

Three Ways to Almost Be a Christian

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. The scripture reading this morning comes from Matthew chapter 12. You can follow along in the bulletin or in your Bible.
- Starting in verse 38, we read, Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.
- But he answered them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.
- For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
- The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.
- [1 : 0 8] The queen of the south will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.
- When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, I will return to my house from which I came.
- And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there.
- And the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.
- While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brother stood outside asking to speak to him.
- [2 : 2 3] But he replied to the man who told him, Who is my mother and who are my brothers? And stretching out his hand towards his disciples, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers, for whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.
- This is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Angie. Well, good morning, everybody. If you are new to Watermark and you don't know me, my name is Kevin, and it's great to be with you this morning.
- Let's pray together as we just reflect on God's word and ask God to speak to us. Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, we come before you this morning. We come to your word because we want to hear from you.
- God, even a passage of scripture like this, which is quite challenging, quite provocative. God, we sense your tenderness and your love, your kindness, God. You bring us these words because you want to reach deep into our hearts and help us see who you are to encounter your life-transforming grace.
- God, I pray this morning that your word won't just wash over us, won't just go in and out, won't just be something interesting we hear and think about for a few minutes, but God, you will deeply penetrate our hearts.

[3 : 51] God, I pray whether we are on the journey towards faith or whether we've been Christians for many years that you, God, will come and meet with us through your word this morning. Father, some of us this morning are weary and anxious, exhausted and heavy laden.

But some of us have had such a big week, Lord. God, we come to you this morning because we want to hear you speaking to us and speaking to our hearts. God, some of us come empty-handed.

We don't have a whole lot that we bring to the table, but that's just how you want us to come, to meet with you. And so, God, this morning, almost in our hearts, we want to leave at the door our resumes and our CVs, all the things that we think credit us to your account.

And we come empty and say, God, give us your grace, please. We need you. Holy Spirit, come and have your way. We pray this in your wonderful and your gracious name. Amen.

Amen. We, as a church, are continuing to work through Matthew's Gospel. We're in Matthew chapter 12. And a few weeks ago, Chris reminded us that Matthew 11 and 12, kind of the big theme of this section of Matthew's Gospel is the response to Jesus.

[5 : 09] Jesus has been saying a bunch of things, doing a bunch of things. What is the response going to be like? Do you remember in chapter 11, Jesus says, this generation is like a bunch of children.

They sing a dirge, and they're upset that I'm not mourning. They sing a dance song, and they're upset that I'm not dancing. They want to control me with their responses. But he says, but I'm not like you.

You can't put me in a box. John the Baptist comes to Jesus, and he says, Jesus, I don't know what's going on with you. I mean, I went telling everyone that you were the Messiah, and now you don't fulfill my expectations.

What's up with you? And Matthew 11 and 12 are all about how Jesus, who Jesus is, doesn't fit neatly into any box. But what is our response to him going to be like?

Are we going to write him off? Are we going to bow down and surrender? And that theme continues in the passage that we're looking at today. What is the response to Jesus?

[6 : 04] And today, the passage is focusing in on the religious leaders. Jesus has been saying and doing some things. What are the religious leaders' response to him going to be like? And in the passage that Angie read to us, we're going to see three almost counterfeit responses to Jesus.

Or you could say it this way. Martin Lloyd-Jones, a famous man from many years ago, said, to almost be a Christian is like being almost saved from drowning in the river.

It's like almost passing your exams. You might get pretty close, but it doesn't help you at the end of the day. In the passage that we're going to look at today, we're going to see what does it look like to almost be a Christian, right?

To get pretty close, but no cigar, as somebody famously said once upon a time. Okay? Three ways of coming close to Jesus, but not encountering his life-transforming grace.

And we're going to look at the negotiator, the renovator, and the tiger mom. Okay? So, let's look at the first one, the negotiator. Okay? Look at Matthew 12, verse 38 to 42 with me.

[7 : 14] Some religious people come to Jesus, and they ask him for a sign, some proof, some evidence that Jesus is who he said he is. Now, remember, Jesus has been making some pretty remarkable claims up until this point.

Jesus has been doing some amazing miracles, but Jesus is constantly saying, I am the way, the truth, and the life. The whole point of the Bible is to point to me, says Jesus.

Jesus is not like Buddha, who said, Don't look to me, look to my teachings. Remember Buddha on his deathbed, he says to his disciples, Don't worship me, follow my teachings, follow the Dharma, follow my dogma.

Jesus is not like Muhammad, who said, I am a prophet, one who will give you the words of Allah. No, Jesus is constantly saying, I am God, I am the Son of God. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

I am the living water. I am the bread of heaven. If you want to know God, you've got to come to me. And so the Pharisees come to Jesus, and they say, Give us some proof for these things that you are saying.

[8 : 14] Give us some evidence. And so they are asking for a sign. But they are asking for more than just a miracle. Jesus has done lots of miracles up until this point already. There were many people in the first century that came to be magicians, and be able to do fancy tricks.

No, they want a clear sign that Jesus comes from heaven. They want him to bring a legion of angels, or a pillar of fire from heaven, or something irrefutable.

They are asking for a sign. But look at what Jesus says, verse 39. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, and I tell you, no sign will be given to it.

What's Jesus saying here? Is Jesus saying that Christianity is anti-intellectual? We shouldn't think about it. We shouldn't want evidence or proof. When we read the Bible, when we come to church, just switch off your brains, and just blindly follow whatever the preacher tells you to follow.

Now that's not what Jesus is saying. What the religious leaders are doing here, they're not coming so much with a request, they're coming with an excuse. They're looking not for evidence, they're looking for a reason not to believe Jesus.

[9 : 28] They're coming not with genuine faith, seeking the truth, they're seeking an excuse that will allow them to retain their independence, and allow them to keep Jesus at arm's length.

They come to Jesus with an excuse that will allow them to convince themselves that Jesus is not really who he said he is, he's not really trustworthy, he's not really dependable.

And therefore, they can admire him from the distance, but they don't need to hand over their lives to him. It's kind of like this. Imagine you are negotiating a deal with someone, okay?

And you're around the boardroom table, and you're negotiating this deal, and the client says, listen, I need this and this and this. And you're like, oh, okay, that's okay, we'll see if we can do that.

And you come back and you say, okay, we've got it. And they say, okay, thanks, we're almost there, we just need a few more things, just X, Y, Z. I think, okay. And you go in your range and you come back, and they say, okay, look, we're almost there, just one last thing we need.

[10 : 28] We just need the Queen of England to sign off on this deal, and then we're good to go, right? And suddenly you realize they're not negotiating good faith. They don't really want the deal.

They're playing games with you, right? That's something of what the Pharisees are doing here. They're coming to Jesus, and they say, Jesus, we're open to being convinced. We're ready to follow you. We just need one more sign.

We know that you've cast out the demons, you've healed the sick, you've raised the dead to life. We just need one more thing from you. And what they need is they're looking for an excuse.

Friends, don't we sometimes do the same? We come to Jesus and say, Jesus, I'm willing to follow you all in. I just need you to give me that job. Just save my marriage.

Just give me a husband. And then I'm willing to follow you. Jesus, give me a sign. Prove yourself. But look at what Jesus says here. He says, An evil and adulterous generation looks for a sign.

[11 : 26] And in the Bible, the word adultery is always connected with idolatry. God is often saying that his people are adulterous because something's more important to them than God.

God has been relegated to second place in their lives. And Jesus says here, An evil and adulterous people seek for a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

You think, what's Jonah got to do with that? That was an interesting story. But what's Jonah got to do with Jesus, right? There's actually a whole bunch of things in the story of Jonah that relate to the gospel. Think about how Jonah left his home country to go to a foreign people to bring them the good news of the gospel.

Just as Jesus left heaven to come to us to bring us the good news of the gospel. Think about how, in the story of Jonah, the people of Nineveh repent and are spared. God, they encounter God's grace as they respond to the message.

And just like us, we will encounter God's grace as we respond to the message. But that's actually not what Jesus is talking about. Because look at what Jesus says in verse 40. He says, For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man, that's himself, be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

[12 : 43] Jesus is saying that if you want a sign, I'll give you a sign. I'll give you the greatest sign you can ever imagine. I will die, I'll be buried in the tomb, and I will rise again from the dead.

Jesus says, If you want a sign, there's only one sign that you really need. One thing you need to understand to really be a Christian, to encounter my grace. And that is the fact that I am going to die on the cross and be buried in the grave for the sins of the world, and I will rise again on the third day.

I will conquer sin, I will conquer death, I will conquer Satan, I will die for your sins and rise again. You need a sign? There's only one sign you need. Trust in what I'm going to do on the cross.

Look to Calvary. Look to Golgotha. Look to the empty tomb and see there who I am. Jesus says, If you take hold of Calvary, if you wrestle with that, if you wrestle with what I'm going to do on the cross, grapple with what that means, you'll see who I am, and you'll understand what the Bible is all about.

Jesus says that, or let me put it this way. Do you remember John chapter 12? Jesus says this remarkable thing. Jesus talks about Calvary as his moment of glory.

[13 : 57] You think, what? His moment of glory? Surely Calvary was the moment of shame, right? That's like the worst day in Jesus' life. Jesus had a bad day in the office on Good Friday, right?

That's the lowest point in human history, but Jesus talks about it as his moment of glory. You know what Jesus is saying? He's saying, If you look at Calvary and you understand what I'm doing there, that I went to the cross for the sins of the world, you'll see who I really am.

You'll see my glory. You'll see my majesty. Look, miss that, and you miss everything about Christianity. You may see the signs. You see the miracles. You see the dead rising from the grave. You see the healings.

You see my wise teachings, but miss Calvary, you miss it all. Jesus says that if you miss Calvary, you could almost be a Christian, but you'll be like a drowning man that is almost saved.

You might know everything there is to know about the Bible, but you won't know who Jesus is. You won't encounter his life-transforming power. Sometimes I talk to people and I ask them, Hey, how did you become a Christian?

[14 : 59] They'll say, Oh, well, my mom was diagnosed with cancer and I prayed and said, God, if you'll save my mom, I'll become a Christian. Or I needed a job. I was out of work. Money was tight.

I said, God, if you give me a job, I'll follow you for the rest of my life. Friends, that's not a Christian. That's a negotiator, right? That's a business person. But God says that what we need is not to negotiate with Jesus.

We need to see what Jesus did on the cross. We need to see that we were dead in our sins and Jesus came and he died and he rose again to save us. John 3, 16 says, God so loved the world that he sent his very best negotiator.

No, no, he didn't. He sent his son that whoever will believe in him, that means whoever will hand over their life to him, whoever will see what Jesus did on the cross will be saved.

Now, here's the question. Why this sign? I mean, Jesus did many amazing things, right? Why this sign? Why not, you know, Jesus, if you want to establish heaven on earth, why not destroy the Romans?

[16 : 03] Send a legion of, an angel, an army of angels. Jesus, send a pillar of fire and destroy all those idol workers, idol worshipers. That'll, that'll get people's attention. That'll get people to worship you.

We may think the same things. You know, sometimes I think, listen, Jesus, if you want to establish your kingdom, just wipe out COVID, right? Or, or end world poverty, or just annihilate all those child abusers.

Then we'll know that you really are the king. But Jesus says, those signs are not sufficient. They're not good enough. Why this sign? Why Calvary?

Jesus is saying here, that all those other things are not sufficient because the human heart is so twisted, we'll find a way of using those things for ourselves rather than surrendering it to him.

In other words, you need a job. You say, God, if you give me a job, I'll worship you all my days. He gives you a job. Well, who's still on the throne of your life? I am, right? I'll come to church.

[17 : 07] I'll say, Jesus, thank you so much. I'll, I'll give him my token worship, my token offering, but I'm still on the throne of my life. I'm still king. Jesus says, if you grapple with the cross and what that means, it'll pierce your pride.

It'll crucify your pride. There's no ways you can really see the majesty of Jesus on the cross and still be king of your life on the throne. If you grapple with what Jesus was doing on the cross, that he was dying for you and for your sin, for your rebellion, your pride will have to be pierced.

It'll have to be dismantled. And that will lead to true life. I don't know if you remember, in Luke chapter 16, Jesus tells this fascinating parable. He says, there was this really rich man one day, and there was a poor beggar that used to live outside his house.

And the poor beggar, his name was Lazarus. And one day, both of these guys die. And the rich man, unfortunately, he ends up in hell, and the beggar is enjoying the luxury of heaven. And so this rich man, he looks up into heaven, and he sees Lazarus in heaven.

And he says to Abraham, Abraham, I'm dying here in hell. Look, it's really hot. Send Lazarus to give me a glass of water. And Abraham says, no, no, I can't do that. It's too late.

[18 : 22] And so the rich man says, listen, if you can't do anything for me, the one thing you can do, send somebody from heaven to go and warn my father and my brothers.

Tell them that I'm in hell, and they don't want to end up here. Give them a warning to repent, to change their ways, to go to heaven. And Abraham says, no, no, you know, they've got Moses, they've got the prophets.

They must listen to them. And the rich man says, listen, they won't listen to Moses and the prophets, but if somebody rises from the dead and tells them, then they'll listen. But listen to what Jesus says in verse 31.

He says, if they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead. What's Jesus saying?

Friends, sometimes people say, I'd believe in Jesus if ABC would happen. I'll follow Jesus if X, Y, Z. If someone were to rise from the dead and come and die, tell me what heaven is like, then I'll believe.

[19 : 22] No, you wouldn't. No, you wouldn't. Jesus saying that if our hearts are too hard to believe the resurrection, that Jesus conquered the grave, they'll be too hard to believe, even if someone that was dead were to walk in this door this morning.

Jesus says, the problem is not the evidence. It's not the sign. It's a hard and unbelieving heart. It's the issue of pride in our lives. It's a heart that doesn't want to surrender. The Pharisees come and say, give us a sign and we'll believe.

And Jesus says, even if I were to move this mountain from here to there, you still wouldn't believe. Your hearts are hard. The sign is sufficient, says Douglas O'Donnell. The death and the resurrection are more than enough, but it's not enough to those who will not believe.

And so look at what Jesus says in verse 42 and 43. Jesus quotes two well-known instances from the Old Testament. The story of Jonah going to Ninevites and the queen of Sheba coming to Solomon.

And he says, these two people, who very offensively were Gentiles, okay, it's like the most offensive thing Jesus can say to the Pharisees. These two Gentiles are better off than you guys because they responded to the message.

[20 : 32] They saw the sign. They responded to the message. And you're going to see me rising from the dead and you still won't believe. Friends, are you almost a Christian this morning?

Have you come close, but you haven't quite handed over your life to Jesus? What's stopping you from surrendering this morning? Friends, what's stopping you from handing over your life to Jesus?

Jesus. You're not so sure about the resurrection? Okay, go and do the research. Go read the books. Go examine the evidence. You'll find that Jesus Christ died and he rose again. He was in the tomb, but he rose from the grave.

You'll be confronted by the facts. But more than that, you'll be confronted with the fact that Jesus died for you. He died for your sin. He died because your sin has cut you off from God.

Jesus Christ left heaven. Like Jonah left Jerusalem to go to Nineveh, Jesus left heaven to go to the cross for you. Friends, what's stopping you from handing over your life? Don't almost be a Christian.

[21 : 28] Don't almost be saved. Come and encounter the life-transforming power of the living God. Come to Jesus with a humble heart this morning. Okay? That's what true and saving faith looks like.

To see who Jesus is, to grapple with the cross, to be confronted by the problem of sin, and to turn to Jesus in faith and repentance. Okay, you still with me? Okay, thank you.

Okay, that's the longest one. Okay, the next two are a bit shorter. So firstly, the negotiator. Secondly, the renovator. Well, look at what Jesus says in verse 43 and 45. He says, What's Jesus saying?

saying here. What's going on? Jesus is saying that one way to almost be a Christian, to think that you're a Christian, to be fooled into thinking you're a Christian, is to see Jesus and Christianity as a self-improvement project.

I don't know if you've ever said this, or maybe you've got a friend that said it. You say, Listen, my life's out of control. I've got to clean up my life, right? All these late nights, all these parties, these one-night stands.

[23 : 00] Listen, it's not any good for me. I've got to clean up my life. Okay? And so we think, I'm going to stop the potting, stop the drinking. I'm going to get spiritual, do a bit of yoga, a bit of Jesus.

I'm going to come back to church, and I'm going to clean up my life. Okay? But look at what Jesus says here. Jesus says, you can clean up shop, you can clean up some of the external behavior, sweep out the junk, quit the smoking, quit the drinking, quit the one-night stands, and yet, unless you fill that void, with something more powerful, more beautiful, actually, you're just dealing with the symptoms.

You're not dealing with the heart issues. Jesus says, you've got to replace the void, with something more wonderful. You've got to fall more in love, with something else. Otherwise, you're just going to fill that void, with some other vice.

I've told the story, many times before, so you'll know this. I should just say, you know, it's that story, right? Then you all know the story. But, a friend of ours in Cape Town, really struggled with drinking a lot, would, you know, go get a bottle of wine, just for herself, and finish it within a couple of hours, all on her own.

And one day she says, listen, this is getting out of hand, I've got to stop the drinking, right? And so she, she stops the drinking. But then she can't stop, weird relationships, toxic relationships.

[24 : 21] And there's one-night stands here, one-night stands there, and that's unhelpful. And so, she soon says, oh, that's not good. I've got to stop these relationships. It's not good for my work, and my, all these things.

But then she can't stop spending money. And she gets into debt, buying this handbag, and that pair of shoes. What's happening? She's cleaning up the life, but rather than filling the void, with something more real and substantial, it's just jumping from one symptom, to the next.

Thomas Chalmers, was a Scottish economist, and a preacher, from 200 years ago. And he preached this amazing sermon, called, The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.

Okay? And what he says is, if you try and clean up your life, by just dealing with the surface things, unless, something more attractive, something more beautiful, fills the void, you're not going to really deal with the substance.

He says, in order to change your life, you've got to, fall more in love, with something, with something new. Okay? Maybe a simple example of this is, you want to get healthy, you've got to be more in love, with the idea of a healthy body, than the bar of chocolate.

[25 : 34] Okay? You can't just say, I won't eat chocolate, I won't eat chocolate, and then, Kathy Tom's chocolate cookies come along, and you think, I'm not eating chocolate, but I'm eating this.

Right? You've got to be more in love, with something else. So, let's listen to how Thomas Chalmers says it. He says it better than me. He says, a person's sinful desires, are not gotten rid of, simply by destroying them.

They must be gotten rid of, by substituting them, with another desire in its place. The most effective way, of withdrawing the mind, from one object of desire, is not by turning it to nothingness, but by presenting to it, another object, which is even more attractive.

The heart is so designed, the only way to dispossess it, of one old affection, is by the expulsive power, of a new one. Okay?

Do you see what he's saying there? That's what Jesus is saying here. He's saying, you want to clean up your life? You can't just say, oh, I've got to clean up shop, I've got to stop the drinking, stop the smoking, I'm going to be a better person.

[26 : 35] You've got to fall more in love with Jesus. Jesus is saying, if you come to him and say, oh, Jesus, my life's a bit of a mess, I've got to clean up, will you help me clean up? But you don't get off the throne of your life, if you still hold on to the keys of your heart, you're just going to replace one vice with another.

What you've got to do is, you've got to hand over the keys of your heart to Jesus, and say, here they are, you have your way. You've got to hand over the combination to the vault of your heart to Jesus, and say, Jesus, here's the combination.

You've got to get off the throne and say, Jesus Christ, you're on the throne, have your way in my life. It's like, I don't know if you've seen on Netflix, those home renovation projects, right? Someone buys an old house, and they want to clean it up, and there's damp on the wall, and they say, I'll just paint over it.

If you just paint over it, it's just going to reemerge. You've got to get to the root issue. You've got to get right to the heart. Jesus says here, that if you clean up your life, you can stop the drinking, you can put a filter on your phone, so you don't look at porn.

You can ask Jesus to clean up your heart, but if you just clean up the external behavior, you'll be worse off, because your heart will still be full of pride. It'll still be full of self-sufficiency. It'll still be full of self-worship.

[27 : 48] Unless you come to Jesus and say, Jesus, you have your place in my life. Something else will fill the void, and you'll be left worse off, because you'll think you're a Christian, but you're still worshipping yourself.

You'll never be transformed, never be changed. The idols of your heart won't be removed. They'll just have a new facade on. Jesus says, don't come to him just as a renovator. Don't come and ask him to clean up your life.

Come to him and worship. Come to him and surrender. Come and put him on the throne of your life. Come and say, you have your way in my life. Everything I am, mind, body, soul, strength, money, sexuality, finances, all of it, it's yours.

Jesus, come and have your way. That way you'll encounter the living God. Okay, don't come to Jesus as a negotiator. Don't come as a renovator. Don't come as a tiger mom.

Okay, look at what he says in verse 46. While still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told them, who is my mother?

[28 : 49] Who are my brothers? Stretching out his hand towards his disciples, he says, here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother, my sister, and my mother.

In this final story, Jesus' family members come to him and they say, Jesus, this stuff is getting out of hand now. Come and do your homework. Okay, Jesus, come back home. This ministry thing, there's people everywhere.

You're not getting some rest. Come, you need an early night. And they're trying to tell Jesus what to do. But Jesus' family members think that they've got a claim on his life because of their proximity to him or because of some past experiences.

Because of Jesus growing up in their home, they think they've got a claim on him, right? But Jesus doesn't buy that. Jesus says something remarkably offensive. He says, you think that because you're my family, you've got an inside track.

You've got a backstage pass to tell me what to do and how to live my life. You think that because of your connection with me, you get to manage me. But Jesus says that actually, the relationship has changed.

[30 : 00] No one gets to manage me because I'm the son of God, not just the son of man. Sometimes, you know, we hear people saying, you know, back in the 1990s, I went on this amazing mission trip and I smuggled Bibles into Pakistan and I faced the firing squad and then their guns didn't work and then I preached to the leader and then they all fell down their knees and it was amazing, right?

And we're still living on what happened in the 1990s. Or someone might say, you know, back in 2000, John Piper came and he laid his hands on me and he commissioned me and he told me I was going to be a great person and I feel so good about myself.

Or maybe you hear people say, I know I'm a Christian because I was christened or baptized by the bishop. Or I was confirmed in confirmation class back when I was a teenager.

And we look back to some historical connection, some past event to give us confidence about our relationship with Jesus. But Jesus says, this is the one that has relationship with me.

The one who's walking in obedience to my father today. It's not about what happened back in 1990 or what happened in 2005. What's our life like today?

[31 : 14] What's our relationship with Jesus like today? You know, one of the remarkable things about Watermark is the number of people here whose parents are in Christian ministry or were in Christian ministry or pastors.

It's actually unbelievable how many people in our church grew up in homes where their parents were in ministry. But friends, your parents, being a pastor, doesn't give you access to Jesus.

You being confirmed by the great bishop or in St. John's Cathedral doesn't give you access to Jesus. You doing some great exploit for Jesus back in the day doesn't mean you're walking with him.

As wonderful as those things are, they don't put us in Jesus' good books. They don't make you a Christian. The world may look at those things and say, oh, look at your great CV, your resume. Jesus says, who is my mother?

Who are my brothers? It's the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Jesus says the same thing in Matthew chapter 7. He says, some people are going to come to him and say, Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name?

[32 : 13] Didn't we cast out demons? Didn't we do many mighty works in your name? Jesus, look at all the boards that I've sat on. Look at how I've funded all these ministries. And Jesus says, I will say to you, I never knew you because you did not do the will of my Father in heaven.

Friends, it's not proximity to Christian stuff. It's not proximity to Christian relationships. It's not an impressive Christian resume or CV. Those things don't guarantee genuine faith.

Those things don't make you a Christian. Those things don't allow us to encounter the life-transforming power of Jesus. It's a surrendered heart. Friends, you serve in the kids' ministry team?

That's wonderful. But what are you like on a Thursday afternoon in the boardroom? Is your heart surrendered to Jesus? You sing in the worship team on a Sunday morning? That's wonderful. But what are you like on a Tuesday night in the university hall?

Is your heart surrendered to Jesus? Is Christ first in your life? Friends, maybe you give a wonderful check to the church. You serve at ICM. That's fantastic.

[33 : 22] But how do you love your wife? Do you welcome people as Christ has welcomed you? Or is our life filled with bitterness and anger, resentment? Or is it filled with the sweetness of Jesus?

Friends, don't come to Jesus as a negotiator. Don't come looking for a sign to try and wangle your way. Come to Him as Lord. Come to Him like the Ninevites. Come in repentance and say, Jesus, have your way.

Don't come to Jesus as a home-proven project, as a renovator, saying, Jesus, I need you to fix up this area of my life, clean up the junk so I can get back on my way. No, no, friends, come to Jesus as a worshiper.

Come and hand over your life. Come and surrender. Say, Jesus, have your way. Heart, soul, body, mind, strength. Have all of it. Jesus, come and sit on the throne. Hand over the keys of your heart to Him.

Friends, don't come to Jesus thinking that you can tell Him what to do or how He can fit into your life. Come to Him as Lord. Come to Him as King. Come in humility. Come and obey Him. Come and say, Jesus, have your way.

[34 : 21] Friends, the one way to come to Jesus, Jesus says at the end of the previous chapter, He says, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden. You who have been trying to control me, you who have been trying to control your own life, come to me and I will give you rest.

Come and hand over your life. Come and take my yoke upon you. Come and take my authority upon you. Come and step off the throne of your life and say, Jesus, have your way. Do that and you'll find life.

Do that and you'll encounter the life-transforming power of the gospel. Do that and you'll find Jesus. Do that and you'll find life. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus Christ, we come to you this morning because you are God and we are not. Father, we come and acknowledge, confess, that Lord, so often in our lives, Lord, we try to fit you in.

We try to give you a share of our lives. a minority share. But Jesus, this morning, you're telling us that you won't take a minority shareholding.

[35 : 31] You won't be accommodated. You'll either be Lord of all or you will not be Lord at all. And so Jesus, we come before you this morning. Help us not to be like the religious leaders.

Help us to not be like the Pharisees. Help us, God, to rather be like the Ninevites who heard the message and responded. Help us, Lord Jesus, to get on our knees and to say, you are God and have your way in our life.

Jesus, we pray, won't you take hold of the keys of our heart. God, this morning, we want to give you the access codes to our hearts, to the very center, the very throne room of our lives.

Jesus, the things that we struggle with, the things that we are fearful of, the things we want to control, Christ, come and have your way. Friends, maybe some of us here this morning are not followers of Jesus.

Maybe you've been religious your entire life. You got baptized as an infant. You were confirmed as a teenager. You've been going to church your whole life, but your whole life you've held onto the reins of your life.

[36 : 52] You've maybe tried to negotiate with Jesus. You've tried to give him a share of your life. This morning, Jesus looks you in the eye and he says, you want to be saved? You want to encounter the gospel?

You want to encounter my life transforming power? Hand over the keys. Friends, this morning, will you hand over the keys of your life to Jesus? This morning, will you confess your sin?

Will you come face to face with the cross that Jesus went to the cross for you because your sin has separated him from him? Will you come and hand over all your excuses?

Hand over your resume? Come empty-handed and come let Jesus flood you and change you. Come and let Jesus be King and Lord.

Lord. Lord. Lord. Lord. Lord. Lord. Lord. This morning, come and do that. Why don't you in your own heart just pray a simple prayer and say, Lord Jesus, I believe that you are real.

[37 : 50] I believe that you want to forgive me of my sin. I let you be Lord of my life. Come and have your way. Can you pray that? Ask Jesus to be King.

He'll change you. He won't just change the superficial facade. God. He'll change you from the inside out. He'll make you a brand new person. He'll change your life altogether.

Lord Jesus, we pray for our church and Watermark Church that you will come and have your way. That you will come and not just as a facade, not just on the surface level. Christ, won't you come and be central?

Won't you have the keys of the church in a way? Lord, won't you come and be Lord of our lives and Lord of Watermark Church? In every area, in every way, Jesus, come and be Lord.

We pray this in your great and your awesome name. Amen. Amen.