

The Cost of Following Jesus

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: 11 July 2021

Preacher: Walt Alexander

[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceathens.com.

! Mark chapter 6, beginning in verse 6b. And he went about among the villages teaching.

And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.

He said to them, Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.

So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. Verse 14, King Herod heard of it.

[1 : 16] So he heard of what was going on. He heard of the message going forth. For Jesus' name had become known. Some said, John the Baptist has been raised from the dead.

That's why these miraculous powers are at work in him. But others said, He is Elijah the prophet. And still others said, He is a prophet like one of the prophets of old.

But when Herod heard of it, he said, John whom I've beheaded has been raised. He explains, For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her.

For John had been saying to Herod, It's not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death, but she could not.

For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. A strange relationship between John and Herod.

[2 : 22] When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.

And when Herodias' daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, Ask for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you.

And he vowed to her, Whatever you ask me, I will give to you up to half of my kingdom. And she went out and said to her mother, For what should I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests, he did not want to break his word. And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head.

[3 : 25] He went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl. And the girl gave it to her mother. When the disciples heard of it, they came and, when his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in the tomb.

Verse 30. The apostles returned to Jesus and told them all that had been, all they had done and taught. It's the word of God.

Several years ago, one Sports Illustrated writer began his weekly column in the following way. It's highly unlikely that anyone not employed by the New York Knicks has witnessed as much of their ineptitude this season as Dennis Doyle, whose adventure with the team now looks more like an ordeal.

Last spring, Doyle, 31, left an unfulfilling career as an attorney and decided to attend all 82 of the Knicks games at an estimated cost of \$25,000.

Doyle went all the way to London last week. Remember they were doing those exhibition games in London? To watch the team drop its 16th straight game, dropping their record at the halfway point to five wins and 23 losses.

[4 : 50] For the Knicks, it has been a season not just of loss but of abandonment. The article continues. Team president Phil Jackson gave up all hope of the playoffs when he traded his two best players.

ESPN cut the team out of the national television picture like an ex-boyfriend, dropping four Knicks games that it had scheduled. Only four for the rest of the season. The New York Times even released its writer that covered the Knicks so he could write about better basketball like a fifth grade girls playing in a boys league in Springfield, Illinois.

As another sports writer tweeted, there is a distinct possibility that by the end of the Knicks games this year, Dennis Doyle will be the only one watching.

Had he anticipated that New York would challenge the 72, 73, 76ers who finished 9-73 for the worst 82-game season, Doyle admits he wouldn't have subjected himself to live viewing every game.

But now he refuses to stop. And I can respect him for that. He says, I committed myself before last season ended. I was going to do this come what may, but I'm only going deeper down the rabbit hole now.

[6 : 07] Now, a season like this really gets to the root of what it means to be a fan. A season like this gets at the root of what it means to be a fan.

I'm a Tennessee football fan, so I can relate. Trial by fire every year. Well, as we study this passage this morning, we're going to come face to face with the things that really get at the root of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

In this passage, Jesus gathers the 12 who have been following him, have been with him, and he sends them out on a mission. They've seen the power of God displayed in the gospel and in and through his works, and now he sends them out two by two to preach the gospel and to lead others to eternal life.

It's a glorious mission that this text captures. It's a wonderfully glorious mission that it captures for them and for us, but carefully woven into the story is a warning of all the trouble the disciples will face in the name of Jesus.

What they will face and what we face as followers of Christ will get at the root of what it means to be a follower. A servant's not greater than his master.

[7 : 24] What we will face will try us, tempt us, and overwhelm us. If we're truly following Jesus Christ, there will be times when we're ready to throw in the towel and give up, but this passage is a gift.

It's an encouragement. It's a boon. It's meant to go down into your heart and press you on a little bit further. So where we're going is let no opposition derail you, preach the gospel, follow Christ, and lead the outcome of your life to God.

Let no opposition derail you, preach the gospel, follow Christ, and lead the outcome of your life to God. First point is following Christ is urgent.

Following Christ is urgent. After being rejected, as we studied last week, from his hometown, he wasn't received by his hometown, Jesus goes out among the villages teaching and then he gathers the 12 to him. If you remember chapter 3 when he gathered the 12 and we got all their names, he gathered the 12 that they might be with him, that they might see him.

And so they saw all these miracles. They were brought into the room when he raised up Jairus' daughter. They were in the boat. Only the disciples were in the boat when he calmed the storm in so many ways so that they might see him, that they might see his urgent mission.

[8 : 39] And here he sends them out. Look in verse 7. It says, He called the 12, and began to send them. Those are the same words from Mark 3, if you're wondering. He called the 12, began to send them out, two by two, gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

You know, we see a wonderful urgency to their mission in several things. We see it in what they are to bring. Look at verse 8 and 9. He charged them, don't take, we see it in what they are to bring, and he said, he charged them, take nothing on your journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in your belts, and to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.

You know, the emphasis, first off, seems to be and what they're not to bring, right? No bread, no bag, no money, no extra tunic.

The idea is to leave everything unnecessary behind and to trust God to provide everything necessary. There's a wonderful promise encapsulated in this command.

If God calls you to a mission, he'll provide. He'll provide for your needs. He always does. George Mueller, historically, is one of the greatest examples of this. He lived on this promise. He ran an orphanage in England determined for the orphanage to live on what the Lord provided.

[9 : 51] He didn't ask for help. He waited. I don't know that I'd commend that for everybody, but he didn't ask for help. He just waited, and he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord provided again and again.

One of the best stories is a breakfast miracle, what it's been dubbed. Early one morning, he led Abigail and the other orphans into the dining room where breakfast was set without food, and he prayed, dear Father, we thank thee for what thou art going to give us to eat, and there was a knock at the door.

It was a baker unable to sleep because he was sure the Lord wanted him to break bread for Mueller and for the orphanage. He said, children, we not only have bread, we have fresh bread. Almost immediately, they heard a second knock.

It was the milkman whose cart had broken down in front of the house, and all the milk was going to spoil, so he said, he brought it in, so it completed their meal.

I just love that. Isn't that wonderful? That's what the Lord does. He loves to provide. But is there something else going on in this command?

[10 : 57] If you think about it. Why is he commanding all these things not to bring? Is Jesus teaching us that it's wrong to plan ahead? It's wrong to have a rainy day fun.

It's wrong to own car. Is it wrong to own things, own cars and homes and things like that? Is Jesus teaching us something more than God provides? Is he teaching us to avoid owning things?

I remember when I first became a Christian, I was a junior at the University of Tennessee. That's when I became a fan. You know, you can't disown it now that you're a fan.

And somebody, I was talking to somebody about the Lord, and they believe that you can't own anything. And we had a long discussion about that, disagreement about what exactly is going on, what exactly is going on with all the things in the New Testament about this.

And I can't take an aside and talk about ownership and things like that. But is there something like this going on? I don't think so. And here's why. Upon closer look, the emphasis is not upon what they're not to bring, but what they are to bring.

[12 : 07] Look back there. He charged them to take nothing except a staff. No bread, no bag, no money in their belt. So they take their belt and they're to wear sandals. A staff, belt, and sandals.

Now listen, on the night of the Passover when the Lord struck down all the firstborn sons of Egypt and he led the people out of Egypt, look at how he told them to eat the meal. We have it for you. Exodus 12, 11.

In this manner, you shall eat with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet and your staff in hand and you are to eat, you shall eat in haste.

That's what's going on here. The emphasis is not upon not owning things. The emphasis is upon the urgency of proclaiming what God is doing. The emphasis is not on renouncing, but on readiness. It's not on protest against things, but on proclamation.

In so many ways, it captures, or it whispers about what we're proclaiming. We're proclaiming a new exodus in Jesus Christ that he is calling people of every tribe, tongue, and nation out of bondage and into the freedom of the children of God.

[13 : 10] Isn't that amazing? No surprise that Ephesians 6 calls us to have our stand with our belt fastened and as shoes for our feet the readiness given by the gospel of peace. There's a wonderful agility that is commanded.

It begs the question, though, do you live with this sense of urgency? Do the things in your life position you for mission or prevent you? Now, obviously, a debtor is a slave to the lender.

There's other ways debt's a problem. It slows you from mission. You can't be generous when you have a massive mortgage. Things like that, not that it's not to have a mortgage, you know what I mean, but there's a wonderful agility that's commended here.

We see the urgency also in what they are to do. Look at verse 10 and 11. Whenever you enter the house, or you got that, whenever you enter the house, if they receive you, stay there. If they don't receive you, kind of shake the dust off.

You know, in a culture familiar with strangers and hospitality and needing places to stay, the disciples were to stay wherever they're welcome. The idea, and the first part, it's just, they're not doing like wish for the next person's house or if they get invited to somebody's house, you know, if there's a better option, don't jump on that one or something like that.

[14 : 18] But if they're not received, if they're rejected, if they're not listened to, that is shake off the dust. Basically, Jesus says, hate or gonna hate, hate, hate, hate. You just gotta shake, shake, shake it off.

Just shake it all off. But in actuality, this command underlines the urgency of the mission. To shake the dust off is a symbolic way of saying, you are on your own.

You're not acting like the people of God. You must turn now in repentance before it's too late. to, to, to, to, there's a, there's, in the preaching of the gospel, there's a, there's a, it's a line drawing message.

You cannot stand on both sides of the line. That's what they're saying. The mission is so urgent that those who hear the gospel must respond now before it's too late. And the mission is so urgent that those who proclaim the gospel must not be delayed by those who do not respond now.

That's why Paul called again and again in the New Testament. At least two times, I remember on top of my head, he says, pray for me that there would be an open door for the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[15 : 34] Not literally a door, but that he would not need to shake the dust off, that they would listen. Does that make sense? So, so, you see the urgency in what they are to bring, what they are to do, and what they are to say.

Look in verse 12. They went out and they proclaimed the gospel. They go out and proclaim. Sure, they cast out demons, they anoint with oil. Wonderfully, people are healed, but like the mission of Jesus Christ, their mission is one of proclamation.

This word, *keruso*, in Greek, it just means to herald, to announce, to broadcast. It's the word that is used again and again for Jesus' ministry in the gospel of Mark.

And just as we get alerts on our phone about an amber alert or about a storm coming in, the disciples were to announce and alert that the king has come. The king has come.

There's a new king and he's come to rescue his people. Repent and believe in this good news. You know, we can't hang out here forever, but this gets at the core of Christianity.

[16 : 43] Tim Keller's helped us understand the gospel is not advice, but good news. And that's what's going on here. Proclamation. It's heralding good news. Right here, we see the difference between Christianity and every other religion.

At its core, every other religion offers advice. Hinduism. Study for a whole semester. It offers advice. A way of identifying with objects and the God behind them.

But at its core, Christianity does not offer advice. This is not God's little book of virtues. It's news.

Every other religion says this is what you have to do to be right with God. Christianity says this is what God has done to be right with you. And that's why we see the urgency. Advice says, pray about it.

Ah, just stick that in your pipe and smoke it a little bit or something like that. Pray about it. But the gospel says, respond. There's a house burning and judgment could fall any day.

[17 : 45] And the only way out of that burning house is the gospel of Jesus Christ. There's one mediator between God and man. There's only one man by which you can cross over the line and that's by trusting in the God man, Jesus Christ.

And so the gospel is about announcing news. And so I announce that news to you. If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved today. Jesus said, if you don't believe, the wrath of God remains on you.

In the red text of the Bible. So how do we proclaim, you know? Do we just say, God is holy, you are not.

Come to Jesus or you will rot. Something like that. I made that up yesterday. Trademarking it though. You know, everybody kind of talks bad about used car salesmen.

I have a few friends that sell used cars so I'm not going to talk bad about them. But if you think about selling your car, I've sold a few on Craigslist and things like that. How do you go about promoting the car?

[18 : 52] You know, I sold one to a high school kid. You know, I was about to go to college. It's like, this is just a great space. Take all your friends in the car. There's great chunk space. Something like that. You know, if it was like an older man that, you know, just going to drive it to the grocery store and back, I'd be like, I got all the oil changed.

This thing will run for years. Or something like that. You get the idea. If you were selling a used car, you'd sell it differently to every person. If you're selling it to an engineer, you would talk about the specs, things I can't talk about like the cubic inch capacity or the double overhead crankshaft.

I would need my friend Mike to come and help me out on that. Or if he's an architect, you'd talk about the sleekness of the design and the beauty. Or a teenager, you would talk about how fast it goes from zero to 60.

Or a sales rep, you'd draw attention to the trunk space or something like that. The same thing you do with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is not preached in one way throughout the New Testament.

Sure, it's a message about God being holy, us sinning against him and needing a mediator, needing someone to stand in our place about Jesus Christ, what he came to do. But you appeal in different ways.

[19 : 59] I don't know if that's helpful, but you're proclaiming the gospel in different ways. If they're burdened with guilt, you can proclaim to them the free forgiveness in Jesus Christ. If they've been kicked around all their life and they're covered with shame, you can proclaim to them the comfort and the adopting love of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

If they're hardened with sin, you can claim to them the reality of judgment and their need to be right with God and to not be hardened. So you're proclaiming, yes, proclaiming and announcing everywhere, but you're doing it persuasively and shrewdly.

Point two, the fallen Christ is dangerous. Falling Christ is urgent because the message is urgent. Falling Christ is dangerous. Before telling the rest of what happens on their story, on their first mission, Mark turns aside and tells us the danger of following Jesus Christ.

Look in verse 14. King Herod heard of what Jesus had done for Jesus had become known. And then there's this little squabble in the court of Herod.

Herod debating about who Jesus is, what's going on. Some say he's John the Baptist raised from the dead. Some say he's Elijah. Others say he's one of the prophets. But Herod said, John whom I beheaded has been raised.

[21 : 20] And we should be thinking, wait, John was beheaded? When did that happen? What's going on?

We heard about him getting taken to prison, but we haven't heard anything else. And so it's interesting, and I'll argue why, but Mark has 13 verses on what happened to John right here in the middle of this verse and their mission to tell us how he died.

There's a couple things that stand out. Herod is a fearful king. There's lots of Herods in the New Testament that can really confuse you. Herod the Great was the one who chased down and killed all the boys after Jesus was born, hunting him down.

Herod Antipas is this Herod. They don't tell you that in the text, but it's this Herod. He's the second son of Herod. He was a king. He was a tyrant like his father.

But the picture here is of a fearful king. He imprisoned John. He had him killed, but John still haunts him, you see. He's saying, John the Baptist has been raised because even though he's killed him, he's still haunted by something about this guy.

[22 : 37] He feared John. The text tells us John shared with him, told him to repent probably, well definitely, and warned him and Herod feared him and it comes out powerfully.

Look at verse 26. It comes out powerfully in his reluctant killing of John. The king was exceedingly sorry. Kind of this pathetic, hands-tied king.

Herodias is a wicked wife. Reminds me of Job's wife or something. You know, Herodias, well, is one with all the power in the story.

She's married to Herod Antipas unlawfully. So Herod was a Jew technically. I mean, by birth he was. I don't think he was true Israel, but he was a Jew and he was married to Herod, or Herod was married to Herodias unlawfully because she was his brother Philip's wife, but he married her anyway and John confronted him and she wanted to put him to death.

The whole story reminds you a bit of Jezebel. We read through that in our Bible reading not too long ago. She plots and schemes, you know, she steals Nabal's vineyard.

[24 : 02] She hunts down Elijah. She opposes the prophets. Well, so too Herodias opposes the prophets of the Lord here. After Herod is beheaded, after John is beheaded, the head is carried into Herod, carried in and given to the mother on a platter.

Just wicked, wicked, wicked. And John is a righteous prophet. Now John is a bit of a wingnut. He enters the gospel with a crazed look on his faith, eating locusts and honey and telling everyone the storm of judgment is coming.

Not exactly someone you'd invite over for the dinner party. So why does Mark devote so much time to the end of his story? He gives us two verses on the temptation of Jesus, three verses on the baptism of Jesus, but 13 on the death of John.

There's a couple things going on. I think it, firstly, it's John, he's saying, he's making it clear that John's a prophet. John's a righteous and holy man, verse 20 says, he prepared the way of the Lord and he was faithful to death, even confronted Herod.

These verses are a bit of a eulogy to John. They're a bit of a way of saying this guy was faithful to the end. Lest anyone be confused that Jesus came and John didn't matter anymore.

[25 : 26] John had a purpose. All the Gospels make that clear, but another reason is to make clear that John suffered a prophet's death. This is going to become clear as we continue through this.

Like so many prophets before him at the hands of people like Jezebel, prophets die. Interestingly, encapsulated in this parallel or in this text are striking parallels between the arrest and unjust death of John and of Jesus.

Both John and Jesus are caught in a carefully devised trap surrounding a feast. Herodias holds a grudge, seeks an opportunity to kill him and finds it in the birthday celebration in a feast.

The chief priests and scribes wait until the Passover, Mark 14, 1, a feast as the opportune time to kill Jesus. Both John and Jesus are handed over to the political leaders.

Both John and Jesus are killed reluctantly by political tyrants. So guys known for killing people don't want to kill them. John by Herod who fears him.

[26 : 39] Jesus by Pilate who washes his hands. You know, that's become so vivid that it's a metaphor we use to wash our hands of responsibility. Both John and Jesus are righteous and holy.

Both John and Jesus die silently as a lamb for its shears. After death the bodies of both John and Jesus are carried away and laid into a tomb. Mark devotes so much space to the death of John to prepare us for what they will do to Jesus.

When they railroad Jesus we will not be surprised. The shadow of the cross begins in Mark 3, 6 when the Pharisees determine to destroy him but the shadow reappears here to see what happens to John and realize what will happen to our Lord.

But there's still another question here and y'all are probably slightly annoyed. Why 13 verses on Herod in the middle of this story about the disciples?

Why another sandwich Mark? Because Mark wants to alert us to the danger of following Christ. If they persecuted John and if they persecute Jesus then they will persecute you and me.

[28 : 03] If they gave John trouble and they gave Jesus trouble they will give you trouble as well. in a book about the gospel Mark Tim Keller retells this old children's story by George McDonald.

It's about a girl named Irene and her fairy grandmother so her not real grandmother. She goes to the attic and every so often her grandmother comes by and is there and she wants to see her more and be able to find her when she's not there so the grandmother gives her a ring with a piece of thread.

She said you hold the ring with the thread attached to it and I'll hold the ball of thread. She tells Irene if you ever find yourself in any danger you must take off your ring lay it under your pillow and follow the thread to me.

Of one thing you may be sure that while you hold it I hold it too. A few days later Irene is in bed and haunted by goblins she hears them approaching and growling outside the door.

So she begins to follow the thread to her grandmother. She begins to follow the thread to safety but the thread takes her outside the house right into the cave of the goblins.

[29 : 28] Inside the cave the thread leads her to a heap of stones that thread leads her to a dead end. So she follows the thread very dutifully all the way outside the house into the cave down to a heap of stones into a dead end.

She tries to go backwards feeling the thread again but it vanishes. The thread only goes forward further into this heap of stones. She begins to wail and cry.

She realizes no one hears her down except for the goblins maybe. She realizes the only way forward is to tear down the wall of stone. So she begins tearing it down. She begins working at making a hole and suddenly she hears a voice behind the heap of stones.

It's Kirti. Kirti is trapped in the goblin's gate. Oh that's why I'm down here. She's trapped there. Why however did you come Kirti said. Irene says my grandmother sent me.

Kirti after Irene removes enough space to create an opening Kirti climbs out the opening but Irene goes deeper into the cave.

[30 : 41] Kirti says why are you doing that? That's not the way out. Irene says I know that but this is the way my thread goes and I must follow it.

That's a bit of what's going on here. When disciples join Jesus in his mission they assume they will do what Jesus did and it'll work.

It'll be like slinging dynamite out. They'll just do mighty works and they'll have success. Not always. They won't always go from strength to strength.

There will be danger in following Christ. They will suffer. So too the Bible says all believers everyone who follows Jesus Christ will suffer. Now it's worth pausing for a few moments here to make some clear statements.

Everything an believer suffers whether it's cancer or natural calamity is a foretaste of final judgment and a warning of the wrath to come. There is no meaning in suffering except warning.

[31 : 50] Why did the tower in Siloam fall? that you might repent. Luke 11 13 But it's not the same for believers.

All their sins have been forgiven. Right? Wonderfully there's no condemnation so there's no more warning. If we respond to the gospel there's no more warning. There's no more wrath.

No more judgment. There's no more disfavor. Displeasure in the heart of God. So why do we suffer? Now you would think naturally there'd be no more suffering for Christians.

Some people say that. Well sometimes we suffer because of sin. The Bible says whoever conceals his sin will not prosper. While God is not punishing us for sin we cannot prosper when we hold sin in one hand and God in the other hand.

Psalm 32 teaches that. Sometimes we suffer because of sanctification. God takes something from us and leads us through something so that we might grow to be more like Christ.

[32 : 58] We suffer sometimes because of sin sometimes because of sanctification. We might assume there's no other reason to suffer but sometimes we suffer unjustly not because of anything we've done and not to rid us of anything.

We suffer unjustly innocently undeservedly yes even as sinners innocently undeservedly unjustly that's the way that's the way John suffers here.

That's what happens when bad things happen to believers. We're not getting what we deserve. We don't deserve wrath and trouble anymore.

When our young child gets cancer and dies. When a wicked co-worker strives to ruin our career. When we're mocked and ridiculed for living for Jesus Christ.

When we are mishandled, mistreated, and taken advantage of by someone stronger and bigger than us. That's injustice.

[34 : 13] It happened to John. It happened to Jesus. It will happen to you. Now, why does this happen? We don't fully know. But as we follow Jesus Christ and we suffer unjustly, we share in his sufferings, the Bible says.

And this suffering is a part of his plan to bring the gospel to a needy world. The world will never listen to those who have it all together.

But to those who've been trampled, killed all day long, like Romans 8 says, they will listen. You've got to keep those things, this could be a breakout session, you've got to keep those things separate.

If you do, they'll change the way you handle trouble. Point three, following Christ is fruitful.

Following Christ is urgent, following Christ is dangerous, following Christ is fruitful. After telling us what happened to John, Mark returns to the disciples and briefly describes their fruit.

[35 : 31] The fruit is almost immediately evident. They cast out many demons, they anoint many with oil. There's wonderful fruit there. The name of Jesus Christ becomes known. Once Jesus Christ departs, the name becomes known.

That's the same thing that was going on in Acts 4, which Brian read for us, the name of Jesus Christ healed. Jesus is at work. In verse 30, we see the disciples, the apostles now return to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.

This is the first time in the gospel of Mark that they're called apostles. They return from the mission. They are the sent ones now. They take up their title.

There's a wonderful thing going on here. Herod may behead John, but he cannot stop the name of Jesus from advancing. So too they may crucify our Lord and a string of followers after him, but no one can stop his name from spreading.

As Tertullian said, the blood of the murderers is the king more powerful. That's what's being whispered here.

[36 : 36] There's a king more powerful than Herod. There's a king more powerful than the emperor in Rome. There's a king of heaven and earth who ensures the advance in the fruit of his gospel even in the face of death.

All that whispered in that little verse, I think. You've likely heard the story about the five missionaries speared in Ecuador in the 50s.

Captured in Elizabeth Elliott's book *Through the Gates of Splendor*. Jim Elliott, Nate Saint, Pete Fleming, Roger Udarian, and Ed McCulley. But I recently heard a part of that story that's just simply incredible.

A number of the Elizabeth Elliott went down there and led numerous people to the Lord. Her daughter, raised her daughter down there. Jim Elliott's wife. Steve Saint also went down there, so it was Nate Saint's son.

Spent a ton of time down there, went back there and saw the conversion of many of the Waldani people, including the very murderers. One of the things Mr. Saint tried to discover when he was down there is why they were killed.

[37 : 50] So there's this massive language barrier. They don't understand what these Christians are doing. They're dropping down pictures of their faces so that they wouldn't be afraid of them. And they knew these guys had killed people.

So they were murderers. They knew that about them and that's why they wanted to take the gospel to them. They went to the dark place, the hardest place. So they're doing all these type things, dropping aid type things to them, trying to befriend them.

So what made them so fearful? What happened? What happened on the beach that day? What pressed them to kill? In the process, he discovered one of the things about the Wodani people that were there that day, what they saw and heard.

Listen to Mr. Saint describe it in his own words. Dawa, one of the three women, told me she had hidden in the bush through the attack, hearing but not seeing the killing of the five men.

She told me she had been hit by gun pellets in the wrist and just above the knee. These obviously came from the guys and they shot off shots into the air, not at anyone, but to try to get them away.

[39 : 00] So these pellets came and landed her, on her. She also told me that after the killing, she saw kawati, which are outsiders.

So she saw outsiders above the trees singing. She didn't know this kind of music. She didn't know what this kind of music was. This is her word.

Until she later heard records from one of the missionaries and became familiar with the sound of a choir. She saw outsiders in the sky, assembled singing in a choir.

Minke and Kimo confirmed that they heard the singing and saw what Dawa seems to describe as angels along the ridge above Palm Beach. Dewey verified hearing the strange music, though he described what he saw more like lights moving around and shining, a sky full of jungle beetles similar to fireflies with a light that is brighter that doesn't blink.

Apparently, all the participants that were there, everyone that was there saw this bright multitude in the sky and felt that they should be scared because they knew it was something supernatural.

[40 : 20] Their only familiarity with the spiritual world was of fear. That's what the Lord is doing when believers suffer.

Scripture says, Psalm 116, precious inside the Lord, the death of his saints. there's a choir. Is this a tragedy?

Is this the end of the world? Everything going on? No. This is advancing the gospel. This is sharing in his sufferings and it's going to march forward come what may. That's incredible.

So let no opposition derail. You preach the gospel. Follow Christ. Leave the outcome of your life to God. It's just over the bend.

Don't give in to opposition. Don't throw in the towel. Wait for it. Finished a long book on Job yesterday.

[41 : 34] If you want some sanity in your life, read Job. God. This is what he said. I think it's a fitting way to end this morning.

We ought to expect that the normal Christian life will be full of unresolved waiting and yearning for God. The normal Christian life. Not your best life now.

This is the mark of a believer of real and personal religion. So we should never be fatalists. A fatalist looks at circumstances and says, what will be will be.

As the song says, there is something, there is some impersonal power up there sorting it all out. Sometimes we Christians say that, but we ought not to.

We ought to say, what is God doing? The God who is my maker, my friend, where is this personal God in all this? If only I might find it.

[42 : 37] Listen, such directed, prayer filled, intentional waiting is the integrating arrow of hope that holds together the authentic Christian life.

That's an incredible statement. Such directed, prayer filled, intentional waiting is the integrating arrow of hope that holds together the authentic Christian life.

so don't let opposition derail. Press on. Preach the gospel and follow Christ.

Let us pray. Father in heaven, we thank you and we praise you, we worship you. We praise you that whatever you ordain is right and you are with us and you will help us.

we offer our lives and our hearts, our affections to you. Pray that you'd help us as we press on to know Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection.

[43 : 43] Not having a righteousness of our own that comes to the law but the righteousness from God that depends on faith. We thank you, we praise you, we worship you.

In Jesus' name, amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.