

How to live with an audience of one

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Date: 02 July 2023

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[0:00] in a little while. I wonder if you could stand up and we'll do a call to worship together. It's Psalm 34, and if I read the italics and you read the second line, that would be great. We'll do this together then.

I will extol the Lord at all times. His praises always be on my lips. I will glorify in the Lord. Let the affected hear and rejoice.

Glorify the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together. And we're going to do that by singing our opening song, which is, Come Lord Jesus.

This is an invitation to him. Come Lord Jesus in your glory. Come and fill this place. Come and have your way among us as we seek your face.

May we see something more of Jesus tonight. So we'll sing. Come Lord Jesus in your glory. Come Lord Jesus in your glory.

[1:15] Come and fill this place. Come and fill this place.

Come and have your way among us as we seek your face. As we seek your face.

May and lay our cares before you. May our striving cease.

As we worship and adore you. Lead us to your peace.

Come Lord Jesus.

[2:18] Our **■**asio. Come?

Make me more and more like you. Change from glory into glory, till we're face to face.

Ransomed, rescued, healed and holy by your saving grace.

Come, Lord Jesus, King of heaven, come in victory.

Now the darkness is defeated, you have set us free.

[3:38] It is finished, death is beaten, the past will become. Every tear will turn to gladness, every battle won.

Joining with the saints and angels, praising you, O Lord.

There will be with you forever our eternal home.

Come, O Jesus, my Redeemer, breathe on me anew.

Searching, glowing Saviour, make me more and more like you.

[5:02] Change from glory into glory, till we're face to face.

Ransomed, rescued, feared and holy by your saving grace.

Thank you, Father God, that we can come into your presence. Thank you for all these promises that we sing to you.

We realise that you've defeated death. You've redeemed us. You're changing us from glory to glory.

Lord, we want to lay all our cares before you today.

And just acknowledge who you are. Lead us in your peace, we pray. Hail the power of Jesus' name.

Let angels prostrate for.

[5:56] We should be the ones that are doing that too. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him Lord of all. Let's sing together. Let angels prostrate for.

Let angels prostrate for. O help of Jesus' name. Let angels prostrate for.

Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him, crown him, crown him, crown him, Lord of all.

Round him, ye martyrs of your God, who from his altar call, extol the stem of Jesse's rod, and crown him, crown him, crown him, crown him, Lord of all.

The seed of Israel's chosen race and crown him, crown him, and crown him, crown him, crown him, Lord of all.

[7:44] Let every king tell every tribe of this terrestrial world To him, O majesty, us cry And crown him, crown him, crown him, crown him, Lord of all O that with a new sacred throne we at his feet may fall Join in the everlasting song and crown him, crown him, crown him, crown him, Lord of all Please be seated.

Heavenly Father, we come this evening to worship you through your Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the only name to grant us access into your presence.

We invite you, Lord, to fill this place with your presence and your power. We want you to have your way among us this evening.

As we seek your face, reveal your glory among us. Lead us in your peace. As we bow before you, speak to us through your word.

Tonight we join with the angels in heaven and hail the power of Jesus' name. He who is the only one able to save the lost by grace through his death and resurrection.

[9:56] We bow before you and acknowledge your majesty. We join with the angels in the everlasting song as we sing.

We acknowledge you, crowned Lord of all. We want to stand on every promise of your word.

Lord of all, Lord of all, you've given us so many promises. You've restored us from guilt to innocence. You've begun a work in each one of us and you will bring it to completion.

And your grace is sufficient. There's nothing that we can add to our salvation or to make you love us any more than you already do. So we thank you for that grace that we receive it by faith.

In Jesus' name. Amen. So we're going to sing again. From the breaking of the dawn to the setting of the sun. I'll stand on every promise of your word.

[11:05] What are we standing on this coming week? We'll stand on every promise of his word. Stand and sing. Amen. From the breaking of the dawn to the setting of the sun.

I will stand on every promise of your word. Words of power strong to say that will never pass away.

I will stand on every promise of your word. For your covenant is sure.

And on this I am secure. I can stand on every promise of your word. When I stumble and I sing.

Condemnation prayer singing. I will stand on every promise of your word. You are faithful to forgive.

[12:32] That in freedom I might live. So I will stand on every promise of your word.

Guilt to live. Guilt to live. Guilt to live. The sun's restored. You remember sins no more. Guilt to live. So I will stand on every promise of your word.

When I'm faced with anguish choice. I will listen to your voice. I will listen to your voice. And I'll

stand on every promise of your word. When I'm faced with anguish choice. I will listen to your voice.

And I'll stand on every promise of your word.

Through this dark and troubled land. You will guide me with your hand. And I stand on every promise of your word.

And you promise to complete every work begun in me.

[13:33] So I'll stand on every promise of your word. Hope that lifts me from despair.

Hope that casts out every fear. As I stand on every promise of your word. Not forsaken, not alone.

For the Comforter has come. And I stand on every promise of your word.

Grace sufficient, grace for me. Grace for all who will believe. We will stand on every promise of your word.

Thank you, Father, for that promise. Thank you for the forgiveness that you've given to us. Thank you that when we do stumble in sin.

[14:37] And condemnation seems to be pressing in. We stand on your promise. Your forgiveness. Your faithful to forgive. We thank you in Jesus' name.

Amen. Drush is going to bring our reading for us this evening. Which is Luke chapter 12 verses 1 to 12. And then George will be bringing God's word to us.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Yes, the reading is Luke 12 verses 1 to 12.

And on page 1044 in your pew Bibles. Okay. Meanwhile, while a crowd of many thousands had gathered so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples saying, Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight.

[15:55] And what you have whispered in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs. I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more.

But I will show you whom you should fear. Fear him who after your body has been killed has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows. I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God.

But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God. And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven.

[16:58] But anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. When you are brought before synagogues, rulers, and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say.

For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say. Thank you. Good evening everybody.

Good evening everybody, really nice to be here tonight. It's been a fabulous day, hasn't it? We had great weather, great teaching this morning, and it's just a real privilege to be here in the house of the Lord.

So just, excuse me while I set myself up. Okay, I'm not that big, otherwise you won't see me.

But listening to Jesus, that's been the theme for a couple of weeks now, and it's so wonderful when we do listen to him. He puts everything in perspective.

[18:15] And tonight we're going to be looking at Luke's Gospel and the first 12 verses, where we're going to be talking about hypocrisy, the ongoing problem. It is, unfortunately.

I don't know how many here tonight still read a newspaper, seems to be going out of fashion. A lot of our news seems to come through the iPad or the television. But it's actually worth getting hold of a broadsheet paper and reading it through.

One of those is the Times. And the Times newspaper, back in the 30s, wrote to leading authors across the country and asked them one question. What's wrong with the world today?

I wonder what you would say to that. What's wrong with the world today? Well, out of those leading authors, one of them wrote back immediately. And he was G.K. Chesterton. And he wrote back a very short reply.

Dear sirs, I am. I am. And I think we'd all say that we're far to the problem. Certainly I consume more than I should.

[19:20] My carbon footprint is probably greater than it should be as well. But if you have time, if you've not already done so, can I say to you, read through the whole of chapter 12.

Because Jesus addresses some of the problems in the world. Problems before God, where we're not following his way. Problems with man. And he lists them out for us.

So hypocrisy is the one we're going to be speaking on tonight. That's in verses 1 to 12. Or coveting. Coveting. Yes, coveting. Is verses 13 to 21.

So we look at somebody who's come in fabulously dressed. And we say, oh, I love that shirt. That dress, whatever it happens to be. Coveting our neighbour's goods. Or his husband.

Or his wife. Whatever. Worrying in verse 22 to 34. We're told, do not worry. Don't worry. But yet we go away thinking, I'm worried. I'm worried about tomorrow.

[20:15] What's going to happen? What about carelessness, verses 35 to 53? Do we really manage God's word? Certainly if you ever get hold of a Quran.

And you are in discussion with a Muslim. Can I suggest to you, you don't put it on the floor. That would be a great insult. Because the Muslim will treat that Quran as God's holy word. And yet, what do we do with our Bible? Bonk on the floor. So be careful with God's word. And then finally, in verses 54 to 59, Jesus talks about spiritual blindness.

The truth is that hypocrisy is an ongoing problem. A problem that Jesus speaks about, not just in Luke, but in all of the synoptic gospels.

So Matthew, Mark and Luke all deal with hypocrisy. These are eyewitnesses. And with any eyewitness, you don't get exactly the same account. They're giving you a view, a similar view, but not exactly the same.

[21:19] So while I'll be examining Luke's account tonight, I'll also be dipping in and out of those other synoptic gospels. And so we should begin by asking, well, what is hypocrisy?

What is it? Well, if we went back to ancient Greek, it would give you one answer, one word. Actor. A hypocrite is somebody who comes on stage with a mask.

They've learned their lines. They will present them very well. And when they go off stage, the mask comes off and they go back to being who they are. Now, Kathy and myself a few weeks ago, seems like a lifetime ago, but only a few weeks ago, went to Stratford-upon-Avon.

Really enjoyed it, if you've not been. And there they got the Royal Shakespeare Company and we thought, oh, that would be a good opportunity to go and hear some Shakespeare. Which I think I've only ever heard one.

But when we got there, they were all touring somewhere else, so that was out. But somebody told us that if you go across the river to the Loft Theatre, and it literally is a tall building, with a lift, which is good, there is a Noel Coward play on Blythe Spirit.

[22:30] And so we did. And there were somewhere 100, 120 people, all on the flat, so all on the same level. And while we were sat here, the actors were about where the furthest microphone was.

They were really close up. So it was very enjoyable. So they put on Noel Coward's Blythe Spirit.

The next week, the same actors were putting on Dracula. They were putting on a mask.

They came out, they'd learned their lines, they were putting on a performance. But when they went away, they weren't going to be out there sucking blood the next week, which I thought was pretty encouraging. So being an actor is all about performance.

I don't know if there are any amateur dramatists here. But if you went to the West End on the opening night, what do all the actors want to do? They all gather together.

They want to know what the critics are going to say about their performance. And they hope it'll say something like, you know, Jane and John were fabulous. And they'll all go, oh, lovey, we were just great.

[23:30] But you were better than I were, dear. But what if the review isn't good? Eek, not so good, is it? Well, Jesus tells us that hypocrisy is pretending to be something you're not.

And he likens it to yeast. Now, I confess straight away that I'm not a baker. I've never made bread. But if you take yeast, which is very small, and put it in with some flour and whatever else you mix it with, pop it in the oven, and hopefully up comes some bread.

It will rise. The result will be good. But Jesus says, be careful if you are using bad yeast, not for making bread, but for influencing people. Because the result isn't going to be good, isn't going to be attractive.

And who does Jesus speak to? He speaks, firstly, to his disciples. But as you heard, Drush giving us the reading, there were thousands of people waiting for Jesus.

He's been in having a meal with a Pharisee. And it must have been the stoniest meal ever, because he just tells the Pharisee what the truth is. But as he comes out, there are thousands of people all trampling on each other.

[24:44] And Jesus speaks loud enough for his disciples to hear, but also for the crowd to hear. And we mustn't forget the crowd. The crowd have an important part to play.

Beware the yeast of the Pharisees. I want to draw out from our passage tonight four things that I think we should take away and think about. The first of them is the actions of others can be a

spiritual threat.

And that's in the first three verses. Jesus tells his disciples, beware of these Pharisees. And if you went back into Matthew and Sadducees, beware of them.

Beware of these experts of the law. Because they're doing one thing and saying one thing in public, and doing and saying something else in private. Now, I've spoken for a while, and if you've heard me speak before, you know that I like to get some interaction.

Just because it gives me a break and keeps you awake. Anybody here, hands up if you've heard of Arthur Conan Doyle. Good, okay. Right, hands down.

[25:53] Hands up if you've heard of Sherlock Holmes. Yeah. Slightly more people heard of Sherlock Holmes. Well, Arthur Conan Doyle was the creator, the author of Sherlock Holmes.

But he was also, Arthur Conan Doyle, was also a great after-dinner speaker. And he told this story, I think it was a story, about sending a telegram to 12 very prominent high officials in the country.

Those who were spiritually purer than anybody else, they were right up there. And then after that, he gave a chuckle and said, oh, sorry, I forgot to tell you what was in the telegram, didn't I?

What was in the telegram was this. Flee at once, all is discovered. Wow. I don't think I'd like to receive a telegram like that. But Arthur Conan Doyle went on with a chuckle to say that within 24 hours, all 12 had left the country.

I think that's a really good example of hypocrisy. And Jesus makes it clear in his teaching that these Pharisees and Sadducees, these so-called experts of the law, had mastered the game of pretending.

[27:07] They weren't as holy and righteous as people thought. They were hypocrites, actors. And I want you to listen to what Jesus says about them, because it's definitely an ouch moment.

They don't practice what they preach. They place burdens on the shoulders of others without doing anything to help them carry them. They're all about show, even using wide phylacteries and long tassels.

If you don't know what a phylactery is, if you've seen very, very devout Jewish people, they have a little black box on their head. If you've seen that, sometimes they'll wrap it on their arm. And in this black box, there are scripture lessons from the Torah, from the first five books of the Bible.

And they strap them on their head. And whether this is supposed to be some form of osmosis that comes through, I don't know. But he says that these experts of the law, these actors, have got extra wide ones, because they want people to look at them and think, how holy are they?

They've got an extra big version. And they've got longer tassels than anybody else. And Jesus says they even want the best seats in the synagogue.

[28:20] I thought that was down to the Germans. They just lay towels down so nobody else could get on the sun lounges. But Jesus is very clear. And it's a direct warning, friends, to anybody called to God's service, that we must be like Christ, who came to serve, not to be served.

We must be like Christ, who came to serve, not to be served. And humility, justice and the love of God should be our guide every day. What we do know, of course, is that hypocrisy, Jesus has told us, transforms godly character.

Where could we find that? Well, if we went back into the Old Testament, you will find the prophet Eli. And again, just quick hands up if you've heard of the prophet Eli. Okay, well, that's really encouraging.

So you think, prophet Eli, his children have just got to be on the ball. They've got to be on the money. They're going to be fantastic. Hophni and Phinehas, they're going to be so good.

Well, they were to look at from the outside. But inside, they were full of sin. And what did they do? What was their sin? They had sex with the sanctuary serving women.

[29:34] It just makes your jaw drop open when you hear that. But it's no good just looking back and saying, well, that was then. That never happens now. I don't know how far we are from Watford.

Five miles, maybe. Five, six miles. And the leader of Soul Survivor has fallen to exactly that problem. So it's, you know, it's something that still affects leaders today.

You can't do one thing in private and something else in public. Hypocrisy can't be contained forever. Our secrets will be brought into the light.

The temptation, of course, is to think, it's never going to know. Nobody's ever going to know what I'm doing. That was something, was it, Steve Chalk told me once. He said, you know, in this country, I'm really well known.

I can really behave. But the danger is when I go to places overseas where nobody knows me. And the temptation's really set in. Temptation is to think that we're never going to be found out.

[30:43] So, again, another question for you. What's been happening? You can shout this one out. What's been happening in politics in this country where somebody's got found out? Anybody?

I throw the name Boris Johnson in. Do you get a bit closer? Lies about parties. Party gates. Party gates have been happening. I was never there, Your Honour.

Parliament had nothing to do with me. I was in my office. I couldn't even see down the stairs. The lies have come out. And Boris has been found out. But it's not just Boris. We can't just look at him and say, you're responsible for party gate, Boris.

Because it's a lesson for us tonight. You can't hide your true self forever. You can't whisper one thing in private and say the opposite in public.

The day is coming when all these things will be brought into the light, however embarrassing they are. For God's truth is like light in the dark and it will expose all lies, hypocrisy and deceit.

[31:50] So that's my first point for you. My second point is this. Fear God, not people. In verses 4 to 5. And one of the problems that all church leaders and all church people who take part in the service have is to be crowd pleasers.

It's a great temptation to be crowd pleasers. To replace substance with style. We must never do that, brothers and sisters. We must never be tempted to replace substance with style because it pleases itchy-eared people.

The truth is, of course, that all of us want to be liked. I want to be liked. Roger wants to be liked. Mike wants to be liked. All of us want to be liked.

I think. But we mustn't replace substance because of style. Matt Redman, I'm sure we've sung his songs here from time to time, was pulled aside by his minister and said that Matt and the band, all the glory was going to them.

At the end of a service, people were applauding. We want more of Matt Redman. We want more of his songs. And his minister said to him, it's all about you.

[33:06] It's not about Jesus. You've got to get back to the heart of worship. And that's what Matt Redman did. And that's why he wrote that song. I'm coming back to the heart of worship.

It's not about me. It's all about you. John the Baptist, much earlier, hit the nail on the head in John chapter 3 and verse 30.

Talking about Jesus, he said, He must become greater and I must become less. When we're giving out the word of God, in any capacity, the glory must go to him.

He must become greater and we must become less. So in our church and in our worship, substance must never be replaced by performance, which is aimed at pleasing other people.

The truth is, and it's sad to say, but neither ordination nor the commissioning of leaders of the church makes those he calls free from error or false doctrine.

[34:11] And that's why we must be very careful to make sure that that doesn't happen. We must watch out for those who play church. Because it's easier to spot the sins of murder, theft or adultery than it is to spot the sin of adultery, of hypocrisy.

You see, these Pharisees, these Sadducees, these so-called experts of the law were supposed to be the guardians of God's word. And that's good. Don't mishear me. It's good to be a guardian of God's word.

But what they were doing was they were becoming inventors of God's word. They've gone beyond being guardians and they've become people who've added to it. And they've developed rules that have made it impossible for them to keep.

Impossible for people to keep. Well, what's the antidote to hypocrisy? If hypocrisy is poison, I want to know what the antidote is. Because from time to time, I'm sure I'm guilty of hypocrisy. But I want to know what the antidote is. The antidote is very simple. It's fear of God. If we fear God, surely that's going to keep us from being hypocrites.

[35:25] I hope so. Any psychologist will tell you that hypocrisy comes from fear. Fear of what?

It comes from fear of man, fear of failure and fear of ourselves. That's how fear comes. But can I ask you a question? But I'm not expecting an answer.

What's more important for you tonight? Is it that your name is praised by Jesus before in front of God the Father? Or that your name is praised here on earth? What is more important?

And in verse 4, Jesus reminds us the only one who has authority to punish the soul is God the Father. So why do you fear what man can do to your body in verse 5?

The worst that can happen is you can take it out and put it in a shredder. But look what God will do. He has the authority and the power to take your immortal soul and cast it into hell.

[36:26] Fear God, not people. Our third point tonight is God knows you and cares about you in verses 6 to 7.

And if you've been following that reading that Drish brought to us, you'll notice that there was a sudden switch in emphasis. Jesus has gone from talking about the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the experts of the law to talking about sparrows.

Well, why are you doing that, Jesus? That should be our question. Because sparrows represent God's love and care. And the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the leaders, had overlooked that.

They'd overlooked it. And they were focusing more on keeping the traditions of the law and by adding to it when they thought it was right. Now, I have got a question for you.

Another one. But I don't want you to answer it until after I've had a drink of water. So I'll ask the question. You think about it. And when I finish my drink of water, shout out an answer.

[37:32] What is the fourth commandment? Okay, anybody?

Well, I've got a church secretary. And one, two, an elder. Deacons. Keep going.

Yeah, keep going. No. No. Okay. You know, in America, before the service, they have something called Class 101, which is a Bible study.

So before you even get into the service, you've had a Bible study. Maybe we should do that. Okay. Let me give you the answer. I'll put you out of your misery. Fourth commandment.

Sorry? Yes. The fourth commandment. Keep the Sabbath day holy. Keep the Sabbath day holy. Now, as I read that, I thought, well, that seems straightforward enough.

[38:38] God said it. We keep it. What's the problem? But somewhere along the line, someone has asked for what a definition of keeping the Sabbath holy means.

Does it mean work? And if it means not working, well, what does that entail? Seems a good question. And so the Pharisees and the Sadducees have got together and they've come up with a definition.

Now, ladies, you're going to like this. You're really going to like this. So keeping the Sabbath holy means no baking and cooking. How good is that? Guys, next week, no dinner, I'm afraid.

Okay. We're keeping the Sabbath holy. And this morning we had visitors from America, from Pennsylvania, from Pakistan. And Mike tells me from Leeds as well.

Well, I'm sorry for them because it's going to be a long route home if they're traveling on the Sabbath because there's no traveling. You're not allowed to drive. It's all about walking. Well, what a, is there something else?

[39:38] Yes, yes, there's more. You can't gather wood or create fire. So, sorry, all those Sunday lunches that were going to be cooked, they're out. Barbecues, forget that. What about, I don't know, somebody's already thinking, that's no problem.

I'll get it delivered through Deliveroo or Amazon or other vendors are available. No, you can't do that either because no buying and selling on a Sunday.

Well, by this time you're thinking, well, it's not, what am I going to do Sunday afternoon, Sabbath afternoon? I know, I'll go home, I'll reorganize the shed. I'll go into my grandson or my child's bedroom with mask and gloves ready to clean it up.

You can't do that either. I'm afraid no moving of goods from one place to another. But there's one that really amused me. And I was thinking about Mike and Drush when I genuinely was thinking of you.

And Mike is a very loving husband. And I'm sure from time to time he would bring Drush a nice bunch of fresh flowers. No? Okay, that's on your to-do list then.

[40:49] Drush is shaking her head as well. But let's say that he did. So he brings her a nice bunch of fresh flowers, puts them in a vase and adds some water. Would he be allowed to do that on the Sabbath?

No, absolutely right, he wouldn't. Because apparently this is classed as a subcategory of planting. Don't ask me why, it makes no sense to me, but that's what it is.

Now by this time, maybe poor old disciples are thinking, well, should we really even be listening to these Pharisees and Sadducees? The Sadducees, after all, the Sadducees don't believe in the resurrection.

That's why they're sad, you see. But, yeah. But should we even be listening to them? Well, Jesus has something very specific to say.

In Matthew 23, verses 2 to 3, he says this to them. The teachers and the Pharisees of the law sit in Moses' seat. Therefore, be very careful to obey what they tell you to do.

[41:50] But then he adds a but. But, don't do what they do. Because they don't practice what they preach. And when you pray, don't be like them.

For they stand in the synagogues and on the street corners, so that they may be seen. They want to be seen praying. They're not interested in what they're praying. They just want to be seen by others.

Look at us. We are putting on a performance. That's not what they're saying to themselves. But that's what the message is coming across as. And Jesus isn't finished with them. In verse 7, he says, And when you pray, don't keep babbling on like pagans, because your many words you think are going to be heard.

No. Ouch. Ouch. Ouch. You see, these leaders, they knew the cost of sparrows in the marketplace. They were well up on the economics of life. Five sparrows for tuppence. Yeah, they'd got it all. But what they'd missed out on was that the sparrows are more important and more valuable to God than anything else.

[42:58] God cares and loves for these tiny little birds. And those birds were the cheapest form of food that people could buy. And yet God loved his creation, his people, even more than the sparrows.

And Jesus wants to say to you tonight through this passage, he knows what you're going through. He knows what you're going through. In verse 7, The very hairs on your head are all numbered. Do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows. Praise God for that. Friends, when anything in the Bible is numbered, it means that it's being carefully watched over.

And for anybody who's interested in theology, that's known as the doctrine of God's providence. You are being watched over. The very hairs on your head are numbered. He knows you.

It means there's nothing about you or in you or of you that God does not know or see. He knows the very things within you, all your fears, all the things that you're not going to bring out to anybody.

[44:07] God knows them and he's telling you, I love you. I care for you. Our fourth and last point to take home tonight covers verses 8 to 12.

If you stand up for Jesus now, he will stand up for you later. And he reminds us in verses 8 to 9 that there are things that we should be afraid of.

You know, I was thinking about this earlier and I thought, well, you know, if I pulled open my shirt, I'm not wearing a Superman vest underneath. I can assure you. I am a fragile person exactly the same as you are.

But we should fear ending up on the wrong side of God's judgment. That is a fact. Because he is Lord of all. And in verse 10, there is a warning to the world not to persistently reject the Holy Spirit. Now, how does that work out in practice? So if I go out onto the street and I have my Ferrari Testarossa.

[45:17] That's an incredibly expensive car. You're probably looking at half a million pounds for a Ferrari Testarossa. And there it is. I park it in Boscombe High Street and I say to people going past, this could be

yours, free of charge.

I'd like to tell you about it. And what do you think the result would be? I'm sure that there were people who would say, well, I'm not interested in that. Thank you very much for making the offer. But it's too expensive. It's the wrong colour. I can't insure it. I've got nowhere to garage it. Give it to someone else. But maybe there's another example.

What about a new invention, a new washing machine that not only washes, but it irons as well?

Well, I'd want one of those. But there you are. It's available to you, Mr and Mrs Boscombe.

Boscombe. I keep saying Boscombe. Yeah. Don't I say Boscombe? Oh, silly person. High Wycombe. Right. High Wycombe. There you go.

[46:18] It washes, it irons, it does everything for you. It's yours.

Would you like to know more about it? No, I'm not interested. I know it's a free gift. I've heard all about it. Give it to someone else.

And why is that important? Because that's what we're doing when we go onto the streets, or we talk to our friends, or we talk to our neighbours, or we talk to those that we're going to meet in the week. And we say, I want to tell you about Jesus. He is offering you a free gift of eternal life. Would you like to know about him? And more and more people out there in the world are saying, I'm not interested.

I'm too busy. Give it to someone else. And Jesus tells us in these verses between 8 and 12, that persistent rejection of the Holy Spirit is an unbelievable sin.

We can't go on saying about the Holy Spirit, I'm not interested. And Jesus likens it to blasphemy.

We need to remind people that there is no appeal at the judgment seat of Christ.

[47:24] To the right. To the left. Come in, good and faithful servant. Go away from me. I never knew you. And that's why telling others about Jesus is important.

And in verses 11 to 12, Jesus makes it clear. Be brave and strong, even in times of persecution and trial. Why? Because your defence lawyer is the Holy Spirit.

Your defence lawyer is the Holy Spirit. It's not Clarence Darrow. It's not Atticus Finch out of To Kill a Mockingbird. It's not any of those famous lawyers. It's the Holy Spirit.

In times when you are in trouble and you don't know what to say, the Holy Spirit will give you words. Jesus is speaking, as we said right at the beginning, to his disciples in the presence of the crowd.

Because Jesus knows there will come a time when he is no longer on earth. He has ascended back into heaven. Times of persecution will come. Times when his disciples will be hauled before the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the rulers of the synagogue.

[48:39] But at that time, the Holy Spirit will give them words to say.

And again, as I thought about that, I thought about Stephen. Stephen, about to be stoned by the fellow Jews.

They've got all their rocks. And who is there witnessing? Saul. The cloaks are laid at his feet. But read if you can. Go back into Acts.

And read the prayer that Stephen offers up. Fantastic. Really, really good news. So don't be anxious or nervous. Even though we don't know how to defend ourselves.

The Holy Spirit will tell you what to say. We must be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is within us. And allow God to reveal the hypocrisy in others.

Before I came out tonight, I was reading and praying and reading about someone who was the wife of a pastor.

[49:45] And she was asked by one of their flock. In fact, she was confided in. If I can find it. Yeah, here we go.

And this lady confessed to the pastor's wife. She said, my husband has been having an affair with someone else.

But it's okay. He has told me that he has prayed about it. And he is forgiven. And this woman said to the pastor's wife, what do you think about that?

And the pastor's wife quoted Romans chapter 6. What then shall we say? Shall we go on sinning so that grace, forgiveness, may be increased?

By no means. Well, what's the practical result of that? The practical result is that if we want to stop being hypocrites, we need to repent.

[50:48] And back in 2 Chronicles, verse 14, it says, If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways.

That was the whole crux of where this husband was. He wanted his cake and he wanted to eat it. He wanted to go on sinning and be forgiven.

Repentance. Turn from your wicked ways. And friends, can I say, and I include me in this, if we are true disciples of God, then we please him.

But we mustn't be legalists. So what we need to do is produce pure hearts and minds and not suffer rules and traditions.

Therefore, let us repent if we are guilty of hypocrisy. Turn from our wicked ways and ask God to heal us and heal our land.

[51:52] So I think G.K. Chesterton got the right answer. What's wrong with our world today? I am. Let's pray. Father God, I thank you for your word.

If there's anything that's been said tonight, Father, that's not of you, I just pray that you will help us to clear it from our minds. But Lord God, if this is of you, then take it to our heart.

Help us to change from our ways and to be more like you. You must become greater and we must become less. Amen. We're going to ask the musicians to come back.

And in a moment, we're going to stand and sing. Dear Lord and Father of Mankind. Dear Lord and Father of Mankind, forgive our foolish ways.

We clothe us in our rightful mind. In pure life's thy service kind.

[53:21] In deeper reverence praise. In deeper reverence praise.

In simple trust like those who hurt beside the Syrian sea. The gracious calling of the Lord.

Let us like them without a word. Rise up and follow thee. Rise up and follow thee.

O summer thrust my now in thee. O come all hills above.

Where Jesus held to share with thee. Feel the silence of eternity.

[54:31] Interpreted by love. Interpreted by love.

With that devotion. With that devotion. Soctuing all our words and words that drown.

The tender whisper of thy call. As joyous as yet thy blessing call.

As well my manner down. As well my manner down. As well my manner down.

For thy still use of quietness. Till all our strivings cease.

[55:28] Take from our souls the strainer's stress. And let our oldenights confess the beauty of thy peace.

The beauty of thy peace. Breathe through the heats of our desire.

Thy coolness and thy balm. Let sense it up. Let flesh retire. Speed through the earth great wind and fire.

Most merciful voice of God. Most merciful voice of God.

Most merciful voice of God. Most merciful voice of God. Most merciful voice of God. Most merciful voice of God. Home liberating.

[56:33] Most merciful voice of God. Most merciful voice of God.

Let us come to our Father in heaven as we pray together.

Heavenly Father, we praise you for all that you are. Forgive us when we fail to recognize your sovereignty, your creator power, your love for each one of us.

You see everything, and none of us are forgotten by you, and we praise you for that. We are so comforted and encouraged that you see us as worth more than many sparrows.

Thank you that when we acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior, then he will acknowledge us. Holy Spirit, teach us what we should say to glorify and worship you, the Lord Almighty.

[57:56] We come this evening with worries, concerns, questions. Our lives are often unsettled.

Take from our souls the strain and stress, and let our ordered lives confess the beauty of thy peace.

And in thy presence, Father, we come to remember those in our fellowship and beyond, those who are in troubled times, those who look forward to happy events.

may indeed your name be worshipped and glorified in that precious, time next Saturday, so that those who do not know you might see something of you through their testimony of their faith in you.

Bless them, we pray. We thank you, Father, for the youth weekend this weekend. We thank you for the leaders that led. We thank you for the young people whose hearts are open.

[59:35] We pray for the seeds that were sown, not just the enjoyment that was had. And we pray that those seeds would bear fruit in your economy in times to come, that they too might come into that living relationship with you.

We pray for those who are injured, those who are sick or in pain or in hospital, those recently bereaved.

And we all know those on our hearts at this time. So in this moment of quiet, let us lift those in our own families, those who perhaps have broken our hearts, those who are broken in spirit that we know and need the Lord's healing touch.

Let's lift them before the Lord now. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. And Father, we name before you Lynn Mangtalo, Andrew Wingfield, Karen Dunford.

[60:54] We name Ron Driver, the family of David Bowen, the family of Peter Ellens, the family of Joan Glasgow. In their hurt, their injury, their sadness, their grief, we pray that you would surround them with your love and your compassion.

And Father, as the deacons of the church meet this Thursday, we pray that you would bring wisdom and clarity in the discussions and in the decisions that will be made.

we pray that in all of this going on, that the church would move forward as new people are added to the church.

We pray for Malcolm in the ministry. We pray that that will be a time of restoration, refreshment, but also continued service as he fulfills the ministry that you have given him over these years.

We pray for Andrew as he takes on new responsibilities in the year ahead. Speak to him, encourage him, and as we encourage each other.

[62:26] We pray for the future of the church ministry here at Union. Give the deacons and trustees and elders the wisdom that they will need to guide and to shepherd us all as we move forward in the months to come.

May wise decisions be made for your kingdom's glory and growth. And Father, we pray for those seeking to walk more deeply with you, to step aside from hypocrisy, to be greater and stronger disciples of you in their daily lives as they sign up for life groups in September and as they seek to support each other in those groups in discipleship.

For those seeking the way forward in their future life, and we pray for particularly for Chris Mangtalo, our ministry trainee, as he goes to Tanzania.

We pray, Father, that you would speak mightily to him as to how he should use his gifts in the future for the extension of your kingdom and fulfillment in his life.

And so, Lord, we bring all these things to you in faith and to the foot of the cross. What is our hope built on?

[64:02] Jesus' blood and righteousness. And we acknowledge him as Lord and Savior. And we pray all these prayers in his name and for his glory.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you, Roger.

Thank you, George. We're going to sing again as we come to communion. I hope this is your song. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.

We'll stand and sing this together as we come to communion. Thank you. Thank you, God. I hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

[65:17] No merit of my own I claim But only trust in Jesus' name On Christ the solid rock I stand All other ground is sinking sand When weary in this earthly race I rest on His unchanging grace In every wild and stormy veil My anchor holds and will not fail

On Christ the solid rock I stand All other ground is sinking sand His power is carbon and blood And the good almighty face against the flood When earthly hopes are swept away He will uphold me on

that day On Christ the solid rock I stand All other ground is sinking sand When the last trumpet's voice shall sound

Oh, may I turn in Him be found Hold in His right, just less alone Hold in His right, just less alone Hold lest to stand before His throne On Christ the solid rock I stand All other ground is sinking sand Great. Please be seated.

The deacons who are serving, perhaps you might come forward. Come forward Thank you, George Thank you, George You didn't know, but there you are When He shall come with trumpet sound When He shall come with trumpet sound Oh, may I then in Him be found Dressed in His righteousness alone Faultless to stand before His throne Without this, we could never ever say that But because of this, we can stand before His throne And we come in the name of Jesus who covers us What a privilege Here is the table of the Lord We're gathered to His supper

A foretaste of things eternal Come when you're fearful To be made new in love Come when you're doubtful To be made strong in faith Come when you're regretful And be made whole Come old and young There's room for all We set aside our wisdom Our will And our words We empty our hearts to you, Lord And bring nothing in our hands We yearn for the healing The holding The accepting The forgiving Which Christ alone can offer Let's have a couple of minutes Just considering Where we're coming to And why we're coming to this table The invitation is to all those Who love our Lord Who love our Lord And who want to follow Him And to give service to Him Who accept His offer by faith [70:16] And accept it as grace, not works And that's not works Father, as we remember the psalmist wrote in Psalm 139, see if there is any offensive way of the evil In me, Lord And lead me to everlasting That I might have fellowship with you ...

Father, as we remember the psalmist wrote in Psalm 139, see if there is any offensive way in me, Lord me, Lord, and lead me to everlasting, that I might have fellowship with you.

He tells us to forgive others as he has forgiven us. Is there someone we need to ask forgiveness for or for us to forgive?

Thank you, Lord, that you know each one of us deep down. There's nothing we can hide from you.

We take off the mask. We come before you to remember your death, the price you paid.

So may the peace of the Lord rest within us and remain with us today and always. As we come to the bread, the tradition which is handed on to us comes down from the Lord himself.

[71:58] For on the very nights of his arrest, as he was being betrayed, Jesus took bread and gave thanks and broke it, saying, this is my body which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. Come, Lord Jesus, feed us with your love and renew us with your life.

Through your spirit, we eat to remember. We give thanks for the bread and for all that it means for each of us. We recognize that you paid the price for our sin and opened the way for us to come into your presence, justified and forgiven.

So Jesus took the bread and he broke it in the presence of his disciples and said, take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. And do this in remembrance of me.

So we do that now. And as the bread is shared, we'll eat it as we receive it. And as we pass the plate, we might say to the person we pass it to, the body of Christ given for you.

[73:11] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. ...

[75:29] In the same way, after supper, Jesus took the cup and said, this cup is a new covenant in my blood, given for you.

Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. So we drink to remember the cost his blood shed on the cross, the hands pierced, the feet pierced, the crown of thorns on the head, and the spear in the side.

Physically, he gave his life. But he gave more than that. He took our sin and paid for it. And the resurrection we celebrate shows that he's overcome and given us the honour to be called his children.

We'll drink to remember and as the cup is shared, it's time we'll hold it until everyone is served and then we'll drink together to remind ourselves that Christ died for his church and we are part of his church.

Job Bill of the of His 2011hua Amen.

[77:32] Amen. Amen.

Amen. The blood of Christ shed for you. The blood of Christ shed for you. As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Dying, you destroyed our death. Rising, you restored our life. We give you the praise and the thanks and the glory. Lord, we look forward to your coming again and seeing you in glory.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

loving God we thank you that you've nourished us at this table we pray that as we hunger and thirst for you we may be filled may we feast at the table of your eternal kingdom this we ask through Jesus Christ who was and is and is to come and who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit God forever and ever Amen Jesus said as the Father sent me so I send you come Holy Spirit empower us with your love inspire us with your life may we be your instruments to transform our town to bring glory to you

[80:13] Amen Our closing song come set your rule and reign is this your prayer?

come set your rule and reign in our hearts again increase in us we pray unveil why we're made come set our hearts ablaze with hope like wildfire in our very souls Holy Spirit come invade us now wow what might happen if he does that now?

we are his church but we need his power in us we stand and sing holy song Una whom to heaven among people hear me sing us sing sing o o we ask how to heaven are we are we here Come, set your will and pray, we'll know our hearts again.

Increase in us, we pray, on better why we're made. Come, set our hearts a place we come, and that we're in our very soul.

Holy Spirit, come and made us know. Come, set your will and pray, we'll know our hearts again.

[82:16] We're the hurt, the sick, the poor at peace. We lay down our lives to heaven's cause. We are your church.

We pray, revive this earth. Build your kingdom here.

Let the darkness fear. Show your mighty hands. Heal our streets and lands. Set your church on fire.

Win this nation back. Change the atmosphere. Build your kingdom here.

We pray. Unleash your kingdom's call.

[83:18] Reach in the near and far. No force of hell can stop. Your beauty changing hearts. You made us. You made us more much more than this.

Away the kingdom seed in us. Fill us with the strength and love of Christ. We are your church.

We are your church. We have a hope on earth. We are your church. Give us a love of Christ. We

are your church. We are your church. We are your church.

Let the darkness fear. Show your mighty hand. Feel our streets and land. Send your church on fire.

Win this nation back. Change the atmosphere. Build your kingdom here. We pray Build your

kingdom here Let the darkness fear Show your mighty hands Heal our streets and lions Set your church on fire Win this nation back Change the atmosphere

[85:11] Build your kingdom here We pray Warmer, filling the fire Well, we've got a week ahead of us from this luxury of being together here this evening We face the world tomorrow and lots of things may be happening but we go out in power Now the blessing May God, our Heavenly Father, bless you with the confidence of his peace May our Lord Jesus Christ grant you his joy in the knowledge and confidence that you are accepted and forgiven May God, the Holy Spirit, give you the confidence to serve God and bring glory to his name Amen Should be some tea and coffee upstairs afterwards

Hope you can stay and join us And