus said to them. Watch and beware. Of the leaving. Of the Pharisees. And Sadducees. And they began. Discussing it.

Among themselves. Saying. We brought no bread. But Jesus. Aware of this. Said. O you of little faith. Why are you discussing. Among yourselves. The fact.

That you have no bread. Do you not yet perceive. Do you not remember. The five loaves. For the five thousand. And how many baskets. You gathered. Or the seven loaves.

For the four thousand. And how many baskets. You gathered. How is it. That you fail. To understand. That I did not speak. About bread. Beware. Of the leaving.

Of the Pharisees. And Sadducees. Then they understood. That he did not tell them. To beware. Of the leaving. Of bread. But of the teaching. Of the Pharisees. And Sadducees.

[13 : 36] And then they gave praise. To God. For his holy. And his. Perfect. Word. Again. Sing once more. This time. From the Psalter.

Scottish Psalter. Psalm. 71. Scottish Psalter. Psalm. 71.

We sing. Verses 1. Down to verse 6. Of the Psalm. Psalm 71. Verses 1. Down to verse 6. O Lord.

My hope and confidence. Is placed in thee alone. Then let thy servant. Never be put to confusion. And let me in thy righteousness. From thee deliverance have.

Cause me escape. Incline thine ear. And to me hand. Me save. Psalm 71. Verses 1 to 6. To God's praise. O Lord.

[14 : 40] O Lord. My hope and confidence. It is. Is placed in thee alone.

Let me in thy righteousness. Let me in thy righteousness.

Since, and thee let me have. Let me with In thy advice.

Peace. unto me and be saved. E' Thou my dwelling rock, to which I ever may restore, Thou give'st come and make me to sin For Thou my dwelling rock and war.

Free me, my God, from wicked hands And to the land unjust.

[16 : 18] For Thou, O Lord God, O Lord God, my God, my God, And from my youth, my trust.

Thou from the womb, This old kingdom, Thou art the same at me.

Out of my mother's promise, I ever will praise Thee.

Let's turn to the Gospel of Mark And carry on our series. Mark, chapter 8, on page 792. Mark, chapter 8, on page 792.

Mark, chapter 8, on page 792. Looking at verses 14 down to verse 20, Of course, it's the same account, But from Mark's perspective, Or Mark's account, Mark's investigation As to what was said and took place.

[17 : 36] Mark, chapter 8, verse 14. Let's take verse 14 itself. And then verse 15 for our text. Now they had forgotten to bring bread And they had only one loaf with them in the boat.

And he cautioned them, saying, Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees And the leaven of Herod. And so on.

We've skipped over some bits, Because we can come back to them For a future series, And that will be clear in the future, God willing. But we see the context of chapter 8.

We see that the headings that will help us here. They've seen the feeding of 4,000. This is a different occasion. The feeding of the 5,000 took place, Of course, earlier on. Now it's the feeding of the 4,000.

Jesus now fed two massive groups of people. And really, as we said before, Just to remind us, When we see 5,000 or 4,000, It was just the men that were counted.

[18 : 38] It was a custom of the day. It certainly wasn't good or right, perhaps. But it was a custom of the day. So when you see 5,000, It's not really 5,000 people. You could well read it as 5,000 or 4,000 families.

There are multiple thousands of people here. The feeding of the 4,000 is 4,000 men. But most of them had wives, we can assume. There were children around.

There could have been easily 6,000, 7,000 people were fed. In the same miraculous way as we saw before. In the feeding of the 5,000. So Jesus feeds this massive crowd.

They've been following him, of course, for days now. They've been around him. And Jesus again goes away. As he does it again and again and again, he goes away. He spends time with them.

He loves them. He looks after them. But he then goes across to the other side of the sea once more. When you picture on a map, our whole journey so far, There's been excursions here and there like we saw last week with the Syrophenician woman.

[19 : 42] But really, Jesus is going one side of the sea to the other and to the other and to the other. Going back up sometimes. That is his ministry. That is his journey he is taking.

Slowly but surely heading towards the cross. But we're not quite there yet. The context is, these thousands have been fed. And we're now back in the boat heading across to the sea again.

For the next part of his ministry. The next part of the mission. And here's where we see this account taking place today.

We join the account just before they go into the boat. Verse 11. They're there waiting into the boat. And the Pharisees of course, and the Sadducees we see in Matthew's account.

They are gathering around Jesus. And they demand a sign. They're always demanding something from Jesus. And here they demand a sign. And that's the context where we now start our account.

[20 : 46] To help us to understand this, we have five points. Don't panic. They're reasonably long, but we'll manage in time.

Five points. First of all, seeing the boat and the bread. Then we see these three different types of leaven. Of leaven. If you've got a better accent than me.

The leaven of the Sadducees. The leaven of the Pharisees. And the leaven of Herod. And finally we see the distracted disciples. First of all, boats and bread.

Verses 13 down to verse 14.

So the Pharisees demand a sign. They ask Jesus to prove himself to them. They've just, some of them we're sure, have just seen Jesus feed 4,000 people.

[21 : 46] If not 8,000 people from some bread and a few fish. They've seen themselves the bread miraculously the fish multiply in the hands of Jesus.

One or two might be a magic trick. Four or 5,000 is not. And they demand yet again a sign. And this is a theme we've seen again and again.

They are approaching the living Son of God. And they're wanting him to do another trick for them. Do a sign for us. Show us again. And then we might actually believe you. Show us again, Jesus, just how powerful you are.

They are addressing the living God. They are addressing their own Messiah. They are addressing the Saviour of their people. Who's done miracle after miracle.

And look at the tone they have. It's a mocking tone. Okay, you've managed to feed a few thousand people. Great. Show us another sign. Show us you really are who you say you are. Or who you claim to be.

[22 : 46] Or who others at least claim you to be. Jesus does not do a sign for them. He does not justify their nonsense. In fact, what does he leave them with?

Verse 12. And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, Why does generation seek a sign? He leaves them not with a sign.

He leaves them in fact with a groan. He leaves them in fact with a sign. We have seen everything we need to see to believe. But yet, because of our own self-righteousness, we said before, because of our own arrogance, we will not believe.

This reminder to us, and I said before, I said again, Never think, and people say it, and people think it, if only I could see Jesus. If only I could see Jesus do a miracle in my life, then I would believe.

They saw miracle after miracle, thousands being fed, dead people brought back to the life, the deaf and the blind being healed. They saw it, they were present at the happening of it, they were there, they could see and touch the bread, they could talk to the people who were brought back from the dead and they didn't believe.

[24 : 04] Friends, seeing is not believing. We think it is but it's not. Our self-righteousness goes so deep, our self-reliance goes so deep, seeing does not change anything.

Never think if only I could see Jesus, if only I could see a miracle, then I would believe. Scripture tells us it's quite the opposite. It's quite the opposite. Plenty saw the miracles and went to the grave never believing. They go into the boat Jesus and the disciples and they go across or begin across to the other side.

Note here, Mark lets us know in verse 14, they had forgotten to bring any bread, they had only one loaf with them. You think, well fair enough, that's not too important to Mark, but why did Mark bother including that? Again, there's no wasted words in Scripture. It's important later on we understand this. But just note for now, there's no food for them.

There's one loaf that we presume they must have forgotten they even had because they get hungry in a second. We're told they had forgotten to take the bread, which is normal enough, but we then see Jesus using this lack of bread to begin to teach them what he wants to teach them in this moment. He's one now to teach them, of course, just after they've been attacked once more by the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Jesus then begins to teach the disciples as to the danger of these two groups. Jesus wants to equip them to better deal with the heresy and the attacks of these groups. So Jesus begins to teach them and he cautioned them. Verse 15, a strong word there. Caution perhaps doesn't quite carry the same power. He deeply warned them. He really warned them as to the danger of the scribes and the Pharisees. What did Jesus tell them? Well, he cautioned them saying, watch out, beware of the leaving of the Pharisees and the leaving of Herod. The leaving, we know this, I'm sure, but just to refresh us. I guess the closest we have is to say the yeast, the rising agent of these groups. Now, our modern yeast, you think about the wee 7g packets you get, that would be, of course, foreign almost, unknown almost in this day to these people. They certainly had yeast. Sometimes they had dried yeast, but that was rare and expensive and that was used not by these poor disciples. When Jesus says leaven here, it's closer to what we would perhaps think about today as a sourdough, as a starter mixture, they call it. It's last week's leftover dough, left to ferment for a week and then added in to the fresh stuff. So it's last week's old dough.

You leave a wee bit behind, you cover it and the warmth, it ferments and the yeast, the bacteria grows. You then add that dough to your fresh dough to cause it to rise. It's the same thing. It does the same job. It is still yeast, but it's in that sense. It's the old stuff being added to the new.

[27 : 28] Which is interesting, what Jesus warns about. Beware, if we word it that way, beware of the leaving of the Pharisees and of the leaving of Herod. Beware of the old stuff being added to what I'm now telling you. Beware of the old stuff from, as it were, last week being added now to this week's fresh mixture. What then is so dangerous about the scribes and Pharisees? How is it like leaving this leavening agent? Well, like leavening agent, and we'll see in a second what it means, but like that agent, it only takes a small amount to cause the whole loaf, as it were, to rise.

Only a small amount is needed to alter the whole product. Once it's spread, it's hard to detect until it's too late. Also, it totally alters the product. Once the yeast is added, once the agent is added, you can't unadd it. You can't take it away, at least not naturally. That loaf is going to rise somehow. It's been infected. The bacteria, the growth is in there already, and it will do its thing regardless of what you do now.

So what is this spreading? What is this growing? What is this situation that's so easy to miss that these groups, that the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, that Herod, what is the danger Jesus is teaching them about? At the very core, these three groups, we see here Pharisees and Herod, we see also Matthew recording Sadducees. These three groups, for all of our variations of the dangers they posed, there is one issue, one main issue, and we've been hammering at this week after week because God's word is bringing it to us week after week. It is quite simply self-righteousness.

It is a heretical, it is a hell-bound self-reliance that leads them away from Jesus, away from God, to say to themselves and think to themselves, because of this or that I am fine, because of this or that I am going to heaven, because of this or that I know I'll be okay, I don't need him, I don't want him.

The core is the same, the this or that changes, we'll see in a second, but the core is the same. It's self-righteousness, self-reliance, not in a healthy way, not in a we-can-get-through-this-day kind of way, but no, but in a deep, soul-level way, that for us, for you, for me to be saved, they were thinking they can do it themselves.

[30 : 29] So how does that look in detail? First of all, the leavening agent of the Sadducees. What was the danger of the Sadducees?

As Matthew records Jesus mentioning alongside the Pharisees and Herod. The Sadducees, they were the men who controlled both the temple in Jerusalem, but also the Sanhedrin.

So they controlled the religious worship, but also the political system, the council of the day. It doesn't really work for us, but imagine that our island was somehow a bit more populated, and there's one church.

It's like presbytery also being the council. But both presbytery and the council have a lot more power, an awful lot more power. These are men who have all the money, all the fame, and they completely ran the religious and the political systems of the day.

But note, they did so under the Romans. The Sadducees were known for being in charge, but they were in charge, step and step and hand in hand with the Romans.

[31 : 50] Of course, the Romans have taken over. The Romans are in full control. But again, the Romans weren't stupid. They knew how to run a kingdom. So the Romans were quite happy, indeed more than happy, in every land they conquered.

If the local leadership, the local religion, if the local government structure worked well, they let the locals run themselves, quite happily. It saved Rome doing it, but they ran themselves.

But Rome had a continual guiding hand in the politics and their plans, also in the temple worship of the time. See, the Sadducees ran the temple, they ran the government of the day, they ran the council, but they did so following what Rome wanted them to do.

They had immense power politically, they had immense wealth, they had immense fame, but they followed the dictates of Rome. Essentially, the Sadducees were known for doing whatever it took to stay in complete control of the people, of the land, of the synagogue, of the council.

In essence, the Sadducees were mingling what was holy with what was worldly. They were mingling faith and power.

[33 : 14] They were mingling God's word and the word of Rome. They were mingling together things which would never go together because it benefited them.

Because they thought that would be the best way to work things out. They mingled together, we could say, their religious devotion, along with their devotion to wealth and power and the world.

Dear friends, and indeed, dear brothers and sisters, do you see this leaving, this starter in you?

Do you see the very grains of this in your spirit, perhaps, in your life? Is your life a mix of both religious but also the world?

Are you wanting to be and look to be someone who knows and loves Jesus in one hand, but also the world keeps dragging you back in? For all the power, all the wealth, all the joy, all the pleasure, all the excitement of the world.

[34 : 25] And you want to keep somehow mingling Jesus in with all that. Your life is a mix of these two currents.

Of wanting to know Jesus, but also wanting to still be part of the wider world. You want all the joy and pleasure and so-called freedom of sin.

But also wanting to know more about Jesus. Perhaps you're swayed by the currents of the day, the political currents, perhaps.

Perhaps you're more concerned with the politics of the day, the opinions of the day. There's no sin in these things. There's a real need for Christians in politics.

There's no sin in being engaged in politics. We don't believe that for a second. Of course not. But is your life more interested in politics and current affairs than it is Christ himself?

[35 : 26] If Jesus is not preeminent in your life, then the rest means ultimately nothing. That's leaving the leaven of the Sadducees.

The world plus. Or really, very round for us. It's Jesus plus the world. Jesus plus something else. That does not save anybody.

It's Jesus plus nothing. What about then the Pharisees? What's the warning of the leaven of the Pharisees? We're now, I hope, well acquainted with them.

We've seen them pop up time and time again in the last few months of this study. They come to test. They come to attack Jesus with questions and try and catch him out.

As we see even in verse 11 here. Again, just to remind us, the Pharisees were... So we said the Sadducees ran the Sanhedrin and the temple. But that's a higher level we could say.

[36 : 28] The Pharisees were religious leaders. They were the theologians, the philosophers. They are the ones who added to God's word with things that they thought were right.

And to summarize their main issue, we're going to look to verse 11. The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him.

They are the ones who were dedicated to the beliefs that they had. They were experts, of course, in the Old Testament. But as we said before, they had added on tenant after tenant.

They had added on chapter after chapter. Section after section. Subsection after subsection. They had created their own brand new laws.

And they thought they were doing well. And they were faithful men. They were known not being as harsh men. We read them perhaps in a harsh way because they were testing Jesus. But the locals of the day didn't hate them.

[37 : 30] They thought they were doing well. They were very religious. They were very devout. They, as it were, they knew their stuff. They were zealous men.

They were careful men. But they were careful. They were zealous. They were devout for something. For a truth that will and would not save them.

It was completely made up in their own brains. It wasn't real. It wasn't from God. It wasn't anything inspired. They were making it up basically as they went along.

And they thought they were doing well. This is the heartbreaking thing of the Pharisees. It's a heartbreaking thing of everyone today who is trying to impress God themselves. Do things their own way.

They are genuine. You think you're doing well. And you mean well. And you try and do well. And you try and love the Lord.

[38 : 27] And you try and serve the Lord. And you try and live a life that's pleasing to the Lord. But you do it all without Jesus. And the reality is without Jesus there is no pleasing life.

Without Jesus there is no pleasing actions to the Lord. Without Jesus there is no way you can please, impress, in any way have the Lord on your side.

It's simple as that. It's Jesus or it's nothing. Quite simply at the very core of who they were. They rejected Jesus for their own ideas of what was right and wrong.

So much so of course that they were willing to seek to kill him. Friends, is this found perhaps in yourself today?

When you look into yourself, you are good people. There's no doubt about that. You are well-meaning people. There is no doubt about that.

[39 : 33] Perhaps in your employment you are doing amazing things. You are doing difficult things. You are going from strength to strength. At home you are a loving, caring parent.

You are a loving, caring grandparent. In your community you try your best to engage what's taking place. You attend all the community events you can. You care about North Tolstoy.

You love this place. Your lineage goes back here perhaps. But if this is found in you then like these men, like the Pharisees, you will never listen to Jesus if it means putting aside your own so-called goodness, your own so-called good works.

You would rather live and die being good but not actually knowing Jesus for yourselves. True goodness only comes through Jesus.

True life only comes through Jesus. And through hope, after life only comes through Jesus. And you won't come through Jesus.

[40 : 49] Or you don't want to come through Jesus. Because it means that perhaps the first time in your life you have to admit to yourself that you can't do it. You can't save yourself.

Like a Pharisee, you can't save yourself. You can't rely on yourself. You have to give it all over. Not to me. Not to the church. But to Jesus.

And to him alone. To find all your safety. All your hope in him. Dear friend, perhaps you've had to rely on yourself for many years. Perhaps you've had to be self-reliant. And look to yourself.

Perhaps that's been your story. And perhaps you've had to be that way. Because of life and what's happened to you. And you do care. You are a good person. You are a loving person.

You are a kind person. Everything else and these things are true about you. Unless you come to Jesus, you'll never know real safety.

[41 : 47] You'll never know real peace. We want to complicate it. I'm not going off track here. But we want to complicate it, don't we? Because if we complicate it too much.

If we say, well, I can't become a Christian because I'm a hypocrite. I can't become a Christian because I don't know enough. I can't become a Christian because I don't go to church often enough. I can't become a Christian because I'm too late.

Whatever other excuse. I won't give a list of excuses. Because if I give a list of excuses. You'll say, well, the minister didn't say what I think. Therefore, I'm okay. Add into the blank whatever excuse you go to.

Why you can't become a Christian. However you intellectualize it away. However you rationalize it away. Dear friends, like the Sadducees and the Pharisees would find out one day, there is no excuse.

Jesus is for everyone who comes to him. You can complicate it as much as you want. You can add your own barriers in as much as you want.

[42 : 52] If you want to know Jesus, then come and get to know him. It can't be that simple, can it?

It can't be that easy, can it? Yes. It is. And to the church's shame, we have complicated it. To our own shame as Christians, we have complicated it.

But bring it right back to bare bones. Come and know Jesus for yourself. The leaving of the Pharisees is a self-righteousness.

Righteousness. Finally and briefly, the leaving of Herod. We covered Herod before. The evilness of Herod. Quite simply, the leaving of Herod is just pure worldliness.

A life of money, of lust, of debauchery, of power. All the world has to offer. It's all yours. You want it all. You want more of it.

[43 : 54] But eventually it all turns to dust. It all turns to dust. We'll see this evening with poor Samson. We come to the end of poor Samson's story.

And it's not a spoiler to tell you. Samson's final few weeks, few months of his life. They follow the pattern of the rest of his life. Where Samson spends his life going after the lust after, really, money and power and women.

And in one sense, it all turns to absolute dust for him. If you see the leaving of Herod in your life, that's that reckless abandon of just eat, drink and be merry.

What's the point? Come to Jesus for that too. Only in Jesus do you see real meaning and find real peace. There's no meaning in this world.

There's no peace in this world, I said Jesus. You live. You die. On a rock that's hurtling through space. And you're gone and forgotten.

[45 : 03] And maybe for fortunate two generations you might last. Your name might be remembered. All for nothing. Your whole life, all your ambition, all your ideas, all your loves and all your losses.

All gone. All forgotten about. If this world is truly for nothing, then what's the point in anything? See, the leaving of Herod, it's good for a while, that debauchery, that money, that power, that worldliness.

But it comes in the end and it leaves you feeling totally empty. Only in Jesus do you find real peace. It brings us to the last thing we have here, the disciples themselves.

Jesus warns them that believe in the danger of these groups. And you'd think the disciples are sitting there searching their hearts. And this is for the brothers and sisters here.

Christians, you'd think the disciples are sitting there and think, well, is this found in me? Am I prone to being self-righteous? Am I prone to being worldly?

[46 : 11] You think, oh, the poor disciples must have been in tatters. What are the disciples doing? Let's look at this. It's almost comedy if it wasn't so sad. Verse 16.

And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. Jesus has told them something incredible, something that should terrify them, make them search themselves.

They just care about the fact that they're hungry. There's no bread. What will we do? You see Jesus here. He's aware of this. Of course he is.

He says to them, why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not get it? Do you not understand what I'm saying to you? Who I am? Are your hearts hardened?

And the point here quite simply is, brothers and sisters, we know this. You've heard these sermons before. Some here, you've heard this text. You've been in church long enough.

[47 : 11] You've heard ministers greater than I give this text out in greater ways than I ever manage. You've heard it before. But yet, as Christians, we so easily forget all about Jesus.

Now that's not true, isn't it? How often this past week, going through the daily struggle of life, have you just forgotten to rely on Jesus and relied on yourself instead?

And we see that Jesus reminds them here. He brings our minds back to who he is. Verse 19. Well, the question is at the end of verse 18. Do you not remember when I broke the five loaves to the 5,000 and the seven loaves to the 4,000?

And note what he reminds them of. He reminds them there was plenty left over. There was baskets full. Twelve baskets the first time. And seven baskets the second time.

Jesus can look after his people. He can provide for his people. He can keep and love his people. There is no need for us to be self-reliant.

[48 : 15] There is no need for us, like the Pharisees, to look to our own selves. There is no need for us to be like the Sadducees and mix the world and power. Jesus is enough.

There is no need for us to find ourselves, like, headed, lusting after the fame and the power and the lust in this world. Jesus is enough. Brothers and sisters, the other section of the sermon was for our friends here to search their hearts.

To see if they are lying on these things. Brothers and sisters, let's search our hearts too. Because, yes, we cannot never be removed from Jesus. Yes, we can never wander away eternally from him.

Yes, nothing will ever snatch us from his hands. But at the same time, brothers and sisters, we are so easily distracted. And we are so easily like the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, like Herod.

We find in our hearts all these sins. And I think the call for us this day and just now this afternoon is to go through this section again. And to spend time looking at ourselves and saying and asking the hard question, Am I like the Sadducees?

[49 : 31] Am I mixing Jesus and the world together? Am I like the Pharisees? Am I beginning to rely on myself too much? God forbid, am I like Herod?

Am I focusing and allowing the lusts and the temptations and the sin of this world to enter into my heart again and again?

It's not easy doing soul searching. But, dear friends, first of all, I ask you to do it and to come to Jesus. Dear brothers and sisters, I ask you to do it and myself with you. And to be reminded, as Jesus reminds us here, that he is sufficient.

His power is enough. He who fed these thousands of people, will he not also look after and feed his people? Let's bow our heads now, a word of prayer.

We thank you, Lord, for the gift of your word. Help us to find our full hope and reliance in it. Help us to search our hearts even this afternoon and to see if these things are true for us.

[50 : 35] Help us to come to sing our final item of praise. To do so of hearts and minds set on you. Glorifying in the risen Saviour who has set his love on us.

And who calls us by name. And who rescues all who come to him. Let's call these things in and through and for his precious name's sake. Amen. Let's conclude by singing to God's praise.

Sing Psalms. And Psalm 75. Sing Psalms.

Psalm 75. That's on page 98. Sing Psalms 75 on page 98. We give you thanks, O God, because your name is near.

I'll speak of your majestic deeds. Your voice we do also. We also hear. Psalm 75. A whole psalm to God's praise. Amen. We give you thanks, O God, because your name is near.

[51 : 54] I choose the appointed kind. I judge with justice.

When earth and all is deep and sweet.

I just câj won.

I amen. The wicked I am blessed, Do not lift the pure that spilled Thy in-for-sequent haughtiness.

No one in all the air And to the healing land.

[53 : 23] God is the church, He raised His one And good sang another heaven.

The Lord's hand's old sack of Will shine up at full bend.

He poured it out and we did not But take it to the end.

God's words I will grow clean And Jacob's God I'll praise The wicked strength I will be
joined The righteous I will praise In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ And the love of God
the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit For you now and forevermore.

Amen.