

The Surprising Wonder of Jesus

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading comes from Matthew chapter 8. Please follow along on the screen, the bulletin, or your own Bible.

In Matthew 8 verse 1, we read. When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, see that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priests and offer the gifts that Moses commanded for a proof to them.

When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.

And he said to him, I will come and heal him. But the centurion replied, Lord, I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word and my servant will be healed.

[1 : 20] For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, go, and he goes. And another, come, and he comes.

And to my servant, do this, and he does it. When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, Surely I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.

I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness.

In that place there will be whipping and gnashing of teeth. And to the centurion, Jesus said, Go, let it be done for you as you have believed.

And the servant was healed at that very moment. And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever.

[2 : 23] He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick.

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah. He took our illnesses and bore our diseases. Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. And a scribe came up to him and said to him, Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus said to him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

Another of the disciples said to him, Lord, let me first go and bury my father. And Jesus said to him, follow me and leave the dead to bury their own dead.

Amen. This is the word of God. Amen. Great. Dan and Soda, thank you so much for that. And good morning to the One Mark family.

[3 : 37] It is wonderful to be with you again today. If you don't know me, my name is Kevin, and it is wonderful to be with you this morning. And two years ago, I think it was December 2019, 2018 actually, we started preaching through the book of Matthew.

And we went on for about 20 weeks. We got to the end of chapter 7. And then we decided to take a pause. And that pause ended up being two years. And so after going through Matthew's gospel, we got to the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

And then we preached through Habakkuk. We preached through Haggai. We have looked at Philippians. We looked at the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament. We've preached through the book of Revelation.

We've looked at the suffering serving passages in Isaiah. But all this time, we've actually been wanting to get back to Matthew's gospel to get up close and personal with Jesus.

And so we are going to dive back into Matthew's gospel. And so for the next couple of weeks, next 10, 12 weeks or so, we're going to be picking up where we left off by looking at Matthew 8 all the way to Matthew 12 for the next 10 weeks or so.

[4 : 46] And looking again, what does it look like when Jesus says, come and follow me? What does it look like when Jesus says, come and be with me? Come and become like me. And come and let the patterns of your life look like the patterns of my life.

And so for the next couple of weeks, we're going to be working through Matthew's gospel. I'm very excited. We've been looking forward to getting back to Matthew's gospel for a while now. And it's great to be doing so. And so today we find ourselves in Matthew chapter 8.

Now, one of the things about Matthew's gospel is that Matthew, who put it together, did so very, very carefully. Everything in his gospel is well thought out, well laid out.

And chapters 8 and 9, which we're going to look at the next couple of weeks, there are these nine miracle accounts, three sets of three. And today we're going to be looking at the first set of three miracles found in chapter 8, verses 1 to 22.

And the question that we're going to be looking at today is this question. What do we need to know about Jesus? What do we need to understand about Jesus in order to experience His grace?

[5 : 55] And there are four things we're going to learn from our passage today. Today we're going to see that in order to experience Christ's grace, we need to know or understand His compassion, His authority, His mercy, and finally, His call.

Okay, so let's dive in. Firstly, His heart of compassion. Look at Matthew chapter 8, verses 1 to 4 with me.

Jesus has finished teaching His famous Sermon on the Mount. He's coming down and the crowds are all around Him and they're following Him. And a leper comes up to Jesus and asks Jesus to heal him of his leprosy.

Now, obviously, leprosy is a terrible, terrible disease, right? It affects your body in a most severe way. Your body starts to not function the way it normally does.

In many ways, those that contract leprosy are living a death sentence. Your body gradually becomes more and more disfigured, more and more ruined. It stops working.

[7 : 01] It's a terrible disease. But in addition to the medical and the physical aspects of leprosy, equally bad are the social ramifications. A leper, especially in the ancient days, was an absolute social outcast.

In the ancient day, leprosy would destroy all your relationships. You were cut off from society. In fact, up until fairly recently, anyone that had leprosy was isolated from the community, quarantined indefinitely until either they died or they could somehow prove that they were no longer infected by the disease.

In fact, even up until the 1970s, here in Hong Kong, we had our own leper colony on the island of Haling Chao off Lantau. And so for anyone who had leprosy, in the ancient days, you had to walk around the streets calling out, unclean, unclean, so that those who didn't know you would recognize this call and would go to the margins, leave you alone, kind of weave this path so that you could walk through the town and make sure you don't touch anybody so that nobody can be infected by your disease.

In the Old Testament, there's a law in Leviticus that says this, the leper shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean.

He must live alone. His dwelling shall be outside of the community. And so this leper is a social outcast. No one's allowed to touch him. He's not allowed to live within the community.

[8 : 31] Anyone who touches him is themselves automatically defiled or unclean or impure. And they would need to quarantine themselves outside of the community, not just for 14 days or 21 days, until your dying days removed from the community.

In Scripture, leprosy is often used as a picture of the human condition. Scripture talks about leprosy. It's a picture of the brokenness of our lives.

And the reason is because sin, in many ways, affects us in the same way that leprosy does. It destroys our lives. It destroys our relationships with God, with one another, with ourselves.

Sin ravages the human heart. And it affects every area of our lives. Relationally, socially, spiritually, emotionally, psychologically.

Sin has this effect that it ruins and disfigures our heart and the center of our being. And so, in many ways, all of us carry the scars of living in a broken and sin-affected world.

[9 : 41] We carry the scars of the sin in our own life. We also carry the scars of those that have sinned against us. And that's why in the Gospels, leprosy is actually never spoken about as being healed.

It's often spoken about as being cleansed. It's a picture of the human condition. And so, this man comes to Jesus and look at what he says. He says here, Jesus, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

Now, before Jesus does anything, let's think about this man's question. If you will, you can make me clean.

The man doesn't question Jesus' ability, but he asks him about his willingness. The word will there means to desire, to want to do something. Jesus, I know you are able.

Do you want to heal me? Friends, this is actually how many of us live ourselves. Many Christians know that if God was able to bring the whole creation into being, the one who spoke the universe and the cosmos into existence, surely nothing is too difficult for him.

[10 : 49] We read the Gospels and we read all these stories of how Jesus is more than able to heal any disease, any sickness. Jesus is able to do miraculous things. But the question is, is he willing?

Does he want to do it? Friends, is God interested in your life and our life? Is he concerned with our struggles and our pain? What about the areas of sin and shame that we carry in our lives?

Things that keep on tripping us up. Is God concerned about that? Or is he too busy running the universe to be concerned about the areas of our lives? Look at Jesus' response.

Jesus says, I will. I will be clean. But before he does that, Jesus does something fascinating. Look at verse 3 with me. Jesus stretches out his hand and see what he does?

He touches the leper. Jesus does what is socially unacceptable, what is culturally all wrong, because he reaches out and he touches this man, which is ceremonially unclean, religiously defiled, culturally on the outskirts of society.

[12 : 01] Jesus reaches out and touches this man that's considered contaminated and impure. And Jesus doesn't pull out the hand sanitizer. He doesn't just first put on latex gloves or the hazmat suit.

Jesus reaches out and touches him because as D.A. Carson says, At Jesus' touch, nothing remains defiled. Far from becoming impure himself, Jesus makes the impure clean.

Friends, what does this mean? Well, you know what it means? It means that there's nothing in our lives, nothing which is too bad, too far gone, too sinful, too defiled, too wicked, too rotten or disfigured or ruined, nothing which is beyond the willingness of Jesus to reach out and draw near and to touch and to get involved and to bring healing and cleansing to the areas of our lives that produce shame and which we like to cover up.

Jesus says, there's nothing in your life about which I am unwilling to get involved in. There's nothing which is too wrong, too far gone, too disfigured for Jesus to say, I don't know if I want to go there.

Jesus reaches out and he crosses all the social barriers, crosses all the politically correct and socially correct lines, and he says, I want to get involved. But there's one condition.

[13 : 26] We have to be willing to come to him. I know that might sound like pious preacher's talk, right? But it's absolutely true.

Friends, think about the areas of our lives where we carry shame, the areas of our lives where we feel deep hurt. Maybe the words that somebody has spoken to us. It may be the sharp, stabbing pain of betrayal that we feel by a loved one.

It may be the personal sense of failure or the fear that we're not good enough. We don't have what it takes. Dan Ortlund writes this. He says, The Jesus that we see in the gospel is not just one who loves, but one who is love.

Merciful affections stream from his innermost heart like rays stream from the sun. The cumulative testimony of the four gospels is that when Jesus sees the fallenness of the world around him, his deepest impulse, his most natural instinct is to move towards that sin and suffering, not away from it.

Friends, you see that? In order to know the mercy of God, in order to experience the kindness and the mercy of God, we absolutely have to know the heart of compassion of Jesus.

[14 : 49] Friends, if we don't understand his heart of compassion for our areas of pain, we'll do what most people do. Which is that we'll cover it up. We'll pretend that those areas don't exist.

We'll put our best foot forward and we'll never experience the grace of Christ in the very areas that we need it most. It's kind of like us thinking this morning. Imagine you've got a gaping wound in your arm here and it's infected and infested and it needs a doctor, a surgeon's touch.

And we cover it up with a jacket and then we go to the doctor and say, Doctor, I've hurt my finger here. Can you put a band-aid on? Friends, many of us come to Jesus and we ask him to put a band-aid on the little areas of our life.

And Jesus knows about this gaping wound and he says, That's why I've come. I've come to bring my healing touch there. Will you take off your jacket? Will you let me in? Will you come to me? We have to know his heart of compassion. Jesus wants to get involved in those areas of our lives that we want to cover up the most. Secondly, in order to experience his grace, we need to know his supreme authority.

[15 : 59] Look at what happens in verse 5 here. Jesus enters this town called Capernaum. And a centurion comes up to him and asks him to likewise perform a miracle, to heal a servant of his who is suffering at home terribly.

And if the leper is a social outcast because of his physical condition, the centurion is a social outcast because of his race and because of his occupation.

You see, the centurion is a Gentile. He's not an Israelite. He's not of the covenant people of God. He is not someone that's grown up with the scriptures. He's not a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And therefore, he's considered to be outside of the people of God. But what's worse is that he is a centurion, which means he works for the Roman army. If you know anything about first century Israel, the Romans were the enemy of Israel.

They were those foreign army that had occupied the nation of Israel. They had stationed their troops there. They had imposed their own king on Israel. They exacted taxes from the Israelites.

[17 : 06] They didn't care a whole lot for the Israelites' faith and their way of life. And so the Romans are Israel's sworn enemy. According to Jewish thinking, this centurion is of the wrong race and he wears the wrong uniform.

And yet, Jesus says something incredible about it. Jesus gives them one of the most amazing compliments. Look at what he says in verse 10. He says, What Jesus is saying is highly, highly offensive.

He's essentially saying that this Gentile oppressor, this Roman soldier, is more likely to dwell in God's kingdom. To experience the blessing and the favor of God.

To be with Christ in all of eternity. Than many of the religious leaders who are meticulously running around trying to obey the law. And do all the religious things, fulfill the commandments.

And those who run around trying to fulfill all the commandments will only experience rejection.

While this Gentile oppressor, this Roman centurion, will be welcomed into God's kingdom.

[18 : 32] Now why is that? Jesus says because of his faith. Well, what is it about his faith? Well, why does Jesus say this? Well, notice two things that the centurion says.

Firstly, notice what he sees in Jesus. He says here, Jesus, don't come to my house. So, he first comes to Jesus and says, Jesus, will you come and heal my servant?

And Jesus says, do you want me to come to your house? And he says, no, no, no, don't come. And look what he says here. He says, only say the word. Just merely say the word. Now I know my servant will be healed.

For I too am a man under authority. With soldiers underneath me. I say to one, go. And he goes. To another, come. And he comes. I say to my servant, do this. And he does it.

In the Roman world, all authority in the army was invested in the emperor. He was the supreme authority. And so, the centurion himself is subjected to this imperial authority.

[19 : 33] But at the same time, the centurion also knows that whenever he gives a command, he does so not on his own authority, but in the authority that's invested in him. He speaks on the authority or with the authority of the emperor.

Look what he says here. Somehow, this centurion has seen something about Jesus. Has this incredible understanding that when Jesus speaks, he speaks with the full authority of God himself.

Somehow and somewhere, the centurion has seen and understood that Jesus is not just a moral teacher. He's not just a good man. He's not just a populist with a crowd pleaser. He's not even just a miracle worker. Jesus has within himself the authority of God himself. Just a few verses earlier, Matthew notes how the crowds are astonished at Jesus. And they say, here's a man who teaches with such authority. And as a result, the crowds are drawn to him. But unlike the crowds, the centurion has also seen the authority of Jesus. [20 : 39] But unlike the crowds, he truly understands it. He's not just attracted to it. He bows down before it. The writer of the book of Hebrews says that at his word, the universe is sustained.

Christ sustains the universe by the word of his power. Colossians tells us that by Christ, all things were made by him and through him and ultimately for him. That in Christ and God the Father and the Holy Spirit is invested all the authority. As we sang about this morning, yes, Christ is merciful. But oh, he's also mighty. He is majestic. He has supreme authority. D.A. Carson said it like this. The greatness of the centurion's faith did not rest in the fact that he believed Jesus could heal his servant. That's true. It's the degree to which he had penetrated the secret of Christ's authority. He knew that Christ had supreme authority, not just because he was a great teacher, not just because he was a great rabbi, but because he was God. [21 : 48] Because he was God himself. Friends, do you know Jesus like this? Do you know that Jesus Christ is the supreme being of all creation?

That the one who walked the dusty roads of Nazareth, the one who with compassion reached out and touched the lepers and the cripples, is also the one who spoke the universe into being. Is also the one who spoke you into being. Friends, many people admire Jesus as a wise man, as a good man, maybe even as a miracle worker. But if you don't see Christ as the sovereign, supremely authoritative one, we'll never bow down to him. And what that means is we'll come to Jesus and we'll want to use him to the extent that he can benefit us, but we won't worship him. The only way to really experience his grace is to know him and to come down and bow before him. To see that he's not just good, but that he's God. He's not just able, but he's worthy of our adoration. Friends, in order to experience the grace of Christ, we need to see him as supremely authoritative.

[23 : 00] But that's not all the centurion sees, because the centurion also says something else. And that leads us to our third point, which is he sees his mercy. The centurion comes to Jesus and says, Jesus, my servant is suffering terribly.

Won't you come and heal him? And Jesus says, sure, would you like me to come to your house? But notice what he says. The first word he says is, Lord, I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof.

Now, what's fascinating about that is that in Luke's account of this situation, some people are there around. And some people say to Jesus, this man is worthy to have you go to his house and heal his servant.

Because he's a good man, he's a righteous man, and this man has paid for our synagogue. So here's this Roman centurion soldier who actually has compassion in his heart towards the nation of Israel.

And he pays for the synagogue to be built in this town. And so some people, some Israelites are around Jesus and say, Jesus, this man is worthy of you to do it.

[24 : 04] But the centurion sends a message saying, no, no, no. I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Just say the word and I know it will be done because I know you have supreme authority.

In other words, this man's faith is absent of any sort of entitlement. There's nothing inside of himself that he appeals to other than the mercy of Jesus.

Friends, you know what that means? It means the kind of faith that Jesus is looking for is not based on what we hope he will see inside of us, but what we see inside of him.

That's so important. Another way of saying that is that the kind of faith that Jesus is looking for, the kind of faith that pleases him, is understanding that I have no rights or claim to him, but I come to him anyway because I believe that he's good, he's gracious, and he's merciful.

Do you see that? I don't come to Jesus based on what I hope he's going to see in me, but what I've seen in him. I have no claim on him. There's nothing I can appeal to inside of myself, but I come to him anyway just trusting that he's merciful and compassionate and gracious to people like me and people like you.

[25 : 21] Now, friends, that's the very opposite of how most of us and most people approach God. Every religion in the world will say, you come to God with what you have in your hand, with what you bring. You need to look inside of yourself to find something to qualify you, to bring you near to God, something to elicit the help of the gods and the deities.

Remember that famous line by Tim Keller. He says, In ancient times, the deities were bloodthirsty and hard to please. Even today, they still are.

Why? Because when we look inside ourselves to bring something to the table, when you try and master up something to please God and to elicit his help, it's exhausting, it's demanding, it's exacting, and we wonder whether we've got enough, whether we've done enough for God to be pleased, whether what we've brought to the table is sufficient.

But, friends, the gospel is the very opposite of that. The gospel says, You don't get God's mercy because you deserve it or because of what you bring to the table. You get God's mercy because he's merciful.

In the gospel, it's not those who think of themselves as worthy or credible. It's those who recognize their need for the mercy of God. Again, Dan Outlan says it like this, With Christ, our sins and weaknesses are the very resume items that qualify for us to approach him.

[26 : 51] Friends, that's astounding. In every religion, the things that qualify you are your strengths, what you bring to the table, how hard you've worked, how faithful you are, how diligent you are, how good you are.

With Christ, the only thing that qualifies us to come to him are our weaknesses and our failings. With Christ, our sins and our weaknesses are the very resume items that qualify us to approach him.

Nothing but coming to him is required. First at conversion, but then a thousand times thereafter, until we are with him upon that day we meet him face to face.

Martin Luther very famously said, When Jesus called people to a life of repentance, he meant that all of life is repentance. In other words, we don't just come to Jesus once upon a time and say, Jesus, I need you, but thereafter we bring all our strengths to him.

We come to Jesus day after day. We live a life of confession and repentance. A life that says, Jesus, I need your mercy. Christ, be merciful to me, a sinner.

[28 : 02] This man gets it. He gets it because when he comes to Jesus, he doesn't appeal to anything inside of himself. Not what he's done, not his position, not his rank.

He comes and he appeals to only what he sees in Jesus. Friends, when you come to Jesus, what do you bring in your hands? What do you write in your internal resume? What do you bring that you hope will qualify you to justify your request, to elicit his favor?

What do you hope that he will take notice of in your life in order to qualify you for his mercy?

Friends, the centurion comes to Jesus and he says, Jesus, I have nothing to bring, nothing to prove my worthiness.

I come empty handed. I'm banking my request on this, that you are God, that you are compassionate, that you are merciful, and that you answer those who seek you. This is the mercy of Jesus.

Friends, do you know his mercy? Do you know the gospel like this? That nothing in my hands I bring simply to his cross I cling. Remember, throughout the gospels, Jesus is constantly contrasting those who think they have what it takes to earn God's favor with those who don't.

[29 : 13] And forever, these are the ones that think that they have what it takes, walk away empty handed, while those who bring nothing actually receive his grace. Jesus says two men go to the temple, a religious man who's done all the right things, and a sinner who comes and says, Jesus, have mercy on me.

And Jesus says, this man goes home with the favor of God rather than this man. Jesus in Luke 18, two groups come to him, some children that have got nothing to contribute to his campaign, and a wealthy young ruler, a man with authority.

And this man goes home empty handed, and the children receive the blessing of God. Why? Because you have to know that the whole foundation of the gospel is this, the unearned, unmerited mercy of God.

Now, at Watermark, we have tried to be very clear on this gospel message. We've tried to be very explicit about what scripture says, the gospel.

That a Christian is someone who's justified, accepted by God, not on the basis of our merit or what we've done to earn his favor, but purely on the mercy of God. And so we've been very clear, you cannot earn your salvation.

[30 : 28] You cannot do anything that's good enough to merit it. God doesn't look at your moral scorecard, your spiritual performance, and reward you. It's purely on the base of empty handed grace.

Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to your mercy and your grace do I claim. But there's a danger in this. But the danger is because it's possible to hear that and to think that the gospel is a get-out-of-jail-free card.

That somehow the gospel is that like God is some dodderly old grandfather in the sky who just loves to give us spiritual license packets. You know, it's almost as if Jesus is saying, you love to commit sin, I love to forgive sin, we're a match made in heaven.

This is going to work just perfectly. But actually, in order to know and experience His grace, we need not only know His heart of compassion, not only know His supreme authority, not only know His mercy, in order to experience His grace, we need to understand the call that Jesus issues to us. It's a call to orientate our entire lives around Him and to follow Him. When Jesus says, come and follow me, He says, yes, come and be with me, but also come and be like me.

[31 : 46] Come and let the pattern of your life look like the pattern of my life. May you so orientate your life around me that you start to be like me and behave like me. Let your life look like me.

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is saying that when we come into His family as children, we start to resemble the image of our Father in heaven. Like Father, like sons, we become like Him.

And so Jesus is not just saying, gracious and merciful, live however you please. Jesus is saying, come and follow me. Come and orientate your whole life around me.

Look what happens in verse 18 in our passage today. Once again, the crowds are all around Him. But amazingly, Jesus is not that interested in the crowds. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus is not that interested in crowds.

In John chapter 6, the crowds are hammering around Him because He's just done this amazing miracle and fed 5,000 people. And Jesus says, if you want to be my disciple, you've got to eat my flesh and drink my blood.

[32 : 50] And most of them say, oh, that's not for us. Thank you. And they leave Him. Jesus has this amazing gift of thinning out the crowds. And again, the crowds are clamoring around Him. And Jesus is not that impressed.

He's not that interested. So He says to His disciples, verse 18, come, let's go to the other side of the lake. Let's leave these crowds behind. And one man comes to Him and says, teacher, I'll follow you wherever you want to go.

Jesus, I'm in. Wherever you want. I've got what it takes. I've got the goods. Jesus, I'm with you. And Jesus says, foxes of holes, birds of the air have nests, the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. What Jesus is saying is this. Listen, if you're going to follow me, it means being with me. It means becoming like me. It means letting the pattern of my life become the pattern of your life. But more than that, Jesus is saying, I've got to tell you, there's not going to be a whole lot of security.

And even more than that, there's going to be a whole lot of discomfort in following me. Jesus is giving this guy the most honest appraisal of what awaits him, what's coming up if you're going to follow him.

[33 : 54] He says, you've got to be willing to die to yourself. You've got to be willing to die to your ego, to die to your own agenda, to die to your self-reliance. This man is saying, Jesus, I'm all in. You can come to me.

I've got what it takes. And Jesus says, that I inside of you, that needs to die. If you're going to follow me, you've got to embrace discomfort, hardship. You're going to be out of your comfort zone.

It's going to cost you. It's going to challenge you. You're going to have to die to yourself every single day. Before you decide anything, know what it's going to cost. Someone else comes to Jesus and

says, Jesus, I'm all in.

I'm with you. Just let me first go and bury my father. And then I'm right with you. Now, what that could have happened, it could mean that the guy's father died literally that day.

And the burial was a few hours away. And then he was going to follow Jesus. But commentators say that that's unlikely. In Israel custom, if somebody died, they were buried that very day.

[34 : 57] And so if someone's father has just died a few hours ago, it's unlikely that he's now at Simon Peter's house listening to Jesus teaching. Chances are he's back at home arranging the funeral and getting things ready for the funeral and the burial that's to happen in a few hours' time.

In likelihood, what's happened is this man's dad is still alive, maybe a couple of months, maybe a few years away from passing away. He's an elderly man. And this man is saying to Jesus, Jesus, I want to come and follow you.

I'm all there. I'm coming now. I've just got a few things I need to tie up first. I need to wrap up a few things. I need to collect my inheritance. And once all those things are done, I'm right with you.

Jesus, I'm willing to follow you. I'm willing to trust you and obey you and do what you ask. I just need to take care of some stuff. I need to sell this property. I need to make this investment.

I just need to start this business. I just need to get my kids through school. And then I'm all in. I'm all yours. Friends, how many times do we hear people saying that? How many times have we said that?

[35 : 59] Jesus, when I've made this amount of money, when I've got this figure, then I'll start being generous. I'll start to give away, to invest in your kingdom. Jesus, when I make this promotion at work, when I get to this level of seniority, I'll have more time on my hands.

And then I'll be able to serve your kingdom. I'll be able to go and do the things you asked me to. I'll invest in others. But friends, does that day ever come? Of course it doesn't.

Because there's always more. There's always another level to get to. There's always more money to make. There's always another reason why it's not a good time right now to embrace the cost.

And so what happens is that before we know it, 20 years have gone by, and we're wondering why it is that our following of Jesus just doesn't seem to satisfy us.

It doesn't feel like we're really walking with Him. We're not experiencing His grace. And for many people, for 20 years, 30 years, they've been saying, Jesus, I'm coming. I'm coming now. I just need to take care of one or two things.

As soon as I get here, I'll be all in. And we wonder why it is that following Jesus seems superficial and bland and like there's no substance.

[37 : 08] Jesus says if you want to experience His grace, if you really want to know Him, you need to heed His call to follow Him, to embrace the cost, to go where He asks you to go, to do what He asks you to do, and to do when He asks you to do it.

Friends, Jesus says, follow me. That means come and be with me. Not later, not next year when it's more convenient. Come and be with me now. Come and follow me. Come and orientate your life around me. Come and become like me.

Come and pattern your life. Orientate your life around me. So that your life looks like my life. And a couple of chapters later, in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 10, Jesus says this, whoever does not pick up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Friends, you know that it's never convenient time to take up your cross. It's never convenient time to die to yourself. Yes, it's true. There's a crown of glory that's awaiting those that follow Him.

But there's a daily cross to take up along the way. Jesus says, I bore the cross of God's rod so that you don't have to. But anyone who follows me will still bear a cross.

[38 : 12] The daily cross of identifying with the crucified Savior. This man comes and he says, Jesus, I'm all in. I'm right with you. But first, I've just got a couple of things to take care of.

I've got to bury my dad. I've got to collect my inheritance. I've just got to make sure that everything's fine and then I'll be with you. Jesus says, let the dead bury the dead. You come and follow me.

Friends, what about you? What about you? Do you want to know Jesus? Do you know Him like this? Friends, do you want to experience His grace?

In order to do that, we need to know His compassion. Jesus comes and He reaches into the very areas of our lives that we like to cover over and pretend aren't there.

And He says, no, no, I want to get involved there. I want to bring my grace and my mercy. I want to bring my compassion to those areas. Friends, do we know His authority? Are we bowing down to

Him?

[39 : 07] Do we come to Jesus and just use Him because He's powerful? Or are we submitted to His authority? Friends, do we know His mercy? Do we know that we come to Him on the basis, not of what we bring, our resume, our moral performance.

We come to Him on the basis of His mercy. Friends, do you know His call to abandon ourselves, to die to ourselves, not just when it's convenient, not just when it suits us, but to follow Him?

Friends, let's not wait another day. Let's not wait another minute. Let's come to Him. Let's call on His grace. Let's follow Him. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, I want you to open our eyes to see you for who you are.

Christ, we come to you this morning. Many of us come finished and exhausted. We come broken and hurting. We come very aware of the areas of our life that are full of pain.

We need your mercy and your compassion. God, we also come and we are tempted to bring our resume our CV. Jesus, right now, I want you to help us to leave that aside and to cast ourselves on your mercy.

[40 : 20] Jesus, I pray for every one of us this morning. I pray that we will come before you this morning and really follow you. That we will pick up our cross. Not the cross to earn your love.

We won't pick up our cross in order to feel qualified. We will pick up the cross that so identifies with you that says, Jesus, our life is yours. Everything we have belongs to you. Christ, come and have your way in our hearts of prayer.

God, we recognize that this requires a move of your grace. We can't follow you in our own strength. We need you, God, to move towards us. I pray for every one of us this morning.

Won't you move towards us? Won't you open the eyes of our hearts to see you? Christ, won't you make us more like yourself? Jesus, won't you get a hold of our hearts.

Holy Spirit, come and have your way. Pray. God, I pray that we will be those who follow you. Not by human strength, not by willpower, not by mental assent, but because our hearts have been melted by your compassion and your mercy, your awesomeness.

[41 : 28] That we will be so drawn to you. Holy Spirit, come and do this, we pray. In your wonderful, in your compassionate, your authoritative, your merciful name, we pray.

Amen.