

# Three Big Obstacles

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 16 June 2024

Preacher: Rev Thomas Davis

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you very much indeed, Callum, and it's a great privilege to be here with you this evening. It's lovely to see you all again, and I was very grateful for the opportunity to help Callum out and to be with you tonight.

When I mentioned to Carlway this morning that I was preaching in Stornoway tonight, somebody said to me, are you preaching James McKeever out? And I hadn't really thought of that. No, I'm not really here to do that, but I do want to take the opportunity to give my very, very best wishes to James and Donna and to express my sincere thanks for all that he's done for the congregation here, but also for the church more widely in many, many years of faithful service to the Lord.

Well, we're here to worship God together, and we rejoice that we come together in the name of our risen Saviour, Jesus. And we're going to sing to his praise from Psalm 95 in the Scottish Psalter on page 357.

Psalm 95 in the Scottish Psalter, page 357, singing verses 1 to 6. O come, let us sing to the Lord. Come, let us, everyone, a joyful noise make to the rock of our salvation.

[ 1 : 10 ] And that's the amazing privilege that we have as we gather to worship again this evening. We are coming together. We are singing to the Lord. We are bringing our joyful noise before him.

So we'll do that as we stand and sing together. O come, let us sing to the Lord.

Come, let us, everyone, a joyful noise make to the rock of our salvation.

Let us, everyone, a joyful noise.

Make a joyful noise. For God, a great God and great King, above all gods he is.

[ 2 : 51 ] The Lord, a great God and great King, above all gods he is.

Yes, God. Together you more, a brings of■■■ zeal. At Christ, Peter. You know a gráfic illustrator. It sing to this church. You may what?

O come, please, all thoughts it sua■■test. O come and let us worship him, let us bow down with all. And honor it before the Lord, our maker let us call.

Let's pray together. Father, we are so thankful that we can come to you this evening, that we can come and gather together publicly, that we can meet together in the name of your son, Jesus, and that we can come together knowing that you've promised to be here.

[ 4 : 42 ] And as we come into your presence, we come to worship you. We come before you, our maker. We come to bow down before you. And we are so, so thankful that we have this privilege.

It's such a brilliant way for us to start a new week, to come together morning and evening on the first day of the week, to rejoice in the reality of Jesus's resurrection, to come together and to be renewed and refreshed in the joy and peace and hope of the gospel, and to be reminded of everything that you have done for us through your son.

We're so thankful that we can come here to worship you, knowing that you're present with us, that by your spirit you are always with us, that you've promised to never leave us nor forsake us. You've promised to be with us all the days to the very end of the age.

And Father, we just thank you for that so much because we acknowledge before you tonight that we need you so, so much. And so often we wonder and we go our own way and we come tonight confessing our sin before you.

We come acknowledging that our thoughts and our words and our actions are so often short of what your word commands. So often we do stuff that we should not do and we fail to do the things that we should.

[ 5 : 57 ] And we're frustrated and disappointed in ourselves. And we come to you with repentant hearts, confessing our sins. But we also come on the, we come standing not on our own strength,

but we come standing on the promises of the gospel, that the blood of Jesus Christ washes away every sin.

And that in you we can have perfect redemption. And in you we can have healing and cleansing and restoration. And so we come so thankful that the gospel gives us hope.

And we come, Father, and you to be, to be, for our hearts to be cleansed and renewed and refreshed in the truth and the joy of the gospel of your son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we come to worship you and we come also to hear your voice. And we pray, Father, that you'd be preparing our hearts to hear your word. We pray that we would be receptive to it, that our minds would be attentive, that we would have understanding, that we'd be able to see how we can apply your word to our lives.

And we pray that your word would be pressed right into our hearts so that it would shape the way that we think and the way that we speak and the way we react and the things that we aim for and the things that we long for would all be shaped by your word.

[ 7 : 15 ] And so we pray that you would speak to every single one of us and that your word would be reaching each one of us and we know that your word will not return to you empty.

We thank you for everybody who's here tonight. We pray, Father, that your blessing would be upon each one. And we come all from very different circumstances. And we come with just this week will have been different for all of us.

For some, it might have been a really good week. For some, a really hard week. For some, maybe a mixture of joys and sorrows. And we come to you with different burdens and different fears, different doubts, different anxieties.

And we just come and lay it all before you. And, Father, we don't want to hide anything from you.

We know that we can't and we don't want to. We just want to lay our hearts open before you.

And we pray for every single person here that every single one would hear your voice speaking to them and would know the nearness of your presence. And that you would draw us all closer to you.

[ 8 : 18 ] That for all of us who are following you, that we would be renewed and refreshed in our walk as disciples. For those who have maybe wandered from you or feel that their faith is fading or that their love is growing cold.

We pray that you would renew them and refresh them and wrap your arms around them and you tonight. And for any here who maybe do not yet know you, for those who are seeking you, or for those who are maybe just really not sure at all.

We pray, Father, that you would open our eyes and reveal yourself to us in the most powerful way that we've ever experienced. And that your word would just press into all of our hearts and that you would meet with us and speak to us and draw us closer to you.

We pray for the congregation here that you would bless them in all the work that they are doing.

And as they reach such a significant milestone with James retiring, we pray for the congregation that they would be so aware that pastors are always only ever under shepherds, that the great shepherd is Jesus Christ and he is the same yesterday, today and forever.

And may they know the stability of your promises and your presence. And we pray that as they look ahead to the future, as they seek your guidance, we pray that they will be renewed and energized and strengthened for the work that you've given them to do.

[ 9 : 40 ] And we pray for all the work of the gospel here, that this congregation would continue to be a beacon of hope and light and joy to the town of Stornoway.

And we pray that the years to come would be years of great renewal and refreshing for this congregation and for the whole town, that there would be spiritual awakening and that the reality of eternity would be pressed onto people's hearts and that people would come to hear the good news of Jesus and come to find the hope and the peace and security that only he can give.

And so please bless the work of the gospel here. We pray for James and Donna, that you would bless them abundantly as they move into this new chapter. And we pray that their retirement would be a refreshing time, but also a very, very fruitful time as they continue to serve you.

And we pray too for Colm and for Joanne as they serve you here, that they would be upheld and strengthened by you and that you'd bless all the work that they're doing for you.

And everybody else involved in the congregation, the elders and deacons, everybody involved in the different activities that happen each week, we pray that they'd be renewed, encouraged, energized and strengthened by you as they continue the work of the gospel here.

[ 10 : 52 ] And what we pray for this congregation, we pray for the church worldwide. And we thank you that as we gather this evening, we gather as part of a family of believers that extends all across the world.

And we pray that you would build up your church all across the nations. And we pray that you would especially help those who are facing opposition and persecution, but also maybe help those churches in areas where they've maybe felt things declining over recent years.

We pray for renewal and we pray that your church would just thrive this week and in all the weeks that lie ahead. We pray all of these things, Father, so that your name would be glorified.

And we pray that this week and every week of our lives would be lived for you. And we ask that you would bless us anew and have mercy on us in our time together just now. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing again this time from the Sing Psalms version of Psalm 57, and that's on page 75.

[ 12 : 00 ] Sing Psalms version of Psalm 57, and we're going to sing from verse 7 to the end of the psalm. My heart is steadfast, Lord, with music I will sing.

Awake, my soul, wake harp and lyre, my song the dawn will bring. If you know Psalm 57, you'll know the early part of it speaks a lot about being in distress and calling out to God for help.

And then these last verses just speak of the assurance and stability that God gives us in his great love. So we'll stand and sing verses 7 to 11 to God's praise.

My heart is steadfast, Lord, with music I will sing.

Awake, my soul, wake harp and lyre, my song the dawn will bring.

[ 13 : 05 ] Among the nations, Lord, to you I will give praise.

Among the peoples of the earth, my songs of you I'll raise.

Great is your steadfast love, which reaches to the sky.

Your constant faithfulness, O Lord, extends to heaven high.

Above the highest ends, O God, exalted thee.

[ 14 : 11 ] And over all the earth, the hope, display your majesty.

Reading this evening is from Matthew chapter 11. Thank you. Matthew 11, and we'll read the whole chapter together.

When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

Now, when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?

And Jesus answered them, Go and tell John what you hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, and lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear.

[ 15 : 29 ] And the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me. As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John.

What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in king's houses.

What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women, there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

[ 16 : 41 ] But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates. We played the flute for you, and you did not dance.

We sang a dirge, and you did not mourn. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, he is a demon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, look at him, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds. Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent.

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

[ 17 : 49 ] But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you. At that time, Jesus declared, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Amen. May God add his blessing to the reading of his word. Well, before we come back to that chapter, we're going to sing again, this time from Psalm 36 in the Scottish Psalter on page 251.

Psalm 36 on page 251, singing from verse 5. Thy mercy, Lord, is in the heavens.

[ 19 : 09 ] Thy truth doth reach the clouds. Thy justice is like mountains great. Thy judgments deep as floods. Five to nine, and we'll stand and sing together to God's praise.

Thy mercy, Lord, is in the heavens.

Thy truth doth reach the clouds. Thy justice is like mountains great.

Thy judgments deep as floods. Lord, thou preservest man and beast.

How precious is thy grace. Therefore, in shadow of thy wings, and sons their trust shall place.

[ 20 : 20 ] They with the badness of thy heart shall be well satisfied.

From rivers of thy pleasures, the will drink to them provide.

Because of life, the fountain pure remains alone with thee.

And in that purest light of thine, we clearly light shall see.

Amen. Just as we turn to God's word, let's pray for a moment.

[ 21 : 35 ] Father, we pray that as your word is open before us, that we will be open before you.

Please give us ears to hear. Please give us minds that understand. And please give us hearts that burn with love for you and for one another.

Amen. Well, I'd like us to turn together to Matthew chapter 11. And I want us to look at the whole chapter.

So as we start, perhaps we can read again the very first verse and then the last couple of verses as well. So starting at verse 1, we read, when Jesus had finished instructing his 12 disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

And then going all the way down to verse 28, we hear the very famous words that Jesus said, Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

[ 22 : 47 ] At this time in Jesus' ministry, he has sent his disciples out to go proclaiming the message of the kingdom of God. And you see in the previous chapter that Jesus spends a lot of time preparing his disciples for that work.

They are to go out as his messengers. And as Jesus gets them ready, and as he prepares them to go out as his messengers, he warns them that as they go out with the message of the gospel, there's one thing that they and we are guaranteed to find in the mission field that we go into.

They're going to find obstacles. Now, when we think about obstacles to Christianity, we can immediately think of opposition.

So we think of people who are opposed to the gospel, people who are hostile to the church, and people who will deliberately try to hinder and oppress the work that Jesus has given his people to do.

And that is a reality. That does happen. Jesus himself experienced it. The early church experienced it. And many Christians today around the world also experience it.

[ 24 : 04 ] But opposition, external opposition to the gospel is not the only obstacle that Christianity faces. And I think we can maybe even say that external opposition is not the biggest obstacle that we face.

And I think one of the reasons we can say that is because if you look at the history of the church, one thing that you'll discover that's very, very true again and again is that when the church is oppressed, it actually grows. And the efforts to stop the advance of the kingdom has never, ever stopped Jesus from building his church.

And so if we're thinking about obstacles in front of the gospel, stuff that happens out there and particularly hostility and opposition towards the gospel is not necessarily the biggest problem. And that's because there's other obstacles that can get away of the gospel. And that's exactly what we find in Matthew chapter 11. We read that Jesus goes out preaching and teaching and as he does so, he encounters three big hurdles.

And I want us to think about these together because we encounter exactly the same thing. We see these hurdles in the people around us and we also see them in our own hearts.

[ 25 : 30 ] And these are obstacles that will either stop us from coming to Jesus or if we are following Jesus, they will hinder us as we try to walk with him.

What are they? Well, the three big obstacles we're going to think about tonight are being unsure, being unfust, and being unteachable.

Unsure, unfust, unteachable. We see all of these in this chapter and so I'll explain a little bit more about what they mean to begin with and then we'll see what lessons we can learn from them.

So number one, being unsure. We see that at the very beginning of the chapter. If you look again at verse two, we see, when John the Baptist heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another? John the Baptist is one of the most important figures in the Bible and it's important to remember that even though we read about John the Baptist in the early chapters of the New Testament, really John is the last of the Old Testament prophets.

[ 26 : 45 ] And as Jesus explains in this chapter, he is the messenger that is sent to announce that the Messiah is coming. And if you know about the story of John the Baptist, you'll know that he preached in the middle of nowhere but crowds flocked to hear him.

He called people to repentance. He challenged the authorities who were oppressing people at that time. He baptized Jesus. He saw the Holy Spirit descend on him like a dove and he pointed people to Jesus saying, that's him.

Behold, the Lamb of God. And so in terms of the Bible and in terms of theology, John the Baptist is a giant and yet here we find him doubting.

He's unsure. Despite all that he saw, despite all that he experienced, now he's in prison and he's just not sure.

And that obstacle of being unsure has been a huge challenge for the church ever since. It affects us as Christians so often. And so although I'm sure every believer in here can think of moments where things felt great, think of high moments in their experience when they felt confident and strong and so assured and so certain that God was there and so aware of his love.

[ 28 : 15 ] There's maybe times when you can think of that and yet I'm sure there's been many times when you thought, is this real? Can I be sure about this?

Am I a Christian? Does God ever actually hear me? Is he even there? And for people who aren't yet Christians, I'm fairly confident that there are very few people, if anybody in here tonight, who says, I am philosophically hostile to Christianity.

I object to it on philosophical grounds. I am opposed to that message and I am not willing to consider it. I doubt anybody in here is thinking like that but I am sure that there are people in here tonight or people watching online and they're saying, I'm just not sure.

I'm not opposed to Christianity. In fact, I respect it. But I'm just not convinced. So often we face that obstacle of being unsure. Second obstacle Jesus encountered is the obstacle of people being unfussed.

You see that in verse 16 and 17. Jesus says, But to what shall I compare this generation? It's like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, We played the flute for you and you did not dance.

[ 29 : 40 ] We sang a dirge and you did not mourn. Here, Jesus is describing the general public, the people that he has been encountering, this generation as he calls them, in verse 16.

And then in verse 20 to 24, he talks about the towns where he has visited and where he's preached. And in describing these places, he doesn't say that they're hostile.

He doesn't say that they're aggressive. He doesn't say that they're atheists. None of these are the problem. The big problem is that people just aren't bothered.

So if a flute is played, they don't dance. If a dirge is sung, they don't mourn. In other words, the general public is just not that fussed.

And that numbness in the public that means that the stuff that should make them either dance for joy or mourn just bounces off them.

[ 30 : 44 ] They're not interested. They're not fussed. They're not bothered. And instead, people are distracted, uninterested, indifferent. And of course, you can see straight away that it's exactly the same today.

Don't ever think that Jesus lived in a different world from the world that we live in. It's exactly the same just now. Today, we are surrounded by a general public that is just not that fussed.

that numbness. And that numbness is a huge, huge obstacle to the gospel. And so often we see that, that the life-changing message of Jesus, the best news that the world has ever heard is just lost in a fog created by, I don't know, the latest big celebrity news that's come out or the latest thing that we need to buy or the latest video that you need to see on TikTok or whatever it might be.

It's so easy for us to stumble at the obstacle of being unfussed. And then the third obstacle that Jesus encountered in this chapter is people who were unteachable.

You see that in verses 25 to 26. At that time, Jesus declared, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you've hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

[ 32 : 07 ] Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. In summing up everything in this chapter, Jesus gives this beautiful description of how God does not choose the intellectual elite of the day.

He doesn't choose the experts to be the first recipients of the gospel. And as he does that, he insists that instead the gospel is being revealed to people who are like little children.

It's not for the big, important, know-it-alls. It's for the people who will come like a child. And there's loads that we could say about that. I want to focus on the fact that these verses are revealing and reinforcing another massive obstacle to the gospel, the obstacle of being unteachable.

For the religious leaders, for the intellectual elite, the fact that they were wise and understanding was not actually an advantage. It was an obstacle because it meant that they were unteachable.

They thought they knew it all and so they weren't willing to listen. Jesus went to preach and teach in their cities. People ignored him because they didn't think that they needed to learn anything.

[ 33 : 27 ] And again, that's still a massive obstacle that we face today. Many people resist the teaching of Jesus not because they're aggressive and hostile but because when it comes to the big questions of life, they're already confident in their own answers.

They're settled in their mind and they do not feel that they need to be taught by Jesus. And yet, the whole concept of being teachable is fundamental to being a disciple of Jesus.

That's what the word disciple means. It means to be a learner. And that's exactly what we have to do in order to become disciples and in order to live as disciples. We need to learn from Jesus.

But in order to learn, we need to be teachable. In order to be teachable, we need to acknowledge that there's stuff that we don't know. In order to acknowledge that there's stuff that we don't know, we have to admit our weaknesses.

And that's maybe the hardest thing of all. So often, we're held back by the obstacle of being unteachable. And so these are the three big obstacles that you see in this chapter.

[ 34 : 36 ] Being unsure, being unfust, being unteachable. What's all of that teaching us tonight?

Well, looking at these three categories, the obvious question that you can start with is saying, well, which one are you?

Are you unsure? Or are you unfust? Or are you unteachable? And thinking, well, which one of these categories do I fall into? Am I like John the Baptist? Am I like the crowds that weren't responding? Am I like the religious elite that refused to listen? And we might think, well, maybe I'm more in this category. You might think of other people and think, well, they're definitely in that category. Do you know what the truth is?

I think the truth is that rather than picking one, I think that in lots of different ways, we are all of them.

These are traps that we all fall into. These are obstacles that we all trip up over. And that's true whether you're a Christian or whether you're not sure yet if you're a Christian or not.

[ 35 : 44 ] We all have times when we're unsure. John the Baptist had doubts. We're the same. We all have areas of our lives that are important to God but we're just not that fussed about.

Things that we just try not to think about that we'd rather just stay numb to. And we all have ways in which we're unteachable.

We've all got ways in which we'd far rather people listen to us than we would listen to them. And these obstacles are serious because they will prevent you from becoming a Christian if you're not yet a Christian.

And they will hinder you in your walk with Jesus if you are already a believer. They'll spoil your relationship with your Savior.

So what's the answer? What do we do? Well, when we talk about stuff like this it's very easy to start saying well, you need to rid your life of obstacles and you need to come to Jesus.

[ 36 : 59 ] And in many ways you think well that's maybe what the pattern of the chapter is saying because you've got that great call at the end where Jesus asks us to come to him and we're thinking okay, right I can see these hurdles in my life I need to overcome them and get back to Jesus.

And so you kind of almost imagine you're on a journey home and you're crossing maybe you're going across the moor or something maybe it's just because I've driven from Carly I'm thinking in these terms but you've got to climb over all sorts of obstacles you've got to get over fences and ditches and walls and you'll get there.

And so I could say to you if you can jump over the ditch of being unsure if you can push through the bog of being unfussed if you can break down the wall of being unteachable then you'll get to Jesus and then everything will be fine.

I could stand here and say you need to overcome the obstacles and come to Jesus. It would be so easy to say that but I don't think that's what this chapter is saying and I don't think that that's what the gospel is telling us to do.

the gospel is not saying overcome the obstacles and get to Jesus. The gospel is saying come to Jesus and the obstacles will disappear.

[ 38 : 26 ] And that's summed up in the amazing words that Jesus makes at the end of the chapter in verse 28. Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. Jesus is saying come to me and learn from me.

And that's what we need to do when we face these obstacles we need to go straight to Jesus and learn from him. And these obstacles will disappear. So that means when you are unsure come to Jesus and learn from him.

You see something so amazing in this chapter that when John's message of uncertainty comes to Jesus Jesus gives him such a brilliant reply. He says to them in verse 4 go and tell John what you hear and see.

The blind receive their sight and the lame walk. Lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear and the dead are raised up and the poor have good news preached to them and blessed is the one who is not offended by me. The key words are these go and tell them what you see and hear.

[ 39 : 36 ] In other words Jesus points the unsure person to objective verifiable truth. Now this is incredibly important in terms of our understanding of Christianity and our whole view of the gospel because so many people get this wrong.

So many people think that faith is believing in something that's vague and mystical and something that doesn't necessarily tie in with the facts so we think well yes I've got facts over here but I've got my faith over here and I'm just going to hold on to that even though it doesn't align with the facts. That's not the gospel. That is not the gospel. That's not the way Christianity works. In fact if you want the best example of that kind of separation between faith and facts one place where you see it quite tragically is in secular humanism's approach to death because you will see people who are humanists whose world view is saying that there is no God that there is nothing supernatural that there is nothing beyond this life and yet when someone they love dies they will say that they're with

us that they're watching over us that we'll meet again and I can completely understand why people are saying that because a cold harsh consistently secular view of death is something that very few people can actually live with but that idea that there's something that idea that we'll meet again that idea that there's another side that's not faith that's guessing faith in terms of how the Bible understands it is not guesswork it's not vague it's not blind it is grounded on objective verifiable truth and that's why when John comes with his doubts

Jesus doesn't say to him keep the faith feel the energy be true to yourself and everything will be fine he doesn't talk like that instead Jesus says to the messenger go and tell John the facts about what you've seen and heard real blind people have received their sight real lame people walk real people who are lepers have been cleansed and it's all reminding us that the gospel is grounded on objective verifiable truth in other words it's grounded on stuff that's real the miracles of Jesus really happened the ministry of Jesus really happened the betrayal arrest and crucifixion of Jesus really happened and most importantly of all the resurrection of Jesus really happened these are objective truths they're real events that really happened and they're verifiable through the historical record that the Bible gives us and that's why eyewitness testimony is at the heart of the gospel it's the heart at the heart of the New Testament's message the New Testament is not a collection of religious meditations it's an eyewitness record

Christianity is not grounded on stuff that we hope is true it's grounded on stuff that is true and you might be skeptical of that maybe you do reject it maybe you know people who reject it if that's the case I want you to imagine that Matthew was sitting next to you right now that he was sitting in the pew next to you and if you're watching at home sitting on the sofa beside you and you could turn to him and say Matthew see all this stuff you wrote it didn't happen you were wrong I think if you said that Matthew would say to you hold on a minute I was there I was there and I saw it and when John comes to Jesus with his doubts and his uncertainty that's what Jesus is pointing him towards verifiable objective truth and the amazing thing about this you might think why is Thomas going on about this the thing that's so important about this about objective verifiable truth is that it means that no matter how much you doubt that has absolutely no bearing whatsoever on the fact that it's true doubts don't change facts doubts don't change the truth some facts some facts are hard to believe [ 44 : 17 ] I find it hard to believe that my heart beats every single second of my life since my mother's womb I find it hard to believe that that it's just beating when you're standing here it's beating more like this and your heart is beating and beating and beating and beating I find it hard to believe that in the last 80 odd years there's been 7 billion child births on planet earth but it's true I find it hard to believe that there's this thing that I can't taste I can't see I can't smell I can't touch I can't feel and it keeps all of us on the ground and in fact it holds the universe and the orbiting of planets and everything together gravity I find it hard to sometimes believe that there's this thing that I can't feel that it can still pull me to the ground but my doubts have no effect whatsoever on the fact that these things are true and that's so true about the gospel because your doubts which we all have your doubts have no effect whatsoever on the fact that all of this is true and that's why if you're unsure

Jesus is saying come to me and learn from me learn the facts from me everyone doubts the greatest doubt John the Baptist doubted and he was fulfilling the prophetic appearance of Elijah Elijah doubted as well if you look at his life these guys all had incredible experiences and you have maybe had incredible experiences but the certainty and the high of those incredible experiences don't always last the distance but what will last is objective truth the fact that you are safe and the fact that if you're trusting in Jesus he is everything that you need often we are plagued by the same question as John that question shall I look for another shall I look for another so some people find that Jesus is too much for them and they're like I don't really want to know about Jesus and they just kind of push him away I think more people find that Jesus is not enough for them and that's true for

Christians and it's true for unbelievers and we feel this need to look for another we think yes I've got Jesus but should I look for another and so we look for security in our health or in our possessions we look for a sense of self-worth and identity in what other people think of us we look for attention and affirmation on social media we look for hope in politics we look for joy in sport and if we are doing that if we are looking for meaning and security and hope and peace in another it's because we're looking at Jesus and we're unsure we're unsure that he's enough and we all do that from time to time we all struggle with doubts but if you are struggling with doubts if you're a Christian who is

struggling with doubts I want you to imagine that right now you could do what John the Baptist did remember John the Baptist got one of his friends to say go and ask him go and ask him and so I want you to imagine that you can do the same imagine that right now you could send a messenger to

Jesus in heaven and say are you the saviour who is to come or should I look for another am I really safe and secure with you and I think that if you did that Jesus would say to your messenger go and tell them what you see and hear and your friend would come back saying I saw Jesus at the right hand of the father and I heard him praying to the father and he mentioned your name loads of times and I saw your name written in permanent ink in his book of life and I saw God the father smile when I mentioned your name and I saw that they were preparing a place for you and when you think about all that you realize I don't need to look for another in Jesus I have everything that I need another way to think about it is to ask the question where do you feel you're most special what when I ask that question what pops into your head where do you feel that you're most special now there's lots of things that make us feel special but where do you feel at your most special is it with another so is it when you do well at work and you come on thinking I've done really well at work today is it when you get really good results in school is it when you're getting on really well with your friends is it when you go and get some exercise is it when you get lots of attention on social media if it is then it means that even if you're a Christian you don't understand

Christianity well enough yet because the place where you are at your most special is when Jesus is looking at you that is when you are at your most special most precious because you are never as special anywhere else as you are to him and all of this is reminding us that when we are unsure when we feel like our faith is wobbling we don't need to fix those doubts in order to get back to Jesus we just need to get back to Jesus and come to him and learn from him and he will take all those doubts away that's such an important reminder for us as Christians and if someone's not yet a Christian when you doubt where do you go where do you go when you're unsure when you're unsure about life and death and time and eternity and life and meaning and purpose and who you really are if you are unsure about that stuff where do you go when you're unfussed is our second hurdle the second ones are much quicker

[ 50 : 49 ] I won't be as long with these when you're unfussed what do you do you come straight to Jesus and learn from him now this obstacle again confronts us as Christians and it confronts us if we're not yet a Christian and a good way of diagnosing this question of being unfussed is to ask yourself what makes you mourn and what makes you dance what makes you mourn and what makes you dance and all too often the answer to those two questions is that it's stuff that actually doesn't matter very much so if I ask myself the question what makes me dance the answer the instinctive answer is sport so I was hoping that I'd be dancing on Friday night I was actually it was a dirge on Friday night when Scotland played Germany but if Scotland win if they can get something against Switzerland and if they can beat Hungary I'll be dancing in my heart with joy and it's the same with lots of other sporting things

I'm sure loads of people here are the same but you know it doesn't really matter does it it's not really that important and the same same thing happens in terms of mourning except the other way around every day the news is singing dirges to us of all sorts of stuff that's going on in the world we see suffering and injustice and oppression and yet I ask myself do I really mourn when I see that or does it just bounce off me I just see it again and again and it just bounces off me and sometimes I realise that I dance about things that don't really matter and I fail to mourn about things that do Jesus responds to that obstacle of being unfussed by talking about a crucial but probably a surprising topic he talks about judgement and so if you are unfussed

Jesus is saying come to me and learn about judgement now you hear that and you think oh man that sounds a bit heavy and we kind of recoil from that idea of judgement and you know when you look at Matthew 11 you have these beautiful words at the end where Jesus is saying come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and then you just look a few verses back and he's talking about all sorts of judgement and you think how can these things go together but we mustn't come to that conclusion we mustn't think that these things are incompatible what we have to remember is judgement is actually an incredibly precious thing and I think that we can prove that I think we can prove that judgement is a very precious thing when we see something that is seriously wrong in life we don't hear people say we demand judgement people don't tend to say I want judgement I need judgement I long for judgement people don't tend to say that instead they say something else they

say we demand justice people see something that's seriously wrong and they demand justice they crave justice they want the wrong to be put right but look at those two phrases we demand judgement we demand justice what's the difference nothing it's talking about the same thing it's talking about exactly the same thing that means that when

Jesus responds to our unfussedness by teaching about judgement he's not being harsh or heavy he's actually talking about something that every human heart craves humanity shouts we demand justice when we see something that's wrong do you know who demands justice most of all God and that's why the day of judgement that this chapter speaks about is not a day of fire and brimstone and divine brutality it is a day of impeccable justice it's a day when everything that's wrong will be called to account and all of that makes perfect sense what is the one thing that oppression and injustice need in order to thrive if you think about a society where corruption oppression injustice thrives what's the one thing that's needed for that to happen you need a society where people aren't fussed and they just turn a blind eye while all these things begin to emerge weeds don't get very far in a garden if the gardener is very fussy but they'll thrive if he's not bothered and that's why Jesus responds to the not botheredness of this generation by talking about judgement and at the heart of that is the fact that the judgement of God is going to put right the things that are wrong that's why God's judgement is such a wonderful thing it's putting right everything that's wrong and that's why Jesus is calling these towns and these cities and us to repent because repentance is a turning away from injustice it's a turning away from what's wrong it's a turning towards

Jesus towards the one who is righteous to his very core and it's all reminding us that to Jesus right and wrong matter injustice and oppression matter discrimination and prejudice matter exploitation and abuse matter if there's one thing that's true about Jesus it's that he is never ever unfussed and that's why we need to be so careful about finding a false security in indifference it's so easy to think that in terms of what's true and false and right and wrong we're safer to be unfussed and maybe there's people in here who are like that you've been raised to know the gospel you've been raised to think about all of this stuff and you think yeah but it's safer I'm just I'm not going to make a conclusion I'm not going to make a judgment I'm going to stay on middle ground we think that's safe it's not safe it's not safe because right and wrong do matter and the tragic thing is that being unfussed is not simply saying you know

[ 57 : 42 ] I'm not going to enforce what I think is right being unfussed is also saying I'm going to turn a blind eye to stuff that I know is wrong and we have to apply the same kind of consistency to a religious position as we would to the ethical situations that we see in the world around us it's so easy to think that it's safer to be indifferent that it's better to be unfussed it's not true if you were to ask a reporter who is in Gaza what do you think of everything that's going on here would you want their answer to be I'm indifferent and on the day of judgment if God asks you what do you think of my son's death do you want your answer to be I'm indifferent there are times when we are all far too unfussed Jesus is saying come to me and learn and then last of all when we are unteachable

Jesus is saying come to me and learn from me I'll be very very brief here because time is running out Jesus is telling us here something that's so important he's telling us that the answer to unteachableness is to come to him not to stay away from him but to come to him we must come to him but if we come to him we have to come to him in a certain way we have to come to him like children that's what he's saying there in verse 25 you've hidden these things from the wise and understanding you've revealed them to little children now we can easily think that that's a bit humiliating and so often that's part of the reason why we're unteachable because we don't want our insecurities exposed but the truth is coming to Jesus with a childlike teachableness is not humiliating it is liberating because it frees us from feeling like we need to impress it frees us from the pressure of having all the answers it frees us from the feeling that we have to prove ourselves and put on this good outward show that makes it look like we understand and look like we're sorted and it's all amazing it's all an amazing reminder that in order to come to

Jesus you don't need to know everything about the Bible you don't need to have all sorts of abilities and skills you don't need to have some kind of amazing experience and you definitely don't need to get yourself up to some kind of elite standard you just need to know that you need him and then you can come to him as you are in many ways that's the defining characteristic of a child it's that they're dependent and that's exactly how we come to Jesus that's exactly how we live our lives as followers of Jesus we come to him as children we come with a childlike faith and we learn from him what's the key difference between a child and an adult the key difference is that children grow adults don't

and that's that's part of what that image of coming to Jesus as a child is teaching us we'll come to him come to him in order to learn in order to grow in order to never stop growing under his care and his protection so these are three big obstacles being unsure being unfust being unteachable these are obstacles that we have to be aware of and the truth is all three of them are exhausting being unsure is exhausting always worrying always doubting always uncertain being unfust is exhausting constantly trying to find a distraction to fill our minds so that we don't have to think about the big questions of life so that we don't have to be confronted by the stuff that really matters and being unteachable is exhausting because we have to constantly try and give this impression that we know it all that we're not silly and that we're not going to make a mistake and we've got to keep up this big wonderful outward appearance of being competent and capable and sorted it's all exhausting and yet in the face of all of these Jesus says come to me and learn from me and the result is that you will find rest you will find rest for your souls if you are recognizing the fact tonight that there are times and ways that you're unsure unfust and unteachable Jesus is not saying sort yourself out he's saying come to me learn from me and I will give you rest may God grant that we'd all come to him amen let's pray Lord Jesus we acknowledge that there's times that we're unsure and there's times when we're unfust and there's lots of times when we're unteachable and we just thank you so much that you are calling us all to come to you and so we do that together just now laying all of these obstacles before you and laying our burdens at your feet and we rest in you in your wisdom your goodness and your indescribable love we thank you so much and we pray that every one of us would be drawn closer to you tonight and we pray that as we go into a new week we be able to live every day of that week with our eyes fixed on you amen we're going to close with sing psalms 34 singing from verse 8 that's on page 40 come taste and see the lord is good who trusts in him is blessed oh fear the lord you his saints with need you will not be oppressed we'll sing 8 to 14 and we'll stand and sing together to god's praise come taste and see the lord is good who trusts in him is blessed oh fear the lord you saints with need you will not be oppressed young lions may grow weak and faint and hunger for their food but those who wait upon the lord will not lack any good come come hear my children gather round and listen to my word and i will help you understand how you may fear the lord does anyone delight in life and long to see

[ 66 : 29 ] good days then keep your tongue from evil speech your lips from lying ways depart and turn from evil paths and practice what is right desire to know the way of peace pursue it with your might as you go into a new week together may the grace of our lord jesus christ the love of god and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you all amen he