

Speaking for God

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[0 : 00] Isaiah chapter 6. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called. And the house was filled with smoke.

And I said, woe is me, for I am lost. For I am a man of unclean lips. And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

For my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongues from the altar.

And he touched my mouth and said, behold, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send?

[1 : 25] And who will go for us? Then I said, here I am. Send me. And he said, go and say to this people, keep on hearing, but do not understand.

Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull and their ears heavy and blind their eyes. Lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn and be healed.

Then I said, how long, O Lord? And he said, until cities lie waste without inhabitant and houses without people. And the land is a desolate waste.

And the Lord removes people far away. And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again.

Like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump. Amen. Okay.

[2 : 31] Thank you, Karen. God, won't you help us to hear and listen and respond to your word. Won't you speak to us this morning in your great name we pray.

Amen. If you are new with us this morning, we are in the third week, the third and the final week of looking at this chapter, Isaiah chapter 6.

It's a very famous passage of Scripture. It's a very wonderful passage of Scripture. And it documents Isaiah's vision of God and then his confession and then his commission, his sending out.

And so two weeks ago, we looked at this vision that Isaiah has of God. And Isaiah sees something of the grandeur and the majesty and the sheer awesomeness of God.

And it takes his breath away. And Isaiah sees God how we all need to see him. He sees his holiness and his magnificence. He sees that God is on the throne of the universe.

[3 : 30] And we've just been looking at this chapter very, very slowly. And the reason is because as human beings, certainly my biggest problem in life is that my view of God is too small.

I have this tendency to have a small view of God and I pray small prayers. My worship is small and restricted and my faith is small. But that's not the kind of people we want to be.

We want to be people that have a big view of the big God and pray big prayers and trust God for big things and have big, bold faith. And people whose worship is expansive and whose obedience is bold.

And for that, we need to see God for who he is. See the majesty and the bigness of God. We need the big God to be big in our hearts. And so we've been thinking about this and reflecting over this the last few weeks.

And then last week we saw that Isaiah, when he sees God, what that does is it causes him to see himself rightly. He sees God's majesty, God on the throne.

[4 : 31] And suddenly he sees himself and he has this confession. He says, woe is me, I am ruined. And I'm lost. But last week we saw it didn't end there because confession always leads to

assurance.

And so in the last week, just we looked at three verses, three very simple verses. And we saw the entire gospel, the entire story of the Bible in three verses. Isaiah says, I'm lost. And God says, you are saved.

Isaiah says, I'm a sinful man. And God says, your sin is taken away. Your guilt is atoned for. Amazing, amazing encounter with grace. And that's what we celebrated when we did communion. Marco led us in communion. This is the story of Jesus because Jesus died on the cross and rose again. We can hear, those of us who trust in him and believe in him, we can hear those words spoken to us.

That our sin is taken away. Our guilt is atoned for because of what Jesus did on the cross. The whole gospel story in a couple of verses. And so today we come to the final section of Isaiah 6. [5 : 35] We're looking at verse 8 to 13 that Karen read to us. And I must say, it's a difficult passage. I have really wrestled this week and gone round and round. It's a difficult passage of scripture.

But let's see what it says. In this passage, God sends Isaiah out. He commissions him. He sends him on a task, on a mission to go out.

And to speak for him on behalf of him. And if you think about it, if you're new to church or new to Christianity, or you're trying to make sense of the Christian faith, or maybe you've recently got baptized, like we've had a couple of people, this is actually a logical progression.

Isaiah sees God. He sees himself. And then he goes out and speaks on behalf of this God that he's encountered. And it's the same thing for us. A Christian is someone who sees God, then sees ourself and our need for God, and then gets drafted into God's cosmic plan to go and make disciples and to speak for God.

And we go out on mission. And so this is what we see in this chapter. And this is what's happening with Isaiah. And friends, one of the dangers for a church like ours, if I can say this, is that we are what's called a Reformed church.

[6 : 49] That's kind of the historical background we come from, Reformed. And Reformed churches love the doctrine of God's sovereignty. God is king on the throne. We love talking about confession and repentance and assurance and the gospel.

But then we like to just stay at verse 1 to 7. Just camp there. That's good for us. But actually, one of the dangers is we need to read verse 8 to 13. We need God to not only, once we see God and we see ourselves, we need to be the church that then goes out.

And we want to be outward focused, not just become introspective and inward looking. And so the bigness and the grandeur of God is meant to compel us to go out with a compelling message of who He is and what He's done.

The gospel draws us in to community and then sends us out on mission. Okay? So that's kind of the big idea of where we're going. So let's look at this today.

We're going to see Isaiah's mission and our mission. And we're going to see three things. See, a good reason for mission, a difficult challenge of mission, and a wonderful promise for mission.

[7 : 48] Okay? A good reason, a difficult challenge, a wonderful promise. You could say the good, the bad, and the wonderful. Okay? Something like that. So let's look at it. Firstly, the good. A good reason for mission.

Look at verse 8 with me. Okay? So Isaiah sees God. He sees himself. He hears the gospel. Your guilt is taken away. Your sin is atoned for. Amazing. Verse 8. God says, or Isaiah says, Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send?

And who will go for us? And Isaiah says, Here am I. Send me. God has a plan and a purpose for the world. God has a plan and a purpose for Isaiah.

God has a plan and a purpose for you and for your life. And so God draws Isaiah in. He allows Isaiah to see him. And now he's going to send him out as his spokesperson, his ambassador. And he asked, God asks this rhetorical question. God's not confused. He knows what's going on. But he asked this rhetorical question. Who will go for us? Who will be our spokesperson? Who should we send to the nation of Israel?

[8 : 50] And Isaiah says, here I am. Send me. That's a very good response. Okay? Good thing to say. One of the things that distinguishes the God of the Bible from every other deity or philosophy or moral philosophy or superstition is the fact that the God of the Bible actually speaks.

He is not silent. God does not leave us to try and just figure out things on earth. God has spoken to us. He's spoken to us in his word. He's spoken to us through Christ, his son. He's spoken to us through the Holy Spirit.

God speaks. And our lives work best when our lives conform with what he has said. When God speaks and we bring our lives into alignment with what God says, that's when human flourishing happens.

And so God here speaks and he says, I've got a plan. I've got a purpose. I want my message to go out. And Isaiah conforms and says, I will go. I will join you.

God, what you have said, what you want to be done, I will do that. And so he says, here am I, send me. Now the thing that interests me in this chapter, and I've read this many times before, but I've never really thought about it before this week.

[9 : 59] But it's fairly obvious. I'm a little slow in that regard. God does not tell Isaiah what the assignment is. He says, I need somebody to go and do something.

And Isaiah says, sure, here I am. Send me. But he hasn't told Isaiah what does the assignment entail? What is the mission? What is the message he's to say? What must he do?

Where must he go? How dangerous is it going to be? And none of that is discussed. And Isaiah just says, sure, here I am. Now I don't know about you, but when somebody comes to me and says, hey, I need some help.

I need you to do something for me. I've got a lot of questions in my mind. Okay, how much is this going to cost me? How much time is this going to take? You know, can I fit this into my schedule? But Isaiah is not asking any of those mental questions. He doesn't do any of that. He doesn't know anything about the assignment or the mission that God's sending him on. He doesn't know how dangerous or costly it is or where he's going.

[10 : 53] He simply says, here I am. Why? Why does Isaiah do that? I think the reason is because Isaiah has seen something of the glory and the majesty of God and he's encountered God's grace.

Isaiah has seen what it's like when the awesomeness of God, who is all-consuming, encounters his life and doesn't destroy him, but saves him.

That's what the first seven verses of this chapter are all about, right? Isaiah sees God. He then sees himself. He says, woe is me, I'm undone. And God doesn't destroy him. God rescues him. And having seen God's awesomeness and encountered the majesty of God and encountered his grace, Isaiah so trusts God that he says, okay, God, whatever you want, wherever you say, I will go.

Now, what does that mean for us? Well, it means two things. Firstly, it means true motivation for Christian mission and Christian witness is always the glory and the majesty of God.

Friends, why do we reach out to people? Why do we share the gospel? Why do we run an alpha course? Why does a young run a Bible study in the bars of Wan Chai or Temple Street? Why do we go to other countries?

[12 : 12] Why do we read the Bible with our neighbor? Why do we reach out to our colleagues and live out our faith in our workplace? Why do we do these things? If there's any other reason than having seen God and being in awe of him, that mission will get twisted and become very weird very quickly.

Wanting an adventure or an excitement or wanting to do something meaningful with your life or wanting us to build a big church or build a big brand name or trying to earn God's favor or feeling guilty for your sin and trying to earn God's love, those things will become twisted and coercive and manipulative and warped.

Christian mission is not done because we love mission, but because we love the God that has saved and rescued us. Out of a deep love and awe for God for who he is and what he's done, that's why we go on mission.

Friends, at Watermark Church, we want to be a highly missional church. We want to send missionaries all over Asia. We want to reach out to more people that don't know the gospel. Our biggest passion is for more people that don't know Jesus to know Jesus.

We want to be missionary all over our city. We want to become more outward focused and outward looking. But it must be not out of a sense of adventurism or let's build a big church or let's try and grow our church or let's become a famous church.

[13 : 33] None of those things are good at all. But because we've seen something of the grandeur and the majesty of God and our hearts have been blown away. Does that make sense? That's incredibly important.

And that's what we see in Isaiah here. Before he knows the assignment, before he knows the mission, before he knows what the purpose is, he's so encountered God. He's been changed by God. He says, my life belongs to you.

My life belongs to you. Here I am. God sent me. Here's the other thing we need to think about this. Friends, if you're a Christian, if you consider yourself to be a Christian this morning, and there's no outward emphasis in your life, no missional impetus, no natural desire or sense of wanting to share God and his purposes, no desire to join God in what he's doing in the world, it might be worth asking the question, do you really know the God that you proclaim to believe in?

Friends, if, and I'm not saying you need to be the greatest missionary, but if it doesn't cross our minds that our lives belong to him, that our lives have been grafted into his cosmic plan, is it possible that maybe our lives haven't been grafted into Christ at all?

Have you encountered his grace? Have you ever come to the place where you say, God, I love you and I'll do whatever you want? Isaiah sees God's glory and he encounters God's mercy and he knows that he's forgiven and it changes the motivations of his heart.

[15:05] It changes what he lives for. It changes how he approaches his life. A good motivation for mission. We want to be missional. Why? Because God is awesome and majestic and worthy of our lives.

Okay. Secondly, the bad, the good, the bad. Now, a difficult challenge for missions. Now, this is where things start to get difficult in this passage. Look at verse 9 to 13 with me.

Isaiah volunteers himself and God gives him some bad news. And the bad news is this. You are going to go and speak to my people. You're going to call them to listen to me and to trust me and they are not going to listen to a word that you say.

In fact, the more you speak to them, the more they're going to reject you and curse you and tell you that you're stupid. Your speaking to them is going to be like speaking to a brick wall. Okay. Look at verse 9.

God says, God is sending Isaiah out on this mission.

[16:18] But it's a mission that is doomed to fail. And Isaiah is being sent to call God's people to trust in him, to come back to him, to put their hope in him, not to put their hope in the political alliances or the military alliances or the nations around them.

And how do they respond? They respond very badly. They say, No, Isaiah, don't worry. We're not going to trust God. The Syrians, the people above us, our neighbors, they will save us in the time of difficulty.

And because they refuse to trust in God, things are going to end very badly. God's people are going to block their ears. They're going to close their eyes.

They're going to harden their hearts because they're more in awe of the nations around them than awe of God. They're more afraid of the nations around them than afraid of God. And so if you go to your Bible, look at just the next chapter in chapter 7.

We see a great example of this. There's this king. His name is Ahaz. He's the king of Israel. And he is very scared because the Assyrians, the people in the north, are threatening to come and attack him.

[17:21] And so he's very scared and he's petrified. And God says, Isaiah, go and talk to Ahaz and tell him, don't worry about those other kings.

Just trust me. Hold on to me. And so verse 3, the Lord says to Isaiah, go out and meet Ahaz. Verse 4, he said, be careful, be quiet, do not fear, do not let your heart be faint, because these two smoldering stumps are firebrands.

He's talking about these two kings that are threatening him. Here are two kings who are threatening Ahaz and trying to bring their military against them. And God says, Ahaz, don't do a thing.

Don't worry about them. Don't listen to them. Don't care about them. Just block out the noise. Verse 9, if you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.

So God sends Isaiah to speak to the king and to call him to trust and to believe in him and hope in him. And what does Ahaz do? He totally ignores Isaiah. And God sends Isaiah to go to the nation of Israel and say, trust in God, hope in him.

[18:25] He will get us through. And what do they do? They totally ignore him. They reject him. And the more Isaiah speaks, the more that they laugh at him and they scoff him. And Isaiah's message is going to fall on deaf ears and be utterly doomed to failure.

And this is the challenge of mission. That often, we go out and we say, city of Hong Kong, the great city of Hong Kong, there is a God, there is a king and he's glorious and he loves you and he died on the cross for you.

And what does our city say? Get out of here. They don't want to listen. And often, it seems that the message is rejected and nothing's happening. It's all been so worthless, so futile.

And Isaiah says to God in verse 11, he says, how long must I do this? I mean, is this a week? Is this two weeks? Is this a month? How long must I go on like this? And God says, verse 11, God has terrible news.

And the message that Isaiah is to give is he's going to say to these people, if you don't listen, bad news is coming your way. God loves you. He wants to save you. He wants to rescue you.

[19 : 50] But if you can't listen to him, the very people that you're fearing are going to come your way. And that's what happened. Judgment is going to come upon them.

The very people that they were trying to avoid because they don't trust in God is going to come upon them. And the Babylonian army comes and he decimates, they decimate Israel.

And it's going to be very terrible. Judgment comes their way. And just look at the imagery here. Look at verse 12. It says, until the cities lie waste without inhabitants, until houses are without people, and the land is a desolate waste.

Friends, just think of the pictures we see on the news of war zones around the world. It's terrible. These buildings that are crumbling and people's lives are suffering and cities are desolate, wasteland, and nobody lives there anymore.

And God says, this is what's going to happen because you do not listen to Isaiah's message. Isaiah is going to call you to trust in God and you refuse. And so judgment is going to come upon you.

[20 : 53] And God says that the nation of Israel is going to be like a tree stump. Think of this once beautiful big oak tree, this magnificent glorious tree that's been cut down.

It's like a tree stump. And there's nothing that remains. And then after the tree stump is cut down, a fire ravages through and burns it all up. And now what was just a tree stump is now a charred, burnt out piece of ash.

Nothing left. God says, this is what Jerusalem is going to look like. It's going to get burnt. It's going to be terrible. It's such bad news. This is what's happening when they reject God's word and his ways.

Friends, life is found in conforming to God's will and death is found in rejecting him. And God says that because Israel is going to reject Isaiah's words, this severe judgment is going to come upon them.

And it's not just going to be a slap on the hand or go to the naughty corner. This is going to be terrible. Now you may be and think, oh boy, here we go again. Old Testament fire and brimstone.

[21 : 57] Okay. They're just, you know, trying to make me feel bad. But actually, this actually happened. This is historical fact. This is historical reality. 120 years after Isaiah lived and spoke this message, the Babylonian army came through and decimated Israel.

And they burnt Jerusalem to the ground. They ransacked the temple. They destroyed all the houses. And they marched 90% of the people out of Israel and took them as slaves to Babylon. And the nation of Israel was like a smoldering wasteland. Only about 10% of the people remained. And it was terrible. This is historical fact. And the nation of Israel was in Babylon for 70 years. For 70 years, they were slaves to Nebuchadnezzar the king. Remember the story of Daniel in Babylon? How does he get there? Well, Nebuchadnezzar comes and takes them away in 605 BC. And Jerusalem is destroyed.

The challenge of mission is that often we speak and nobody wants to listen. And it falls on deaf ears. The challenge of mission. Now, before we get to the good news, the wonderful part, friends, there's something we need to think about here.

[23 : 09] And I want us to reflect on this, just one or two things here. Now, the New Testament actually quotes this passage five or six times. In every one of the Gospels, Jesus quotes this passage, and Paul quotes it in the book of Acts and later on in Romans.

And each time, this passage is quoted to explain what happens when people hear God's Word and the message of the Gospel and reject it. And the Bible says that when God's Word comes to us, our response is never neutral.

It's never that God's Word comes and it just has no effect. God's Word is living and active. And what that means is it always has an effect on us, either positively or negatively.

God's Word comes and if we'll hear it and listen to it and respond to it, it'll grow faith in our hearts and life in our hearts. But if we reject it, we don't just stay neutral.

Actually, it hardens our hearts and our eyes get glazed over and our ears get blocked up even more. Okay, does that make sense? When God's Word comes, it's never just neutral. It always has an effect, positively or negatively.

[24 : 17] God's Word is living and active. It either softens our hearts and builds faith or it hardens our hearts and solidifies the judgment that's coming. And because Israel couldn't care less about God or His Word, His Word is going to fall on deaf ears.

But it's worse than that. It's actually going to harden them even further. And so as you read the book of Isaiah, the people become more and more hostile. It's not just that they say, oh, we don't really believe it.

They actually become antagonistic towards Him. Their hearts are really hard. God's Word comes to them and it alienates them, pushes them away even further. In the third century, a theologian called Origin of Alexandria said this, the same sun that melts the wax also hardens the clay.

Think about that. I've often thought about that. How does that work? You put something in the oven, something melts, but something else you put in the oven, it gets hard and crispy, right? But the same sun that melts the wax also hardens the clay.

And what he's saying is this. The same gospel, the same message comes to one person, their heart is receptive and it softens them to trust Jesus. But it comes to someone else that is hard and they're pushing God at a distance and it just pushes them further away.

[25 : 33] And just think about the people in Jesus' day. Jesus speaks the gospel and some people fall down and worship and say, this is the Messiah. And what do other people do? They turn away and they plot how to kill and destroy Him.

Now, friends, here's the lesson we need to take from this. Be careful how you respond to God's word. Friends, when God's word comes to you, maybe you read your Bible in the mornings, or maybe you're in a CG and you're discussing it, or a friend reads the Bible with you one-on-one. Maybe you come to church like this morning and someone reads the Bible, someone tries to explain it. Be careful how you respond. It will change you one way or the other.

And if our hearts are soft and open, we say, God, speak, I'm listening. God will build faith and life. But if our hearts think, who cares? I've got my plan.

I'm on my own trajectory. Actually, it will alienate you and push you further away. In the New Testament, the book of 2 Timothy, chapter 4, the apostle Paul, he's an old man.

[26 : 36] He's on his deathbed. It's the last letter he writes in the Bible. And he writes this young man called Timothy. And he says, Timothy, preach the word.

Do the work of advantages. And he says, there are many people that won't want to hear what you have to say. They will gather around them other teachers who will tell them what their itching ears want to hear.

So they'll say, we don't want to listen to you, but this guy's going to say what we want to hear. We'll listen to him. So what is Timothy to do? What should he do in that circumstance? Should he just give up and say, oh, there's no point?

Paul says, Timothy, keep going. Don't stop. Preach the word. Do the work of advantages. Fulfill your ministry. Keep on preaching the word. Why?

Because the word is power. And there will come a time when some people will turn and say, okay, God, speak. Friends, the challenge of mission is that it doesn't always look like it's working.

[27 : 31] What are we to do? We be like Isaiah. You just keep on going. Keep on going because God is at work in the world. Finally, the promise, the wonderful promise of mission.

As we come to a close, look at the very last sentence in Isaiah chapter 6. So I read verse 13. Verse 13 says this, And though a tenth of the people remain, it will be burnt again.

He's talking about the city of Jerusalem. Like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled. And it's the end of the quotation marks. And the last sentence is this, The holy seed is its stump.

Now that's a very weird thing. What on earth does that mean? It's a strange but a poetic way of saying this. Israel's going to face God's judgment. They're going to be cut off like an oak tree that is

cut.

And then a fire comes through and it's burnt. And it's just this little stump that remains. But there is life in the stump yet. There is hope in the stump yet.

[28 : 35] There is like a little shoot that's going to come out of that stump and grow and produce life. That thing that looked so hopeless and like it was dead and buried, that thing is going to produce life again.

In fact, it's only because it's died that new life can grow. Because in God's economy, in God's way of operating, things often need to die before they come alive again.

Before they can encounter life, often things need to come to the end of themselves. They die and dead and buried. And in that state, God says, now I can work and bring life.

This is why so many of you had to come to the end of yourselves. You had to hit a wall. You had to suffer terribly. You had to come to the very end of yourself and say, okay, God, I've got nothing left. And then God says, okay, now I can produce life in you.

Now I can work with you. Jesus said this. He says, actually in John chapter 12, John quotes this passage. And then Jesus says just before that, truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

[29 : 42] Nothing happens. Think of a grain of wheat falls on some concrete. Nothing's going to happen. It's going to die. But if it gets buried in the ground, if it dies and falls into the ground, what happens? Life starts to form.

Fruit starts to grow. It starts to produce fruit. And that's exactly what's going to happen to Israel. The nation of Israel, Isaiah speaks to them. He speaks. He speaks. They don't listen.

And what's going to happen? Ultimately, they're going to get judged. The Babylonians are going to come and wipe them out. They're going to decimate them. They're going to take 90% of the people back as slaves to Babylon. But that's not the end of the story.

Because in that broken state, when Israel at the very worst, when it feels like there is no hope and nothing is happening, and Isaiah's words just fall on deaf ears, in that place, God is going to say, now I can bring fresh life.

And 70 years later, God is going to bring the Israelites back from Babylon, back to Jerusalem.

They're going to rebuild Jerusalem. And they won't be perfect, but new life is going to be formed.

They're going to be reformed.

[30 : 40] They're going to become the people of God again. And they're going to start to listen to God's word. And out of this dead, useless stump that looked like it was dead and buried, the Messiah is going to come.

A savior of the world, who's going to rescue and redeem all people. Friends, when things look like they're at their worst and there is no hope, in that place, God starts to bring life and hope.

It's what happened to Israel. It's what happened to Jesus, isn't it? Jesus, the savior of the world, he died. And yet out of his death came life. Out of his death came not just his own resurrection, but life for us as well.

Because Jesus died and rose again. Sinners like me, sinners like us, can find new life. Jesus' road to glory passed through the horrors of Calvary first on the way to resurrection life.

Friends, it happened to Israel. It happened to Jesus. It can happen for us as well. Two implications for our lives as we come to a close.

[31 : 47] First one is this. The Bible says again and again that the way to life passes through death. If you want to experience new life, new hope, new start, new peace, new joy, you must first come to the end of yourselves.

You must die to yourself. The way up is firstly to go down. The only way to find life is to lose it. To come to the end of trying to make life work on your own terms.

To come to the end of trying to be your own success. To acknowledge I don't have what it takes. God, rescue me. To embrace the painful exercise of confession and repentance.

And though that feels like death, actually it leads to life. And God tells Isaiah here that though judgment and death is going to come, through that new life is going to come to Israel.

They're going to be reformed. They're going to be renewed. They're going to be born again.

Because new life comes through death. Friends, if we will embrace Jesus' judgment on our behalf, that Jesus went to the cross for us, died the death that we deserve to die, we can find new life.

[32 : 53] But here's the second implication. The life of mission. God says to Isaiah here, Who will go for us? Who will I send? And Isaiah says, Here I am, send me.

Friends, for some of us who are Christians, the idea of witnessing for God, being God's ambassador, being God's spokesperson, might feel like the very worst thing in the world. You might rather that the ground open up and swallow you up and you die before you have to speak for Him. I wonder if in some ways Isaiah felt a bit like this when he found out what the mission was, right?

He says, Here I am, God send me. And God says, Okay, you're going to go and you're going to fail. And they're going to reject you and they're going to kill you. You know, church history, church tradition, tells us that the way Isaiah died is they arrested him and they sawed him in two with a saw.

That's how his life ended. I wonder if Isaiah felt a bit like that. Saying, God, you've got to be kidding. You've got to choose somebody else. Friends, living for God and His purposes, being a witness and speaking for Him, knowing you may face rejection, you may be ridiculed, you'll certainly lose face, may feel like dying a slow and painful death.

[34 : 03] Not quite as slow and painful as crucifixion, but pretty slow and painful nonetheless. But friends, out of your dying to yourself will come fresh life.

Life for your friends, life for your family, life for the people of Hong Kong, life for your loved ones. Out of your dying to yourself will come fresh life.

But not only life for them, life for you as well. Because as you die to yourself and embrace the messy, difficult mission of saying yes to Jesus, as you come to the end of yourself, God will birth new life in you that will change you and reform you forever.

Friends, is your spiritual life a bit dry? Do you feel like spiritually you're in a dark, dry place? Maybe the one thing you need to do is die to yourself and embrace the mission of God.

Friends, we want to become a more missional and outward-looking church. We want to be a church that says, here we are, God, send us. Because we've seen His glory. Because we love God.

Because God is big in our hearts and we've encountered His grace.

[35 : 10] Friends, let the glory of God and the joy of the gospel, let it compel us to speak for God, to live for God, to bear witness for God, to lay down our lives and die for Him even when it seems difficult.

For life comes through death and joy comes through obedience to the King. Let me pray for us as we do that now. Let's pray together.

Well, Jesus, you sent Isaiah on a difficult message, a difficult mission, and yet that mission is difficult and as futile as it seemed at first, God, you used it.

You used Him. And God, you will use us as well. God, we pray for ourselves and we pray for Watermark. We pray that we will become an outward-looking church, a missional church. We pray we'll become the kind of church that You want us to be.

But God, we know that that's going to come at a cost. We know that we are going to need to die to ourselves and our own agenda, our own comfort and convenience, maybe our own plans for our lives.

[36 : 17] But Jesus, as we embrace You, we know that You will reform us. We know that out of that death will come life. Out of that difficulty will come a new hope.

And so, God, we pray for us. I pray for myself. I pray for every one of us here. Lord, I pray for those of us that don't know You, that have never encountered Your grace. Lord Jesus, I pray, won't You help us to come to the end of ourselves?

Help us, God, to get on our knees. Help us, God, to surrender, knowing that life is found in You and You alone. I pray these things in Your great and wonderful name. Amen.

Friends, let's take just a minute or so before we sing this last song. I want us to, just two questions for you to reflect on. What has God been wanting to say to you through His Word this morning? This tricky passage that says you're going to go and it's not going to work at first. You're going to have to die to yourselves. What has God been wanting to say to you? And then secondly, what would it look like to respond to that?

[37 : 21] Let's think about that for a minute or two and then Matthew will lead us in the song.