

Not Keeping the Good News to Ourselves

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: 27 April 2014

Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Matthew chapter 5, we'll read the first 16 verses before we hear. Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down.

His disciples came to him and he began to teach them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

[1:11] Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?

It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

I was born a sinner. And that means I had a sinful nature that wanted to sin, and so I did sin as I grew up.

I chose my way over God's way. And if I had died in that state, I would be in hell today.

[2:22] And I would be in hell tomorrow, and a thousand years from now, a million years from now, forever and ever, I would be in hell. But God had mercy on me.

God sent His Son to die in my place, to take that punishment that I deserved. And when I was a boy, He brought that good news to my heart.

And He showed me that there is a Savior for sinners. And that if I would turn from my sin and trust in what Jesus had done to save me, He would save me for eternity.

And I did trust Him. And that means if I would die today, I'll be in heaven. And I'll be in heaven tomorrow. And the next day, and forever and ever.

And if you're a Christian today, you have the same testimony. Now, I haven't said anything new to you, but I wonder if we sometimes miss how profound it is that we have been saved from everlasting torments to everlasting happiness.

[3:42] We've a story to tell to the nations. We have a story to tell to our next-door neighbor. We're in the midst of a study on the church that Jesus Christ is building.

And we're looking at its purpose. Why is there a church? Why did Jesus come to establish a church? He said, I will build my church. And we're looking at its purpose, and we're finding that there are three purposes for God's church.

Number one, the church exists to serve God in public worship, like we're doing this morning, and we'll do again tonight. Secondly, it exists to serve the needs of one another in the body of Christ. All the one-anotherings that we do here in the body of Christ. That's part of why there's a church, that we're not out there all by ourselves, but we're in a body with people who are looking out for us and helping us and ministering to us.

And now today, the third purpose is to serve the needs of a lost and dying world by evangelism, missions, and good deeds. So we have a story to tell to the nations.

[5:01] The 11 disciples were on a mountain in Galilee with the Lord Jesus. It's 40 days after his resurrection from the dead. And he's now leaving them to go back to his heavenly Father.

And he's got important last words to give to them. And then he says to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. There is a message that people will be damned if they do not hear and believe.

It is the good news of Jesus Christ, the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Therefore, the church is to take that gospel to the ends of the earth, calling on men and women, boys and girls, to repent of their sins and trust in the Lord Jesus that they might not perish but have everlasting life.

[6:15] And though Jesus spoke these words to the 11 disciples, he was addressing the 11 as they represented the church. They were the representatives of the church as they received this great command.

Now, they would live just a short time thereafter, but Christ here promises his presence and power for this task to the very end of the age.

You see? I will be with you to the end of the age in this task of making disciples of the nations. So until Christ returns, it's the church, you see.

It's the church that is to be about this unfinished business of proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth, making disciples from all the nations. So to be involved in evangelism at home and abroad is to fulfill one of the most basic purposes for why there is a church.

Whether you be thinking of the universal church, all the people of God, or whether you think of this church. Why does Grace Fellowship Church exist?

[7:30] Well, evangelism is one of the three most basic purposes. Now, Peter was there on the mountain that day when he heard these words from our Savior.

And 30 years later, he reminds the church that this is indeed her purpose on earth. 1 Peter 2 and verse 9, he says, Now, those are not individualistic terms, are they?

They're corporate terms. They're things that are said of people together. You're a chosen people. A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.

Those are names given to the church. And he says, You are such, and a purpose clause follows, in order that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Why are you an entity? Why do you exist as the people of God? To show forth, to declare, to proclaim the praises of him who brought you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

[8:56] You're his witnesses to tell how great God is. To tell of his mighty acts of salvation in Jesus Christ. How he called you out of darkness.

The darkness of your sin and guilt. Into the light and life of Jesus Christ. Christ. So the church is God's chosen institution for bringing the gospel to the world.

There are many organizations that exist to bring the gospel to the world. And I'm not here to slam them, only to say this is the only God-instituted organization that God has chosen.

He fashioned the church with this purpose. To take the gospel to the ends of the age. So this is your task, Grace Fellowship Church.

This is your job, every one of you. It's not just the task of preachers and those with special gifts of speaking. But every one of us who've been brought out of darkness into his marvelous light can tell others what Jesus has done for us.

[10:02] Just this past Wednesday, we were praying for people that are lost and we're wanting to witness to. We want to see saved. And I was struck with how many people there are that your pastors never see.

No, you see them at work. You're related to them. They live next to you. You met them here or there. But we never see them. You're reaching all kinds of people that we could never reach.

And that is how Christ meant it to be. The whole church called to proclaim the glories of him who saved us. So this work of evangelism advances most powerfully as each part does its work.

So I must ask you, how much evangelism would be going on at Grace Fellowship if no one witnessed more than you do? As each of us are involved in the sphere where God has put us, we are bringing the gospel to this world that needs to hear that message.

I wonder if you think of yourself as Christ's appointed witness. I wonder if we would act differently if we were one of the eleven that were there that day and those were Jesus' last words that we heard him speak before he went into heaven.

[11:30] It has come to us. We are that church that is to proclaim his gospel to the end of this age. You say, but I don't know much.

I don't know as much as the pastors or as others. Well, that doesn't disqualify you. You remember in John chapter 9, there was a man who was blind. And Jesus healed him.

He healed him on the Sabbath. And as the Pharisees were interrogating this man, there was a lot that he confessed he did not know. He did not know. But he said, one thing I do know.

Once I was blind, but now I see. And Jesus did it. Now he bore witness, you see. He gave testimony. He told about the praises of him who brought him out of darkness into the light.

So tell them, Christian, what Christ has done for you. You too can say, I once was blind and I did not see the glory of Jesus Christ.

[12:33] I did not see how wonderful God was. I live for things that I could see. But then God gave me eyes to see that the things I live for were empty nothings.

And the one that I was neglecting was none other than my maker, my redeemer, my judge. You can tell what God has done for you.

Tell them the gospel. You know, if you know enough to be saved, you know enough to tell another how to be saved. Are you a Christian? Then you know enough to tell another how they too can be saved from their sins.

Give them a track or invite them to church. You know, that's what the immoral Samaritan woman did when she turned to the Lord. She ran into town and she told everyone, Come see a man who told me everything that I ever did.

Maybe she wasn't the best prepared right then to verbalize the gospel, but she could say, Come with me and see a man who does know. He could be the very Messiah we've been waiting for.

[13:43] And they poured out of town on her invitation. And many of them put their faith in the Lord Jesus. You too can invite others to come along where Jesus Christ is set forth in his word.

You can invite someone next week. Michael Amati, his parents came from Iran. Muslims.

The Lord saved them. Michael grew up in a Christian home because of it. Now he wants to go to Ireland. Preach the gospel to people there. Where almost no one goes to church.

And he'll be here to preach a gospel message. Invite some folks along there. Who can you invite next week to be here? To hear the gospel? We can do that. That's part of what it means to take the gospel to the lost.

Now the early church in the book of Acts did not think that evangelism was the sole responsibility of the preachers. The apostles. Yes, the apostles preached the gospel, but so did those who were not apostles.

[14:53] Look at Acts chapter 1. Acts chapter 8. Acts chapter 8. And this chapter opens up by reminding us of a great persecution that broke out against the church at Jerusalem.

Stephen has just been stoned. They laid their coats at the feet of Saul of Tarsus. And the blood of Stephen created thirst for more. And so this great persecution broke out against the Christians in Jerusalem.

And the last part of verse 1 says, All except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. So the apostles stayed in Jerusalem.

And the rest of the church was scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Where did Christ tell his witnesses to proclaim the gospel?

Look back at chapter 1 and verse 8. We're coming back here to chapter 8. Now Acts 1 and verse 8. Jesus said to them, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem.

[16:07] They were to start right where they were. But they weren't to end there. In Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

So up to Acts chapter 8, the church has confined its evangelism within Jerusalem. Now we see it taken to the next level. They're moving outside of Jerusalem throughout Judea and Samaria.

Well, that's interesting. That's where Jesus told them to go. From Jerusalem on out to Judea and Samaria. And who proclaimed the gospel there throughout Judea and Samaria?

Well, it wasn't the apostles, at least not first. In fact, it was everybody but the apostles. Do you see that in chapter 8? Chapter 8 and verse 1. All except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

And verse 4 says that those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. So the non-apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

[17:17] And wherever they went, they preached the word. Not the formal preaching, such as we're doing here. But the word is evangelizing, gospeling the word, spreading the truth about Christ.

So the scattering of believers by way of persecution only served to scatter the message, the life-giving message of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord turned for good what Satan meant for evil. And so the gospel is now breaking outside of the city limits of Jerusalem, throughout Judea, into Samaria.

And it's by non-apostles. They scattered the seed wherever they went. That's a good image for us wherever we go to be scattering seed.

It's one of God's main purposes for the church. So we labor in evangelism by speaking to the lost about Christ. That's what we've seen up to this point. But there's other ways that the church carries out this purpose of world evangelism.

[18:20] Not just speaking about Christ to the lost. Yes, that. But we also labor in evangelism by praying. By praying. We're told in the scriptures to pray for open doors.

For gospel opportunities. That we might share the gospel with people. We're told to pray for God to open the hearts of people. So that they might receive the message that they hear from Christians. Remember Lydia? There she is down by the riverside in Paul's preaching. And the Bible says the Lord opened up her heart so that she received the message.

That we need to pray that God would do that for people that we're witnessing to. And that are hearing the word of God. We pray for each other to be bold and wise and tactful and loving in our witness.

That's something that we seek to do on the third Wednesday of each month. To pray for each other. To pray for the lost. And then we pray for those who preach and teach God's word here and elsewhere.

[19:29] We pray for our missionaries who are scattered to the ends of the earth. Preaching the gospel. You know one of the things that Paul pleaded with the Ephesian church to do was to pray for him.

Here he is the missionary. And he says pray for me. Pray also for me that whenever I open my mouth. Words might be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel. So we advance the cause of the gospel when we pray for our missionaries. We pray that when they open their mouths words might be given. And we're to pray for more workers to be sent into those harvest fields.

That are white and ready to harvest and there are so few workers. We pray for more shepherds to be gathering the scattered harassed sheep. Who are without a shepherd.

So we labor in evangelism by speaking about Christ to the lost. But then we labor in evangelism by speaking to the Lord about the lost.

[20:32] Prayer. Thirdly we labor in evangelism by giving of our finances. To train men. To preach the word of God. To publish.

To distribute gospel literature. To support preachers of the gospel here and on foreign fields. Many churches had a share in Paul's gospel labors through their support.

Especially the Philippian church. As he would write these letters he would thank them. And would remind them that the rewards of the gospel minister would be shared by those who supported the gospel minister.

We can labor in evangelism. With our finances. And then lastly we labor in evangelism by living a holy life.

A life that commends our Savior and his gospel to others. In Titus chapter 2 and verse 10. Even Christian slaves were to be good slaves.

[21:33] Faithful slaves. Trustworthy slaves. To the end that in every way they might make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. You see the way we live.

Can either commend the gospel and say this is why I live this way. Or it can cause the gospel to look unattractive. So we must be sure that we are living in a way that commends and adorns the doctrine of God our Savior.

The way you work. The way you study. The way you talk. The way you spend your time. What you laugh at. All of this you see is meant to lift up the gospel.

As people see your life. And wonder what it is that makes you tick. You might give a reason for the hope that you have within you. Now that's what we see in this passage that was read for us in Matthew chapter 5.

And if we could turn there the Sermon on the Mount. You know evangelizing the world was Jesus' last words to his apostles.

[22 : 38] But we must not think that that was the only time that he spoke about it. Rather we find this sermon right at the very beginning of his ministry. And we find him urging the believers to be evangelizing.

To be influencing their world for the gospel. And for the gospel of the kingdom. And so here we have the Sermon on the Mount. That teaches evangelism.

Here's Jesus the King of this kingdom. And he's teaching about his kingdom. And the opening verses are about what are called the Beatitudes. They are attitudes that mark the citizens of Christ's kingdom.

Who does belong to the kingdom of Christ? Well they're described here for us in eight heart attitudes. And after he does that he then speaks about their purpose.

What is their purpose? And in verse 14 he says you are the light of the world. Now you see we're right back to the purpose of the church. One of the purposes that we exist as the church is to be the light of the world.

[23 : 43] Without the gospel the world is sitting in darkness. That means it's sitting in ignorance of the one true way to be saved.

The way to be right with God. Man has his own ideas about how to be saved. But they're all mistaken. Romans 3.11 There's no one who understands.

No one who seeks God. Ephesians 4.18 They're darkened in their understanding. And separated from the life of God. Because of the ignorance that is in them.

Due to the hardening of their heart. They may be PhDs in other fields. But as to how to be right with God. They're ignorant. They do not know the gospel.

The one way to heaven. 1 Corinthians 1.21 Says the world by its wisdom did not know God. Take all the greatest philosophers and theologians.

[24 : 43] That have ever lived on their own. Apart from God. And they did not know God. They came short of that true knowledge of salvation.

In Jesus Christ. All their learning. Failed to lead them out of the darkness. And into the light. And so God. For his great love that he had for this world.

Sent his one and only son. Into the world. As the light of the world. Jesus stood and said. I am the light of the world.

Whoever believes in me. Whoever follows me. Will never walk in darkness. But will have the light of life. Jesus is the light of the world.

Sent by the father. To enlighten men's hearts and minds. As to how to be right with him. But those whom Jesus enlightens.

[25 : 41] And brightens with his salvation. Become themselves. What we might call a thousand points of light. So that Jesus is able to say.

To you and to me. You. Church. You. You. Are the light. Of the world. I thought. Jesus was the light of the world.

Yes. But now he's saying. You. Are. The light of the world. Not because of any self-generated light in us. No. We were those walking in darkness.

And he translated us. Out of that kingdom of darkness. Into. The wonderful light of the gospel. No. It's. It's light. Light. In us. That comes from Christ.

The light of the world. Is living in me. By his spirit. And so there's light. That. That comes from.

Those who have the light of the world. In them. He's the sun.

[26 : 36] We're the moon. And we reflect. His light. In our lives. And so church. We're to think of ourselves. As the light. Of the world. The purpose of the light.

Is to shine. It's to enlighten. To illumine. To bring truth. To light. That's the purpose of the church. To make plain. How boys and girls. Men and women. Can be saved.

For eternity. By trusting. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Now when the light. Of the world. Lives in you. The change.

Is drastic. It can't be hidden. Hardly. You're brought out of darkness. Into. To light. You are brought out of ignorance. Into. Understanding.

The most important things. That there are to know. You know God. You know. You know. The one way. To get to God. You know. Who made you.

[27 : 31] You know. Who you are. Why you are. Where you're going. You know. The most important. You've been brought out of darkness. Into light. You understand. These things. You know.

Your purpose in life. You know. What happens after death. You know. How to go to heaven. When you die. You now have truth. Guiding you. As a light. In a dark place. You've been brought out of the darkness.

You see. Into the light. Also. You've been brought out of the darkness. Of sin. Into the light. Of holiness. And Christ's light. Transforms you. And shines in.

And through you. To others. So that you exert. A positive influence. Wherever you go. You are now. The light. Of the world. And as the light of the world. Your light then.

Is to be seen. That's the purpose of this passage. In Matthew 5. 14. To 15. And 16. Your light is to be seen.

[28 : 29] And so he. He shows that by two illustrations. Jesus says. First of all. You should be like a city on a hill. That cannot be hidden. A city on a hill.

Cannot be hidden. Now you can hide a lot of things. You can hide your phone. You can hide your money. You can hide your feelings.

But you can't hide a city on a hill. It's too big. It's too right up there. Where everybody can see it. And Jesus says. That's. How you're to be.

Right up there. Where everybody can see. You're not to hide your light. You're to be like a city on a hill. That cannot. Be hidden. And. Then you're.

You're to be like a lamp on its stand. A lamp on its stand. And this envisions a one room house. You won't understand Jesus illustration.

[29 : 29] If you don't understand that most people were poor. And had. One room homes. And so if you. If you. You lit a light. And you put it on its stand. It would give. Light to all that are in the house.

Now in your house. If you put. Light on a stand. It wouldn't give light to all in the house. Because you got many rooms. But there's just one room. And. And Jesus is painting this picture.

So here's the one room. And it's darkness. It's. It's dark. It's night. There's. There's no light. You can't see the hand in front of you. But you somehow fumble around. And find the matches. And you light a lamp.

And you put it up. On its. Lamp stand. And that light. Gives light. To all. That are in. The house. There's no place in the house. You can go to this corner. And the light. Is shining on you. You go to this corner. The light reaches you. There's no place. In the house.

[30 : 23] Where the light. Does not shine. And Jesus says. That's. To be you. That's to be me. Lights. That cannot be hidden.

And think about it. It's really a humorous illustration. When Jesus says. That. That the one who lights a lamp. Is. Does not put it under a bushel.

So it's dark. And he. He goes to the trouble. Finding. Whatever he did. To light the fire. And he lights the fire. I'm not sure if they had matches. That's why I'm backtracking.

He lights the lamp. And. It's shining now. And he immediately. Puts it under a bushel. And the whole. House goes back into darkness. You see the folly of that.

Why. If he went to the trouble. In the first place. Of lighting the lamp. He would not. Immediately. Cover it up. It's just. A no brainer. And. Jesus is wanting us.

[31 : 20] To be. Thinking. Why did God. Light me up. With the light of the world. Why did Jesus Christ. Come. As the light of the world.

And live in me. By his spirit. Why did. Did he bring me. From darkness. To light. In such a way. That I became light. A light bearer. Of Christ. It wasn't.

To cover up. So no. Secret. Christians. No. You were lit. To shine. And so Jesus.

Brings the application. In verse 16. Therefore. In the same way. Let your light. Shine before men. That they may see. Your good deeds. And praise. Your father. In heaven. Do you see. The purpose. For the church. In this. Why did Jesus Christ.

[32 : 15] Light his people. Light his people. Up with his light. It was that they might shine. Now he says. Get on with it. Church. Get on with the shining. So that everyone. In your house. Receives the influence.

Of that light. Now if we take that. As of us. As a church. Then. That influence. Really goes a long way. It follows you. Home to work. And into your house.

And your relatives. And your neighborhood. And where you go to school. And where you go to work. And. And Grace Fellowship Church. Is to. Is to let the light shine. To all that are in.

Our house. Our sphere of influence. As a church. Or if you take it. As your personal. Word. To you. You. Where you live. In your family.

Where you shop. Where you do business. Where you. Go to school. You see. That's the house. In which you are to. Let your light. So shine. That everybody.

[33 : 14] Sees. Your good deeds. And praises your father. In heaven. Think of yourself. Christian. As a lamp. Lit by Christ.

In order to shine. Start your day out. With a remembrance. I have been lit to shine. Today. I am to shine. For the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. And see to it. That wherever you go. That light. Is not. Being covered up. But that it is shining. Brightly. To all. In your influence.

You see. That light. Is not only. Shined. Outward. By your words. But it's also. By your actions. And your attitudes. Jesus. Is just given.

The eight beatitudes. Hasn't he? That is no small. Part of the light. That you are to shine. Into this world. And so you go into the world. Not as a proud.

[34 : 08] Arrogant person. But as one. Who is lowly in spirit. Who mourns for sin. You go into the world. Where everybody's. Climbing over each other.

To get to the top. And elbowing their way. To the front of the line. And everybody's got to have it. Their way. And you go in. To that situation. With meekness. The meekness.

And gentleness. Of Christ. You can't hide that light. You can't hide that city. On a hill. You go into a world.

Where everybody's just caring. About themselves. Where everybody's walking by. That guy. That's been beat up. Along the road. And nobody stops. To help.

But you show mercy. You stop. What you're doing. It may cost you something. But you. You minister mercy. To others. You give them. What they don't deserve.

[35 : 04] You treat them. In a way. They don't deserve. Even as God. Has treated you. And that's part of your light. That's part of the good deeds. That men see. To bring glory.

To your father. And they. You go into this world. That's full of impurity. And sin. And uncleanness. And. And you go in. With a pure heart. The heart. Pure.

Right with God. You. You go into this world. That doesn't care about righteousness. And you're hungering. And thirsting for righteousness. And you're even willing to be.

Persecuted. Because of righteousness. That's a. That's a city on a hill. That can't be hid. That's a lamp. On a lamp stand. That will give light. To all in your house.

And in that way. The work of evangelism. Goes forward. As your life adorns. And lifts up. This great savior.

[36 : 02] Who's made you to differ from others. Who's made you to differ from what you would be. Had he not come. As the light into your life. For you would be just like those that you live around.

That have nothing of grace. In their heart and lives. And so as you live that life. Tell them why you live that way. Tell them that Jesus has come. And made all things new.

So that they may. Give praise to your father. In heaven. There to see your good deeds. There to hear your good words.

But there to see your good deeds. And very often in the bible. When it speaks of good deeds. It refers to meeting the physical needs of others. And that's what we see in Jesus ministry. He cared for men's souls.

And he cared for men's bodies. At the same time. Someone has said. Men don't care how much you know. Until they know how much you care. By ministering to the needs of others.

[37:03] They see that you really care for them. And they will. Have a more open heart. To listen to what you have to say. To them. Showing mercy.

Showing kindness. Loving on people. Meeting their needs. As we give out the gospel. I want to close with just two reasons to evangelism.

We've seen that Christ commands the church. He tells us to go into all the world. That's your neighborhood. All the way to the other ends of the earth.

And so we see it's a command. That's reason enough isn't it. But I want to give two other motives. And reasons. To evangelize. And the first is because God is glorified.

In the salvation of sinners. I don't know of anything that glorifies God more. Than the salvation of a sinner. Every time a sinner gets saved.

[38:04] God gets the glory. For the saving. You know we see this on the news sometimes. Don't we? Somebody made a heroic effort to save someone.

And that someone that was saved then honors and praises the one that saved their life. And that's what happens when people go from darkness to light.

And Jesus saves them. Their whole life then shows forth the praises of the one who called them out of darkness into his light. We can't thank him enough.

We can't say enough good about him. And so that's a reason to be giving out the gospel. Because God is glorified. And don't we want to see God glorified?

He's glorified. Not only in the salvation of the lost. But you know he's glorified every time you tell a lost person how to be saved. Because every time you tell a lost person how to be saved.

[39:05] You're magnifying God for his so great love that sent his son into the world. Aren't you? You're magnifying that amazing grace that we sang about today. That abundant mercy.

You're praising God as you share the gospel for his uncompromising justice. He had to punish the guilty so he punished his son. What justice there is in God.

That he wouldn't just let sin slip but would punish it. Yet in his son. What justice but what grace. And in the gospel we see his patience to receive sinners.

You mean you've been living without Christ for how many years? You may be a young person. That means days on end. Weeks on end. That you've lived without God.

You've turned your back on God. That's a tremendous crime. You mean Christ will still receive you? What a patient Savior we have. It commends his patience. His wisdom in devising a way to save sinners.

[40:06] His sovereignty and power to work out this salvation in human history. How the attributes of God shine as the story of the gospel is told.

And that itself is a sweet smelling savor to God. And he's glorified as you do so. Regardless of the response. So we ought to be motivated to share the gospel.

Because God is glorified as we do. But second because sinners desperately need the gospel. They really are heading to an eternal hell. And only Christ can save them.

They need the message. They need to hear and believe on Christ. So evangelizing is really the highest form of loving your neighbor as yourself.

If you love your neighbor, you'll give him the highest good. The gospel that can see him saved forever and ever. And we have a picture of this in an Old Testament deliverance and salvation that God gave to the people of Israel back in 2 Kings 6 and 7.

[41:14] The capital of the northern kingdom of Israel was surrounded. It was besieged by the Arameans. Ben-Hadad was the king of Aram.

And in the siege of Samaria, this capital city, no food could get in. And so a terrible, horrible famine resulted. It became so desperate that parents were eating their children.

That's how bad the famine was. And then God, right in the midst of that city, besieged, announced to the king through his prophet Elisha that on the very next day there would be plenty of wheat sold at a cheap price.

Unbelievable. They were paying huge price just for the head of a donkey. Now he's saying there'll be cheap wheat to buy. People will be able to eat again.

Incredible. The king's officer said, look, even if the Lord should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen? And Elisha said, you will see with your own eyes, but you'll not eat any of it. So how's God going to do this?

[42:23] How's God going to save this city? Well, four men with leprosy are just outside the city gate. And of course, they're outside the city gate because they've been quarantined, as the law required.

They had to be separated from the city. And so they had to live in isolation outside the city wall. And there they are. And they get to thinking one day. They, too, are starving.

And they say to themselves, why should we stay here and die? There's only famine and sure death inside the city. And if we stay here, we'll die.

So let's go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. And if they spare us, we live. And if they kill us, then we die.

That's what you do when they kill you. It's a very obvious thing. But don't you love the logic of these lepers? There is nothing to lose and our lives to gain.

[43:26] If we stay here, we're dying. If we go over there and they kill us, we're dying. But they may spare us. So let's go and venture upon their kindness.

And that's what they did. They went for it. I wonder if you know, my unconverted friend, that you are like those four lepers outside the city. If you stay where you are, you will be damned.

If you stay in your sin, where you are right now, you will be lost forever. If you don't get to Jesus Christ and find mercy for your soul, you'll be lost forever and ever.

You've sinned against God. The punishment is the second death as well as physical death, the lake of fire and brimstone. And so you're somewhat like these four lepers.

If you stay in your sins, you'll die in your sins and suffer in hell. But your situation is better than theirs. Because they said, but if we go over to the Arameans, they may let us live or they may kill us.

[44:39] Christ is better than the Arameans. He has said, if you go to me, if you come to me, I will in no way reject you. What a promise.

So there you are. You're in your sin. You're under condemnation. You're one breath away from hell. And Jesus says, come to me and you'll have life. Promised. So you're better off than these four lepers.

You have a promise from the God who cannot lie. So go and surrender to him. And you'll find him to be true to his word.

Well, at dusk, the four lepers went to the camp of the Arameans to surrender. But when they reached the edge of the camp, there wasn't anybody there. For the Lord had caused the Arameans just to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army.

So that they said to one another, look, the king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us. So they got up and fled in the darkness of dusk. And they abandoned their stuff, leaving it all in their tents.

[45:47] They just left it and ran for their lives. And so the four lepers are just coming upon this scene and they come to the first tent and they go inside. You know the first thing they did?

They ate and drank. Remember, they haven't had food for weeks and weeks. Perhaps just the scantiest fare. They ate.

They drank. Then they saw the gold and the silver and the wealth. And they started to pile it in their arms and they went out and they hid it. And they came back and went into another tent and found some more precious things and clothing.

And they went out and hid it. And then it hit them. It hit them that what they were doing was not right. Listen to what they said to one another.

We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. We're keeping it to ourselves.

[46:53] Oh, let us go at once and report this to the royal palace. And so that's what they did. The lepers who had tasted of the Lord's deliverance.

It was the Lord that drove out their enemies and had walked in and eaten and and feasted on the Lord's provision. They went and told the good news to the others so that they, too, might taste and see just how gracious the Lord is.

So what's the church? Well, we are a community of people of lepers who have tasted that the Lord is good in our salvation.

We, too, once were spiritually starving under condemnation, a breath away from eternal hell. But someone brought to us the good news about Jesus Christ.

And we repented and believed the gospel. We found Jesus to be as true as his promise that whoever believes on him would not perish but have everlasting life.

[47:58] And we feasted on him. He's the bread of life. And we partook of him just as these men ate of what they found. We ate of Christ. We took Christ to ourselves and we found eternal life.

And that's you, dear Christian. That's me. And even this morning, are we not feasting again on Christ today as we worship him? Are we not enjoying and partaking of what he is to us as our great Savior and Lord?

But even as we feast, all around us are people who are starving, who don't have a bone to chew on, who don't have anything to give them eternal life, nothing to satisfy their deepest needs.

All their thoughts about religion come short of salvation. All that they're trying to do will not bring them to peace with God, forgiveness of sins, removal of guilt.

But we have the message. We have the feast. Is it not good to go to bed at night knowing that if I should die before I wake, I'll be in heaven?

[49:14] Isn't it a wonderful thing to lay your head on your pillow at night right with God? All my sins are forgiven. They're under the blood of Jesus and no one or no thing can ever condemn me because of them.

What a precious thing is forgiveness of sins through Jesus' blood. And we're enjoying this, aren't we? It's a feast of joy, of daily joy.

It's a wonderful thing. Should we be keeping it to ourselves? It's a day of good news. Let's not keep it to ourselves. Let's seek grace from Christ to move out and to share this good news with our neighbors all the way out to the nations.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for the feast of the gospel.

We thank you that there's everything in Jesus Christ that perfectly meets our needs as sinners.

Lord, we didn't deserve a bite of it. We deserve to go hungry forever, thirsty forever, without any relief because of our sin against you.

[50:36] And you in grace sought us and found us and granted to us repentance and faith. You drew us to yourself to where we were fed up with ourselves and our sin.

And we casted ourselves upon Christ and we found mercy. And we thank you that whenever we come to Christ, we find mercy. Whenever we're fed up with ourselves and our sin, we find the same welcome.

And so forgive us, Lord, that we've had such a feast of good things and we've kept these things to ourselves. Oh, that you would give to us that same conviction that you gave to the four lepers.

That we might go at once and tell others about this Savior. Do forgive us and do help us as we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.