

A Vision Of DESPERATION

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[0 : 00] Good evening, everyone. Great to be in church with you tonight. We're three weeks into our vision series and three weeks into this new orientation in our church, and there's a whole heap of benefits, one of which that in preaching now, when I'm not restricted to a particular area, I've got a headset, I actually worked half a kilometre in preaching at 9.30 this morning, so it's doing good for my health, hopefully as it is for us as a church as well. Let's pray before we jump in to vision series number three. Heavenly Father, we want to thank you for what you have been doing in us as a church. We want to pray, Lord, that you'll continue to reform our hearts.

We ask that we might treasure the Lord Jesus above all things. We pray, Lord, now as we look at your word that it would not just be an intellectual exercise in any sense, Lord, that we would love you, that we would love your word, that we'd be obedient disciples of yours. Help us to see your worldview in all things and for our lives to be conformed to it and be shaped by it. Lord, if there's any call of obedience, may it be a sense of joy, not duty, because of what we have in the Lord Jesus. So send your spirit now so that we might love what you love and hate what you hate, and we ask it for your glory. Amen. Possibly the most devastating statistic that comes out of the 20th century is the fact that Adolf Hitler exterminated six million innocent Jews in concentration camps, and that's to say nothing of the Poles and the Gypsies and the homosexuals. And what makes this information far more terrifying is the fact that Hitler did not succeed in his mass murder by himself.

Nor did he recruit thousands of extermination helpers from the planet Mars. The majority of Hitler's assistants in genocide were recruited from the pews of Germans, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic churches after they'd been told by their clergy to obey the civil authorities of their day. And so you've got to ask the question, why did Lutheran and Catholic Nazis go about their daily routines of extermination? Why didn't they stop? Why didn't they repent? Why didn't they just go, isn't this different from what we read in the Bible or what we've been doing at church?

And part of the answer is they've been led to believe in a cheapened form of God's grace that would save them. Now please don't think that this is my interpretation of history. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German theologian who was head of a seminary for the Confessing Church. He was imprisoned by the Nazis in 1943. He was hanged by them on the 9th of April in 1945 at Flossenberg Concentration Camp, two weeks before it was liberated by the American troops. And he was at the heart of writing what is known as the Theological Declaration of Barmen in, it sounds like it's written in a pub, doesn't it?

Theological Declaration of Barmen. He wrote that, it might have been, in 1934 with Karl Barth, which called Christians in Germany to oppose Hitler's national socialism. And very few actually did.

[3 : 45] And it was in this context that in 1937, Bonhoeffer wrote this book called *The Cost of Discipleship*. And the first line of the first chapter says, cheap grace is the deadly enemy of the church.

He writes, in such a church, the world finds cheap covering for its sins. No contrition is required, still has any desire to be delivered from sin. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, grace without discipleship. In other words, grace alone does everything. It's all the work of God.

Everything therefore remains as it was before, Nazi uniform and all, Auschwitz and all. And Bonhoeffer describes how this cheapening, this preaching of a cheap grace led to German Christians believing in the 1930s that my only duty as a Christian is to leave the world for an hour or so on a Sunday morning to go to church to be assured that my sins are forgiven. One hour, Sunday morning, Sunday morning, forgiven, off you go back to Auschwitz.

Now, according to Bonhoeffer, this thinking in Germany in the 1930s is that the passage, like the one that was just read out for us tonight from 2 Corinthians 5 and 6, is not for normal Christians.

This is a passage for the select few like the Apostle Paul and maybe some missionaries. And Bonhoeffer suggested it's that kind of thinking that was the cancer that made it possible for Lutherans and Catholic church members to become Nazi guards. And what Bonhoeffer called the church in Germany to in the 20th century is what the Apostle Paul called the Corinthian church to in the 1st century is what I would call us to today at St. Paul's in the 21st century. It's 2 Corinthians 6.1.

[6:05] As God's co-workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. Over the past two weeks, I've been unpacking our vision statement.

In view of who we are as a church, we aim to be united in our desperation for the world around us to encounter Jesus and in our desire to represent the diversity of Chatswood. And I preached on what unity looks like, unity in Christ. I've looked at what diversity looks like for us and talked about it last week as a trans-cultural church. And over the next two weeks, I want to focus on that part of our vision statement that reads, desperation for the world around us to encounter Jesus.

That part of the vision says something about us, which is my focus tonight, and also something about our world, which I'm going to focus on next week. And what has been put in front of us already in the last two weeks, and again tonight, is effectively a worldview. And it's a worldview that trumps all other worldviews. It shapes, clarifies, it defines what we value, what we treasure, how we live, day by day, 24-7. It is God's vision of all things for all time, and how we fit as part of God's vision for all things for all time. It's God's global plan, his global agenda. We see it again in 2 Corinthians 5 and 6. And like last week, where we got a graphic picture of the end of all things from Romans 5, we get a similar end of picture, graphic picture of the end of all time in 2 Corinthians 5.10. Look at it.

This is how... Open your Bibles. That'd be great if you haven't got your Bibles open. 2 Corinthians 5 verses 10 to 6.10. This reveals, 2 Corinthians 5.10 reveals how high the stakes are for people right now.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. That is, what that's clearly saying is that God will hold all people accountable for their life. Notice that the judgment seat of Christ here is universal. We must all appear. That's everyone. No exceptions. And notice too that while it is everyone, we will all be judged individually. Each one must give an account. Each life will be exposed for what it is. And my mates and my family and everyone else is not going to be there saying, oh, come on, give him a break. Romans 2 verses 5 to 11 gives a vivid account of what that day will look like. It says, because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

[9:02] God will give to each person according to what he has done. And then we read that there are only two outcomes for the final reckoning with the Lord Jesus. It's in verse 7 of Romans 2. It says, to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger, there will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. But glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good.

See the description there? The description is stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, self-seeking, and you reject the truth and follow evil. That is a great description of what the Bible refers to as sin. Sin is a universal problem. Sin is not just for the bad people of this world, the criminals, the axe-wielding people. It's a problem here for the clean, middle-class people who are deeply committed to their nice boy and good girl wickedness of pride and unbelief and indifference and ingratitude and impurity and greed and comfort and personal ambition.

Romans 3 says that everyone has sinned and has fallen short of what God requires of us. And the terrible consequences of that kind of life is what Romans 2 verse 8 calls wrath and anger.

And let me tell you, you go to any commentary, you go to any sermon on this, on what wrath and anger looks like, and there is no one, no one, who has ever overstated the terrors of what those words mean.

You see, Paul painted a picture of eternal life in the first part of Romans, sorry, in the first part of 2 Corinthians 5, verses 1 to 9. And eternal life is infinitely wonderful to imagine.

[11:12] Eternal life of the presence of Jesus is infinitely beautiful to contemplate. And if eternal life with God is the most glorious reality that you could ever imagine, eternal life without God is the most appalling reality that you can ever imagine.

It is a Holocaust. I remember watching Band of Brothers, it's a war thing, World War II, and I remember the scene, the most gripping, gripping part of the whole series for me was when they, the American troops, walked into a concentration camp and liberated the concentration camp. It's a TV series, right? They were so graphic in revealing, trying to capture the horror of the American soldiers walking in liberating concentration camp.

I remember watching the scene, and I remember bursting into tears as I watched it, realising this is a graphic picture of what happened in real life. And even that doesn't grip what this wrath and anger looks like.

Revelation 4.11 is probably the most graphic New Testament statement of the eternal suffering of the unrepentant sinner. It says, And so Paul writes in verse 11, Now, the fear of God is a right motivation, but it isn't our only motivation.

[13:15] You see, the fear of hell and of God doesn't actually give proof that you actually treasure Jesus, that you actually love God. But we do not, but if we do not believe in our hearts, the awful truth of the enmity that exists between us and God, and all its terrifying consequences, that God will hold us accountable for that, and his judgment will be right, it will be true, then I believe, with Bonhoeffer, that our love for Christ will be shallow, and it will be flawed.

Without the fear, my love for Christ will be taken for granted, it will be passionless, and my entry into all the joys of the eternal kingdom, into the presence of God in heaven, will just be the next thing I expect him to do for me.

That is, without the fear, cheap grace is the result. And so friends, may we believe and feel the horror of eternal condemnation, and may we flee from it into the loving arms of Jesus, where there is no condemnation.

And so what follows from here is, are verses that are rich in the wonder of God's love for us, and his plan of redemption of all things in Jesus. Verse 18, 2 Corinthians 5, 18, God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.

And again in verse 19, God was reconciled the world to himself in Christ. To reconcile is to render two parties to be no longer opposed to each other.

[14:53] It is to win over from hostility into friendship. It is to make two opposites consistent and compatible. And these verses say that it is God who has done that.

He has taken the initiative to reconcile us to himself. It's the work of God. Verse 18, all this is from God. Verse 19, God was reconciling the world to himself.

Again, verse 21, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us. The initiative, the momentum, the purpose of reconciliation are all from God. Does God here, does something about the sin that causes the enmity between us, that causes the division?

And verse 19 is a preliminary explanation of how the reconciliation is brought about. It says, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.

How is that possible? How is it possible that God would not count our sins against us? He's not just going to ignore it.

[16:03] That wouldn't be righteous. It wouldn't be right. It wouldn't be fair if he just ignored it. And so verse 21 describes how it's possible that God doesn't count our sins against us. It says, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

In other words, there's a swap that's happened. This is a picture of an account book. Verse 21 says that my sin is not put to my account, but put to Jesus' account instead.

My account of sin, my record of sin has been put by God to the account of his sinless son, and Jesus has taken my place, and he's borne my sins on his body on the cross.

It means that he's been judged in my place. He was made sin. The sin of the world has been placed by God onto his son, the Lord Jesus. And not only is my sin placed to Jesus, but his perfect, unblemished record has been put into my account.

I cannot be condemned because there is no debt. There's nothing. I'm not guilty. It's like I woke up this morning, and my bank balances, which got a whole lot of red there all over the place, and all of a sudden I wake up and I've got billions of dollars to my name.

[17:32] I look at the account. It's like, it's ridiculous. It's got Steve Jeffrey written on top of it.

That's not right. The bank's made a mistake, and Gina Reinhart wakes up this morning and goes, what the? Where did it all go?

No. The accounts are being swapped, and it's not a mistake. It's a deliberate plan of God. That's what happens when you become a Christian.

You bring all of your sin and your moral bankruptcy to him, and he receives them, and he counts them to his son, the Lord Jesus. And Jesus' perfect record is given to me. I have perfect standing with God.

And the reconciliation of the world to God happens through the death and the resurrection of Jesus. The word world in verse 19 is staggering, and let's not forget about this point.

It says that what God did through the death of his son on a hill just outside the city walls of Jerusalem around AD 33 concerns the reconciliation of the whole world to its maker.

[18 : 41] That is the extraordinary claim of the New Testament. It is the claim of verses 14 and 15. We are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died, and he died for all.

Jesus' death and resurrection has universal significance. It crosses all generations and all cultures. You don't need anything more than Jesus, but you can't have anything less than Jesus. Understand what that passage is saying.

We are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died, and he died for all. In other words, he's not one way to get to God.

He is the way to get to God. There is no reconciliation without God outside the person of Jesus. The religions of the world are just not another form at all.

There is only one way. It's an exclusive claim here. Everyone needs to receive the benefit of reconciliation to God through the Lord Jesus.

[19 : 46] And can I just say, if you're someone sitting here right now in this room, and if you're someone who does not trust in the Lord Jesus, then I want to say, suggest to you that the stakes could not be high for you right now.

It says in chapter 6, 2 Corinthians 6, verse 2, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. So I want to implore you, as the Apostle Paul does here, to be reconciled to God through Jesus tonight.

Tomorrow is the devil's timing. God's timing is, right now, is the day of salvation. If that's you, I'd love to talk to you tonight after the service.

I'd love to do that. Now, that's the message of reconciliation, is what God has done and can only do through the person of the Lord Jesus. This message reorientates and changes the course of your life.

Those who receive the message of reconciliation are now given the ministry of reconciliation. And this is what God can only do through us. Okay?

[20 : 49] Message of reconciliation is what God does through Jesus and only through Jesus. The ministry of reconciliation is what God does through us and only through us. And the stakes couldn't be high for us too. God calls those who are reconciled to God to attend to this matter, to be desperate for the world around us to encounter Jesus.

Verse 20, we are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us. Verse 18, all this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

The ministry is given to us, not Christ, not the angels. Verse 19, and he committed to us the message of reconciliation. That's given to us, not Christ, not the angels. Verse 20, again, we are therefore Christ's ambassadors.

God were making his appeal through us. He does it through us. Not Christ, not the angels. Verse 20, he makes, verse 20 makes our ministry very clear. We are Christ's ambassadors.

Now, our ambassador's job is a really distinguished one. We speak and we behave on behalf of a sovereign power. We represent a sovereign power and the honor of that sovereign power is at stake.

[22 : 05] We do not make up what we want to say and what we want to do as an ambassador. And that is an overwhelming thought. In his death, Jesus represented us.

In his absence, we represent him. And so, if you've received the message of reconciliation, you then have the responsibility of the ministry of reconciliation. See the connection in verse 15 of 2 Corinthians 5?

He, that's Christ, died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

As a recipient of the message of reconciliation, my whole life is now redeployed to the diplomatic service. I speak and I live in such a way that Jesus looks like the magnificent treasure that he actually is.

and this means that those to whom we represent Jesus individually, wherever we work, our families and connections and whatever it is, but also for us, corporate as a church here in this community, they make their judgment about Jesus by what they observe in us.

[23 : 21] And so, I'm convinced that the ministry of reconciliation cannot be exercised in a detached or a cold manner. The language that is used here in 2 Corinthians is deeply emotional and passionate.

Appeal, implore, persuade and that's why we have deliberately included the word desperate in our vision statement. It's an emotive word.

It's meant to be an emotive word. We are meant to feel something in such a way that we are, we are meant to, when we read that statement, meant to feel something, it meant to drive us, to move us in some direction and it's just as emotive, if not quite as emotive, as what I wrote in our core value of local and global impact back in 2009.

If you get the Vision 2020 booklet and look like, read it down, you will read something like this. In fact, you'll read exactly this. As a church, we are committed to the whole church pursuing a wartime mindset, relating to the Holocaust of perishing people and the use of our resources.

That's why the Apostle Paul says, I don't regard anyone from a worldly point of view anymore. He sees the horror, the reality of what people are confronted with in Jesus.

[24 : 48] When you see yourself as an ambassador to the Lord Jesus, chapter 5, verse 20, and as God's co-worker in chapter 6, 1, I think there's an inevitable drivenness about our service.

And I think that if you are casual, if you are laid back, if you are comfortable, if you're happy just to meander, to cruise, to waffle, to dawdle, then I would encourage you to take another look at the grace of God to you.

And have you embraced a cheap grace? look at Paul's lifestyle here in verses 3 to 10. This is the lifestyle of a desperate ambassador who is the honour of his great treasure, the Lord and Saviour, is at stake.

It's a lifestyle that commends the greatness and the glory and the wonder of the Lord Jesus to the world. And this is the lifestyle of ambassadors. So when you read through this list, you ought not have the High Commissioner to New Zealand in mind when you think about your diplomatic service. Think about diplomatic service you're working for President Trump in a hostile Muslim environment. Think about that, or maybe Mexico. Think about that, the difficulty associated with that.

[26 : 07] So it says in verse 4, chapter 6, rather, he says, rather than being a stumbling block and discrediting the ministry and of the Lord Jesus, he says, rather as servants of God, we commend ourselves in every way, in great endurance, in trouble, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots, in hard work, sleepless nights, in hunger, in purity, understanding patience and kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in sincere love, in truthful speech, and in the power of God, with weapons of righteousness, in the right hand, and in the left.

In other words, the Apostle Paul is saying, when you have reconciliation with God, through Jesus, you can lose everything with joy.

It's all joy. Let me take you to the bulletin blurb. This is in your vision booklet, and I know you've all read it, but let me just show it to you again.

I quote from John Stott's book, The Radical Disciple, and this is what he wrote. This is the last book that John, not this book, sorry, Radical Disciple is the last book that John Stott wrote, after a long and stellar ministry.

He says, Christianity offers life, eternal life, life to the full, but it makes it plain that the road to life is death. Life through death is one of the profoundest paradoxes in both the Christian faith and the Christian life.

[27 : 35] The radical, biblical perspective is to see death not as the termination of life, but as the gateway to life. In short, the Bible promises life through death, and it promises life on no other terms.

What we are doing in this vision series, as we do every vision series, is I'm asking St. Paul's to die a little more to self.

That's what we're doing. And the paradox of this life through death has profound implications for the life of discipleship, and Jesus himself puts it even more bluntly than John Stott, when he says, then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples, and he said, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me, for whoever wants to save their life will lose it.

whoever wants to lose their life for me and the gospel will save it. The condemned criminal on the way to execution is the dramatic image that Jesus chose to help his disciples to understand what it meant to be his disciple, what it meant to be his follower.

What he expects of those who call on his name. And Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in the Cost of Discipleship, when Christ calls a man, he bids him to come and die.

[29 : 15] Now, Jesus' words here about, which is the same as Bonhoeffer, about saving and losing our life, is not restricted to martyrdom, although throughout church history it has been that.

But the word life there equals self. And so to paraphrase Jesus a little bit, it would be something like this, whoever is determined to hold on to themselves and to live for themselves, will lose themselves.

But whoever is willing to die to lose themselves, to give themselves away in the service of Christ and in the gospel will, in that moment of complete abandon, they will find themselves.

And they will discover their true identity and their deepest satisfaction and joy. You see, Jesus promises true self-discovery at the cost of self-denial.

True life at the cost of death. death. That's what 2 Corinthians 5.15 says. Jesus died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.

[30 : 30] That we might no longer live for ourselves. In other words, as Jesus says, you, when you embrace Jesus, you cannot serve something else.

That Matthew 6 reading, you cannot serve two masters. You cannot be the diplomatic service for two sovereigns. So let me just, there's masses of implications for this, for us, to do with our idols, and we're going to get to that in a moment.

But one of the biggest sovereigns, one of the biggest treasures, one of the biggest masters that competes with Jesus for our allegiance in a materialistic Western society is money.

In fact, Jesus was explicit with it in Matthew 6, before there was a materialistic Western society. He says, you cannot serve both God and money. Jesus could have picked a billion things, but he chose money as the rival affection for our hearts and our allegiance.

He put money up there as the major alternative treasure and affection for our heart. The alternative God to be worshipped, the alternative God to idol that demands our allegiance.

[31 : 46] Money has a hole in us because we trust it to deliver what only God can deliver to us. Purpose, significance, worth, identity, and that's why it captures our hearts so much.

It is so easy for us to give our money to what is our Savior, what is our Lord, what is our hope, what is our happiness, our meaning, our significance, our security, our identity.

My ongoing battle, I've told you this many, many times, my ongoing battle is the temple called Bunnings. I find it terribly easy to pay homage there too often with my money in exchange for tools or things that I can use my tools on.

Why is that? It's because my identity, part of my connection is a sense of identity for me about being useful and practical.

That's a real issue. That's the idol. I was affirmed as a young person in skills that I had to do things practical and to work hard. And so I find it easy to spend money on what fuels that part of my identity.

[33 : 01] Now, some of you think of Bunnings and go, Bunnings. I mean, I've convinced my girls it's the greatest shop in the world. But there are other things.

Let me tell you that goes even slightly deeper and slightly more personal for me. When I was in my early stages of a teenager, someone said something, someone very close to my heart, someone who I tried to get approval from in one way or another, said something incredibly derogatory about me, about my appearance.

And I still remember where I was. This is a long time ago, in early teens. It was a long time ago for me. I mean, I'm forgetting all sorts of stuff, but I don't forget this one. I can still remember where I was.

I can still remember the tone in which they said it. And I can still remember how I felt when they said it. And that means that if I'm not careful, I can spend an enormous amount of money, easily drop money on things to do with my identity.

Sorry, about my appearance. Easy to spend money on my appearance. Even back in the days, it's seen me go from a progression from a flanny wearing, you know, Bogan country guy to wearing pink shirts.

[34 : 36] There's been a transition for me. I used to, even when I worked, even when I wore a uniform to work for the national parks many, many years ago, I used to get comments from people about how I used to wear the uniform compared to how everyone else used to wear the uniform.

I was concerned about how I looked because something cut me deep in terms of my identity. And so it's very easy for me to spend money where my identity and my idol's attached.

And so the question is, is, sorry, and it is for you too. I'm just giving you an example. It is for you too. If you're someone who says, well, I don't spend any money at all, you know, I hang my tea bags on the, you know, clothesline to dry them out so I can reuse them.

You know, you're really, really frugal. You squirrel all your money away in investments and stuff like that. You have an idolatry that has to do with security. You want to control your world via your investments.

So security is your idol. You have the same issue, just a different idol. So the question is, is my identity wrapped up in Christ or in who I am in him or because of people think I'm useful, practical in the way that I dress or my appearance in some kind of way?

[36 : 04] Well, in one level, it's both, which is why the battle rages for me. Every time I go to Bunnings, every time I go down to Westfield, the battle rages for me in a way that it doesn't rage for me, as I've said before, if I go into spotlight.

There's no battle for me there. I'm not tempted to part with my money in spotlight. It's just not me. For some of you, it will be the bookstore or for your education.

I know people who finish one degree and do another degree and then finish that degree and just keep going on and on and on with education. And they buy libraries and libraries of books and resources because at some point in their life, they've been made to feel stupid.

So there's identity wrapped up in there and so they'll throw money at trying not to be made to feel stupid. For some of us, it's philanthropy because you've been affirmed in giving money away.

And so ironically, the very thing that I'm calling you to do tonight is the thing that might challenge your idol or affirm your idol. Well, the point is what I'm saying is that money reveals what we truly treasure.

[37 : 19] And it seems to me that if we do not have the freedom to joyfully give our money away in eye-popping proportions, it's because something besides Jesus is our functional Lord and Savior. We're giving our money to some other God, some other Savior, some other Lord.

And so how do we break the power that money has over us? Is to see the gospel of the Lord Jesus, see everything that we have in him and to realize the thing that we're putting our money into will not give us the very thing that we need.

You can have all the money in the world, a GFC here, so you don't have security. Jesus offers you security for eternity. He's the one who gives you what you need.

Radical generosity is not a different subject than knowing and being known by God through the Lord Jesus. Radical generosity is a value that displays the wonder of the gospel. Paul puts it like this in 2 Corinthians 8, a couple of chapters later than what we've been looking at.

The Corinthians are failing to follow through in their commitment to raise money for ministry. And he says, see that you also excel in the grace of giving. I'm not commanding you, but I want a test and sincerity of your love.

[38 : 26] For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich here, for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. Every single person sitting in this room tonight has set their heart on something.

And whatever it is, you will do anything for it, you will pay any cost for it, anything to maintain it, sustain it, reclaim it. And Jesus Christ came and died for us.

And why would he do that? At least one answer is that you and I are his heart's treasure. Every other treasure in this world will insist that you die, that you purchase it, that you sacrifice in order to obtain it.

I have spent copious amount of money in Bunnings over a very long time. And before that it was Mitre 10. Over a very, very long time. Very, very long time. And in clothing stores. Over a very, very long time. And not one single cent that I've spent has ever, ever dealt with the identity issue.

[39 : 29] Ever. Every other treasure will insist that you keep purchasing, that you keep sacrificing in order to give you what it cannot give you.

And Jesus is the only treasure that died to purchase us. And so the way that we break the hold of money over our lives and the other treasures and the idols of our lives is to think about the radical generosity of Christ to us.

To dwell on the infinite value of Jesus until we get the freedom to joyfully give generously. And when we see Jesus dying on the cross because he so loved the world, that he so loved you, then only then and only then will we love him.

When we see that we are his greatest treasure, then he will become our greatest treasure. And the advice of the Apostle Paul here is don't sit down with a calculator. Sit down with the cross.

Think about Jesus. What he did, what he's given, what he has promised until it causes us to be generous like he is generous. Now let me tell you, this is so essential for us on a very practical level right now as a church.

[40 : 38] For us all to grapple with. The vast majority, the financial resources of this church come from 20% of our people. And when I say vast resources, I mean the vast.

20%. We are heavily weighted to a very small portion of people. And that's why I do not believe that the 12% increase of giving that we're looking for for next year, that's just to pay the bills that we currently got.

Or the 70,000 that Jimmy told us about that we're seeking to raise next week, I don't believe either of those goals are impossible. Why?

Because we've already got the money. That's the good news. The bad news is it's in your pockets and wallets and bank accounts.

That's the bad news. All it would take is for the majority of us to be captured by God's vision of all things and for Jesus to be our greatest treasure. And so here's what you do in the next week.

[41 : 44] is as we head towards Vision Sunday, is to get your Vision Series devotion, devotion booklet. I'm so grateful for Sam for putting these together.

And what I want to encourage you to do is to grab this, go to number 1, 12, 13, 14, and 15. Five in the next seven days. 1, 12, 13, 14, and 15. Pour over them.

Pray over them. And having done that, plan to take one step further in treasuring Jesus. I'm asking you, as a church, to take one further step to dying to self.

That's it. If you're currently not giving, start giving. If you're a regular giver, start giving regularly. If you're a regular giver, but you're only giving a really small portion of your income, which is standard practice across churches in our country, take a step towards getting into God's ballpark of the 10% at least.

And if you're a regular and you're a proportional giver, take a step towards extravagant giving beyond 10%. I don't believe it's ever meant to be a limiter. I think it's meant to be a starting point. I firmly believe that our experience in giving will be joy when we see and we savour Jesus as our greatest treasure.

[43 : 08] And I believe the way we do it is by making things like, passages like Philippians 3, 7 to 8, more and more real for us. In my words again, Yeah, I love that last bit.

I have suffered the loss of all things. He's not moping about it. He's saying, actually, they're rubbish. In order that I might gain more and more and treasure Jesus more and more.

We are united in our desperation for the world around us to encounter Jesus.