

A Charge to Discipleship - Week 3

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[0 : 00] Certainly in varying degrees, and it's certainly true in some degree in our church, that there's a gap in what we say we believe and the way in which we actually live that out.

That at given moments in any of our days, you can look at us and say, this person doesn't love Jesus at all. And so two weeks ago, I kind of began this charge to discipleship as we're taking a bit of a break from Mark for the month of February, and began by talking about how if we are going to follow him, then we have to care about what he cares about.

That the primary thing we should be concerned about is the advancement of the gospel, the building of the kingdom, the making of disciples. This was his great commission, the big charge that he gave to the church.

Our church, as a local expression of the universal church, has a responsibility to this. And not that it's a burden, but it's a joy that God has given us to his mission in the world.

Last week, we looked at the ongoing way that this activity is encouraged and supported, and that is in the life of a congregation, in the way in which the church meets, or at very least, should meet together.

[1 : 18] And I emphasized the fact that the primary way in which our church is going to do this, the specific way that our church is going to do this, is through our community outreach groups. We're going to be pressing at each other to have our actions match the things that we say that we believe.

That we're going to press at each other in this way. And I said to you last week, as this week's sermon is going to be about the particulars, the biblical parameters for evangelism, finding people becoming, that first step of becoming a disciple, that one sermon on evangelism is not enough for you.

In fact, if I were to preach a sermon on evangelism, how to evangelize every single week for the rest of this year, it wouldn't be enough, because you need more than that. Not just hearing it, you need to be putting it into practice, and we need one another to do this.

The accountability and the pressing, we need to be encouraged in this direction. Living for God in the kingdom opposes the desires of our flesh.

Praise God we have new spirits, we've been made new creations, and God has given us a community called the church to push each other in this way. And so this is what we talked about last week.

[2 : 38] And so this week we're going to talk a bit more about the specifics of sharing the gospel, and then next week, discipleship. How do we go on from there? Once we see people come to faith in Christ, what do we do?

What are the responsibilities we should take up? And how do the scriptures guide us in that process? And so our major text for today, I had you in Mark 8. Turn back just a few pages to Mark chapter 4.

I'm going to read to you a rather large chunk of Jesus' teaching here. I hope that you'll stick with me. I'm going to come back and address specific parts of it, but Jesus' teaching is taken here in this completion, and he begins with this parable called the parable of the sower.

And I want to draw your attention before we read the entire thing together, because in verse 10, we see that the disciples don't know exactly what he's talking about, right?

And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. This one specifically, he says, And he said to them, To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything in parables, so that they may indeed see but not perceive, may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.

[3 : 50] And he's giving these parables in such a way that those with spiritual illumination will understand them, and those without will not. And then in verse 13, he says, Do you not understand this parable?

How then will you understand all parables? So this is a very important one for us to get right, and he goes on with a couple of other parables. Also, mostly, at least two of the three, have this agrarian theme to them as well, to help them get some understanding of the way in which the kingdom is going to come about, and their part to play in that.

So follow along with me as I read Mark chapter 4, verses 1 through 32. Here we go. Again, he began to teach beside the sea, and a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land.

And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them, Listen, a sower went out to sow, and as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

Other seed fell along the rocky ground where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away.

[5 : 11] Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and yielded no grain. And other seed fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

And he said, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. So we see that there's these varying types of soil, and the reality of this is that the scene would have been very familiar to them as this was an agrarian society by and large, that they had many, many fields around the cities, and there would have been these hard-worn paths in between.

And in fact, a lot of the roads that were traveled in this day were simply these paths between the fields. So this hard path is what he's referring to there. And the sower goes out, and as he's scattering his seed, as he's throwing it to the wind so that it'll be scattered across the field, it lands in various places and various things happen.

We see good soil, we see a rocky soil, we see one that's choked out by thorns, and we see another that the birds come along and eat it up. So he's giving us this picture that they would have totally been able to wrap their minds around that this is the way in which the word of God is going to be received in the world.

So let's get down to his explanation. Verse 14, the sower sows the word. The seed is the word of God. It's the gospel. And these are the ones along the path where the word is sown.

[6 : 35] When they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground, the one who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy.

And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while. Then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

But those who were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

And he said to them, Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed and not on a stand? For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret except to come to light.

[7 : 31] If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. And he said to them, Pay attention to what you hear. With the measure you use, it will measure to you, and still more will be added to you.

For the one who has, more will be given. And from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And he said, The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows. He knows not how. The earth produces by itself first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come. And he said, With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?

It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. Yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.

[8 : 34] Let's pray together. Father God, I would ask today as we open up your word that you would humble us before it.

we recognize that all scripture is breathed out by you and that it's profitable for us. Not simply for us to gain for our own sake, but that we might live righteously before you, that we would please you, which is certainly great gain.

I pray, Father, that you will work in us a miracle by your Spirit, that the scriptures will be illuminated to us this day, that you will change our hearts by the listening to it and the application of it.

Find us, God, not to be simply hearers, but doers also of your word. Find working in us the great mark of Christian maturity, which is obedience.

And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So, three points I want to give to you today. And the first one is that we must share the gospel.

[9 : 44] We must share the gospel. And I know that that is maybe even somewhat trite in your mind. You've heard this many times before. Of course we must share the gospel.

But here is a point at which I think that we know this to be true, but so very rarely prove it. We very rarely express that and walk it out. Remember verse 20 of chapter 4.

Those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word. We're all saying, we're all expressing when we say we're disciples of Jesus Christ that we are good soil.

We have received the word. We accept it. And he says it bears fruit. Thirty-fold, sixty-fold, a hundred-fold. That this will be a necessary outcome of the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The bearing of fruit. Verse 21, And he said to them, Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed and not on a stand?

[10 : 45] For nothing is hidden except to be manifest, nor is anything secret except to come to light. And he's being very tongue-in-cheek. Why would anybody ever light a lamp? Why would God illuminate our minds and our hearts and then have us hidden away somewhere?

This is not the job of the believer. The job of the believer is to be out in the darkness, giving light to people who desperately need it. It's the obvious thing that you do with light as you expose it to the darkness.

I want us to have the mind that was Paul's mind as he shares in Romans and in 1 Corinthians. Romans 1.16, he says, for I am not ashamed of the gospel.

We are so often ashamed of the good news of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

This message that we proclaimed is the message by which we came to believe, and it is the very power of God to bring others into his kingdom.

[11 : 52] those who are without this message eternally damned, eternally separated from him, and they will suffer torment forever. There's a general grace to this world right now that keeps people who have sinned against God from not being just destroyed.

People generally experience and enjoy the warmth of the sun, the goodness of food, the celebration of family, but someday when they pass, those things will pass away, and they will be tormented forever and ever.

And it is the gospel that is the power of God to save them from it. Paul writes again in Romans chapter 10, verse 13 and 14, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him in whom they've never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

Beloved, don't get caught up in the cultural narrative that there are multiple ways to heaven. There are not. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. People must respond in faith to gospel proclamation.

[13 : 03] And what Paul is expressing to us here is that we are the tools by which the gospel is proclaimed. I may feel like a heavy burden laid upon your shoulders, but let me say to you that God doesn't need you.

God is God. He would cease to be God if he needed you. But God, in all of his infinite wisdom and his love for us, has chosen to use us to be the instruments for gospel advancement for the sake of our joy.

To experience the blessing of being part of his work in the world. So we must preach. We must go. We are tools in his hands.

In Romans 9, 1-3, Paul says this, I am speaking the truth in Christ. I am not lying. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers. The longing of Paul's heart to see those that were his kin, other Israelites, those who had been given so much revelation of the truth of God, and yet had not responded favorably to it.

[14:18] He so desired to see them be part of the kingdom that he said he himself would be willing to be cut off from God for eternity to see that be the case.

Is this true of anybody in this room? 1 Corinthians chapter 9. Turn to this one with me. 1 Corinthians chapter 9.

1 Corinthians chapter 9. Verse 19. Paul gives up his liberty, puts aside some of the things that he has been granted access to in the gospel of grace for the sake of others.

He says, For though I am free from all, this is 9, 19, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew in order to win Jews.

To those under the law I became as one under the law, though not being myself under the law, that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law, not being outside the law of God, but under the law of Christ, that I might win those outside the law.

[15:29] To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Now there is so much that could be said about becoming all things to all people and what that means in our day-to-day living. But the emphasis that I want you to get from here is how desperately he wants to see people come into the kingdom, that he might share with them in its blessings.

For the sake of his joy, he puts aside trivial things, things that are not that important, the way in which he conducts himself, what he eats, what he drinks, because he so wants to enjoy the blessing of the gospel.

Back up a few verses. 1 Corinthians 9, 16. Paul says, For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting.

I have no space in this to say I am a preacher of the gospel. Good for me. He says, For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.

[16:35] Is this the mind that we have within us? That we must preach the gospel. That there is a draw on our hearts because we so love Jesus that we love the things that he loves.

That we recognize that his great work in this world is about the building of his church. The salvation of souls that they might come in and be discipled, that they might sing his praises forever. We sang a song and we said again and again and again, Hallelujah, which is a Cobb Brown Hebrew phrase, which means it's a command, come and praise my God with me.

That's what that phrasing means. And that is the hallelujah of our life is that we go and advance the gospel. We say to people, come and praise your God, the God that created you, come back into a right relationship with him and praise him with me.

He is worthy of all honor and all praise. We want people as believers to sing his praises in greater and higher degree, at least I hope. That we do.

We must preach the gospel. So do you sow seed? Do you sow the word at all? And if you do, how do you sow the seed?

[17:49] Because the picture painted for us here would have been a very liberal sowing of the seed. There was plenty of seed, so much seed in fact that it was okay that some of it fell on the path. It wasn't all that important that every bit of seed made it onto the field, but that the seed was being cast in wide and in liberal ways.

Being sown out so generously because we so desire to see a yield. We want to find the good soil. We want the word to fall on the good soil that it will bring forth fruit, that there will be a yield, a harvest to be had at the right time.

I think that many of us walk around rather than with large bags full of seed that we sow and we sow and we sow and we sow. We have maybe a couple little seeds we carry around in our pocket and we're maybe looking for that perfect opportunity.

Maybe when I spot some good soil and I'm confident it's good soil, I've only got a couple of seeds so I don't want to put a seed in any kind of bad soil, I'll put the seed in the good soil.

And I'll say I'm a Christian, I'm following Jesus, I know I'm supposed to do this thing. Rather than recognizing that we have the time and the ability, the grace of God given to us, that we would sow and sow and sow and sow that we would plant the word everywhere.

[19 : 11] You want to know how you figure out where the good soil is? You sow the seed everywhere and you see where the good plants come up that stick around and yield fruit.

That's how you know. How do we see where the spirit's at work, plowing the field, preparing the soil? That's not our work, that's his work. How do we know where that's happening? We sow seed and we see what happens with the seed.

So we have to be sowing. We must share the gospel. We must go and go and go and go. In verse 30 of chapter 4 of Mark, Jesus says, with what can we compare the kingdom of God or what parable shall we use for it?

He tells us about this grain of mustard seed, which is incredibly tiny. A grain of mustard seed is a speck. It's so easy. If I had one in my hand and I breathed on it, it would blow off my hand and we would totally lose it in this room.

A tiny little thing, but it grows up into something that is large in the garden. It has a great deal of usefulness. And what he's saying here is that our little sharing, it seems so insignificant sometimes, it feels often pointless.

[20 : 21] Have you had those gospel conversations with somebody where you just feel like you're beating your head against the brick wall trying to talk to them, and you just go, I just don't understand how it is that God intends to use me to advance this kingdom.

It seems totally insignificant. This is what he's trying to say. But guess what? When it's planted in good soil, it yields a wonderful bush that has great usefulness in the kingdom of God.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3, 5-9, what then is Apollos who was a disciple? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed as the Lord assigned to each.

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.

For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

[21 : 24] So our responsibility in this, as you can see Paul saying, Paul is saying that I planted.

Another disciple came along and watered, but ultimately and finally God gave the growth.

It is his kingdom and we have a part to play in this. He's invited us into his work to sow the seed, to sow the word of the gospel liberally everywhere we go.

We must share the gospel. Secondly, we must share the gospel regularly. It must become a natural part of our life and our living.

There's a parable again that we read together, chapter 4, verse 26 through 29. The kingdom of God is if a man should scatter seed on the ground. Here again we see the scattering of seed.

He sleeps and rises night and day and the seed sprouts and grows. He knows not how. He doesn't understand how it is that the seed takes any effect in anybody's life. There's a great mystery of the gospel that the spirit of God comes into people and changes their hearts, completely changes their affections, causes them to do a 180 from being an enemy of God to being a friend of God.

[22 : 35] Causes them to be eternally condemned before him to being justified before him in Christ. It's incredible miracle is what he's communicating to himself. The earth produces by itself, the blade, the ear.

We get the science behind this. They certainly didn't. God's work in bringing about the harvest. And every year when the grain is ripe, once he puts in the cycle because the harvest has come, and this is something that would have happened for this person every year, this regular sowing, this regular sowing, this reaping, seeing the growth, reaping the reward, we are to share the gospel regularly. In the past two weeks I've shared with you on a white board, we're going to put it up on the screen today because this is all I needed on the screen, on the board, that this tri-county area that we live in, where our church property is, is pretty equilaterally located between Dawsonville and Dahlonega and Gainesville.

So in those three counties, Hall, Lumpkin, Dawson counties, there's approximately 232,000 people. And I've shared with you that the Chattahoochee Baptist Association estimates that 80% of that

population is unchurched.

It's a fairly loose definition, the 20%, they don't give a denominational, not necessarily a Georgia Baptist church, Southern Baptist in denomination, but 80% unchurched, that's 185,600 people.

[24 : 02] This is kind of a staggering number, 185,600 people, just in this area, right here where we live. That if we're optimistic as I think they are in this estimation, because we know that if somebody is in a church, it doesn't necessarily mean that they're a disciple of Jesus Christ, but if we just say this is the lost population around us, this is a staggering, staggering number, beloved, that leaves 46,400 churched.

So let's again be optimistic and let's say that all of those people are in fact disciples of Jesus Christ. 46,400 people who claim the name of Jesus Christ.

And what I say to you is that if these 46,400 were actively involved in sowing seed, we would be reaping a harvest. That seed would be falling on good soil.

Now something for us to know and to remember about these parables is that Jesus is also trying to communicate to them that some people will not receive the word. don't become discouraged by that. There are going to be bad soils.

Soils that just will not reap harvest. At least now, maybe a bad soil becomes a good soil as the plowing work of the spirit works in their life. But we should be reaping a harvest if we're sowing, if we're finding the good soil and planting the word in it.

[25 : 29] Now, the current U.S. mortality rate, just to make this, give us an eternal perspective on this, I mean, all of these people, again, assuming 185,600 people are not saved, they're not experiencing the joy of the gospel here and now, they're separated from God here and now.

These things are horrible, but for eternity they will be separated if they don't respond in faith to the gospel of Christ. The current U.S. mortality rate means that 1,500 of those 185,600 will die this year.

1,500 of those people will die, presuming that they're not saved, that they have not yet been saved from their sin, they are still enemies of God, they are doomed to eternal damnation.

This should break our hearts. This should press us to the point where Paul is at, where we would say, I wish that I would be cut off, that I would be cursed, if just some of these would come to faith. I'm willing to become all things to all people, I'm willing to lay aside all of my desires, all of my wishes, because I know Jesus cares about these people. I know that he wants them to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, that he wants to give them opportunity to respond in faith to the good news of the gospel.

[26 : 43] I believe that the life, death, and resurrection of Christ has great power. I said to you two weeks ago that I think we often operate under the assumption that God doesn't want to save people.

Our actions at least seem to reflect that, rather than operating under the assumption that he does. He has good, eternal, loving plans for the world around us, and I so want our church to be involved in that.

Now, Paul, in speaking of the ministry of reconciliation that God has given us in Christ, said in 2 Corinthians 5 16, we regard no one according to the flesh. And so keep this in mind as you leave this place, you go out into the world around you, you go grab some lunch.

We ought not be looking at people as temporal things. Everything else in this world you can view as temporal, because it is for sure. But people themselves have eternal souls. Do not regard any of them according to flesh.

And they're following one of two ways. They're following God and obedience to him. They're found in him. They've been saved. They will one day eternally rejoice with him in glory, or they're not.

[27 : 54] And their end is destruction. And they need the gospel. Now, I know that often statistics can be really challenging. I mean, this is just a number on a screen, right?

It's zeros and ones on a computer that projected an image up onto a screen. Much different than reality. And so, you need to think of people that you know that are in this category.

Real human souls. Not simply a digit on a screen together, but there's a reality to this. And there are people passing all the time around us. There are people currently separated from God that need to know him.

They need to be made right again with him. And so we're going to take a break from the sermon. When you guys all sat down, there was a piece of paper, mostly blank.

So, one verse at the top of it, and I want you to get it out. I know many of you bring paper with you on Sunday mornings, and that's good.

[28 : 56] I encourage you to be an active listener and take notes. But I don't want any excuses this morning. So, you all have paper. And right now, if you need a pen, I want you to raise your hand.

We have got pens galore. Here we go. They're coming at you. You might be ready to catch them. And the guys are going to make their way around with a pen, and I'm going to tell you what we're going to do with these. And what we're going to do, again, may seem trite to you.

I don't care. I want you to do it anyway. Because I think that we too often place ourselves above some kind of exercise and practice like this, and therefore we do just nothing at all.

There are 15 lines on this piece of paper. After the fact, after I had printed all these up, I did a little bit of math, and I was just curious, really.

And I took this 46,400 church people, right? The remainder above and beyond that, this 46,400. And I just did a little math, and I just said, if we could just get 25% of these people, just 25% of that population to actively be sharing the gospel with their neighbors, relatives, friends, coworkers, etc.

[30 : 22] All the people that run in their spheres of influence that are not followers of Christ. Then the responsibility of each individual, and I know that this is kind of a vacuum number, I get that there's a lot of overlaps in those spheres, but provided they were evenly spread out across these three counties, would be 16 people.

So I wish I'd given you 16 lines, but I gave you 15. Feel free to use the margin at the bottom if you would like. So we're going to take a break, just a five-minute break. We've got one song that's going to get played over the speakers, and I want you to do your very best to list 15 people that you don't believe are followers of Jesus Christ, right?

It's kind of tough to tell in our culture sometimes, because everyone seems to say they are. People that you don't think are followers of Jesus Christ. And it could be as simple as a girl with blonde hair at Subway.

Like, you may not know her name, but maybe you need to figure out what her name is. You may have specific people that are coming to your mind. I want you to make a list, if you can, in this amount of time, do your very, very best to make a list of 15 people that you know, your sphere, right?

That you personally encounter throughout the week, that you may see this coming week, that are not disciples of Jesus Christ, as far as you may know. And then we'll get back together in just a few minutes.

[31 : 37] So if you bring that music up, guys, in about five minutes. All right. Now, if you're astute at all, let me first say that there are 20 lines.

Because I had 15 lines, and I made the font size bigger to give you more space to write, and it bumped the lines up. So I started counting mine. I thought, my gosh, oh, okay, the lines.

Oh, the lines are all messed up. Okay, so there are 20 lines. And good for you if you fill them all up. Now, I'm just going to assume, and maybe a lot of you couldn't quite get to 15 on your sheet of paper.

But if there are that many, there are a lot of souls represented by the people in this room, the influences that you have, the people that you get to be around and give gospel proclamation to. I think it's also probably pretty safe to presume that there's not a lot of overlap. A lot of you are college students. You may know some of the same people. As a friend group, you may be ministering and loving on some of the same people.

[32 : 38] But there's probably not a lot of overlap. What a massive opportunity to be going and to be pressing and to be sharing.

Now, if you are not a person that likes this kind of stuff, you don't like it when I start talking about statistics. Let me read something to you by Charles Spurgeon in a book he wrote called *The Soul Winner*. He said, I am not among those who decry statistics, nor do I consider that they are productive of all manner of evil.

For they do much good if they are accurate and if men use them lawfully. It is a good thing for people to see the nakedness of the land which statistics of decrease. That they may have been driven on their knees before the Lord to seek prosperity.

And on the other hand, it is by no means an evil thing for workers to be encouraged by having some account of results set before them. We should see the failing as well as be encouraged by the

success.

I should be very sorry if the practice of adding up and deducting and giving in the net result were to be abandoned. For it must be right to know our numerical condition.

[33 : 46] It has been noticed that those who object to the process are often brethren whose unsatisfactory reports should somewhat humiliate them. This is not always so, but it is suspiciously frequent.

People who don't want to talk about numbers, and I want to talk about growth, typically are those who would be very embarrassed if they did. This is what he is suggesting to us. So, what do I want you to do with this little sheet?

You know, it is conveniently the size of your Bible, likely, will fit very conveniently in there. Firstly, begin to pray for the people on this sheet. Intercessory prayer is number one.

Pray for them. Ask that God will be working in their hearts. Ask that He would be plowing the soil so that good seed can land on it. It's very possible that some of these people may receive the word from somebody else, but be in the process of praying for them.

Ask that God would save the souls of the people on your sheet. Secondly, look for opportunities to love them sacrificially. Right?

[34 : 54] As circumstances arise, be available for people. Go that extra step for people. Show people that you care about them. There are opportunities abound to step into somebody's life and be a part of the hurt that's going on in the world.

As the pastor of this church, let me tell you that there are hurts in our church. And this extends out beyond these walls. Right? This world is sin-infected. We are all hurting because of the rampant nature of sin in this world.

I jokingly ask people all the time, people talk about health issues and things like that. I say, you know why, right? And they go, no, I go, sin? Right? That's the thing that's messed everything up in this world. Anything that goes poorly, it's because of sin. And it's running rampant.

So there's all kinds of opportunities to come alongside people and love on people. I tell you, I can't do it all myself. Right? I need your help. You've got to be with people. You've got to be out there in the community loving them sacrificially as the circumstances arise.

And thirdly, commit to proclaiming the gospel to three people on this list in the next two weeks. I want you to make a star, an asterisk, a smiley face, a swirly thing.

[36 : 03] I don't care. Whatever you want to make, I want you to put next to three people on this, three people that you believe that you'll be able to share, make gospel proclamation to in the next two weeks. Right? It's a simple thing.

Don't ask their permission to do it. Say, hey, I have something I want to tell you that's really important and preach the gospel to them. And I'm going to tell you a little bit more about that in a moment. But let's do that. Three people over the next two weeks.

If you're part of a community outreach group, share it with them. If you're not, get involved with one. If you're a guest with us today, find someone back where you are, a group of people that you can be accountable to doing this.

And be flexible. Right? You might find that through the process of loving people sacrificially as circumstances arise, that your plan may change. And that is good and fine. As the Spirit of God is moving and working in the lives of these people, be willing to be flexible and to make responses to it.

Now, do I expect that simply because we get active doing some things like this that people are necessarily going to come to faith in Christ? No.

[37 : 06] I don't. I think that the fact that we don't see more people coming to faith in Christ is indicative that we don't do this like we should. I think that's very true of our congregation.

That we're not going and sharing the gospel the way we ought to. But God has at times in history withheld blessing and we should be very aware of this. Right? There are going to be different types of soil.

Some of these people, you're going to be faithful, you're going to get in there, you're going to do the thing that you're supposed to do, and they're going to reject you. They're going to laugh at you.

Right? They're going to mock at you. They're just going to think you're kind of nutty. Or they may just not really care at all.

This is going to happen. And every time I think about this and I experience this, I'm always drawn to the life of Jeremiah who was a prophet, one of the major prophets, prophesied for a very long time, for decades.

And it's presumed that he had, depending on who you hear say, that he had nobody turn back to the ways of God in his ministry. Some people say won. Guys, maybe he did. The text gives us some clue to that.

[38 : 06] He won in all of this time that he was doing this. And he was hated. He was always telling people about the destruction that was going to come. If they continued in their ways, this destruction was coming on them. Nobody liked Jeremiah.

And in chapter 20, he laments this. Chapter 20, verse 7, he says, Oh Lord, you have deceived me and I was deceived. You are stronger than I and you have prevailed.

I have become a laughingstock all the day. Everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, violence and destruction. For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.

God, you tricked me. You said to me, if I follow you, I'm going to do great things with you. Fooled, right? I'm a total laughingstock.

I'm always telling people bad news. In verse 9, he says, If I say, I will not mention him or speak any more in his name, there is in my heart, as it were, a burning fire shut up in my bones and I am weary with holding it in and I cannot.

[39 : 14] The word of God to Jeremiah was so powerful in him that he had to share it. Even though he had these emotions of, Oh, I've been tricked. What a path to walk in.

It's miserable. But yet God had given him a word to give to his people and he had to share it. So we ought to be in that position. If people are not responding in faith to Christ by our work, we ought to still be influenced in this way.

Pressing on. Pushing. Pushing. Pushing. Intercessory prayer. Sacrificial love. Gospel proclamation. I believe God will reward our efforts. We'll see. But if he doesn't, if he delays the blessing of our efforts, we ought to still work at this very thing.

So we must share the gospel. We must share the gospel regularly and we must share the gospel rightly. We must share the gospel rightly. Alright, we're going to scoot. You ready?

We're running out of time. Verse 14 of Mark chapter 4 says, The sower sows the word. The good soil bears good fruit. So the word brings forth the word.

[40 : 23] More proclamation. More seed planting. But in the doing of this, we must preach the whole gospel. We must preach the whole gospel.

And I hate that there's some kind of a qualifier placed on gospel. We should say gospel and everybody knows exactly what we're talking about. The word simply means good news. We understand it to be the good news of Jesus Christ.

But there's this cultural press to say the whole gospel because so often people are being preached the quote-unquote gospel in an abbreviated form.

And that is primarily across our nation this morning even happening as people are neutering the gospel because they're taking out the judgment of God for sin. They're teaching simply that God is love which He most certainly is but they're neglecting the fact that God is also full of wrath and vengeance against His enemies.

They're saying that we need to be saved from something but what? What exactly are we being saved from? Or being taught that there's a God-sized hole in the middle of our hearts that only He can fill.

[41 : 31] Right? That our life will just be better. We can experience our best life now if we simply add this little thing called Jesus to the mix of what's going on. And I'll tell you that this is a major reason that there is rocky soil.

That they see this little spring up people go that sounds fantastic. Right? Place my faith in Jesus Christ and things are going to get a little bit better and then they don't. They get worse. Right? The sun of tribulation comes and those people fade away.

This is happening in such massive staggering degree. False conversion after false conversion after false conversion because the gospel itself is not preached.

Some little trite version of it is preached. But not... That's the third time I've used that word this morning. Trite. They're not being told of the wrath to come. People are not fleeing from the

destruction of God to the salvation of God.

Right? We are saved from God by God to God. Those are all important elements of good gospel presentation. A guy, a street evangelist by the name of Ray Comfort wrote a book called *The Way of the Master*.

[42 : 39] You may or may not be familiar with him. Let me just give you a couple of antidotes from this book about the nature of this type of teaching, this neutered version of the gospel. In Cleveland, Ohio, an inner city outreach brought 400 decisions.

The rejoicing no doubt tapered off when workers involved in a follow-up campaign couldn't find a single one of the 400 who had supposedly made a decision. In 1991, organizer of a Salt Lake City concert encouraged follow-up.

They said less than 5% of those who respond to an altar call during a public crusade are living a Christian life one year later. A pastor in Boulder, Colorado, sent a team to Russia in 1991 and obtained 2,500 decisions.

The next year, the team found only 30 continuing in their faith. That's a retention rate of 1.2%. George Barna of the Barna Group says that the majority of people making decisions leave the church in six to eight weeks.

In Leeds, England, a visiting American speaker acquired 400 decisions for a local church. Six weeks later, only two were still committed and they eventually fell away.

[43 : 52] It's not a new problem. In November 1970, a number of churches combined for a convention in Fort Worth, Texas and secured 30,000 decisions. Six months later, the follow-up committee could find only 30 still continuing in their faith.

In Omaha, Nebraska, a pastor of a large church said he was involved with the crusade where 1,300 decisions were made, yet not even one convert continued in his or her faith.

Pastor Dennis Grinnell from Auckland, New Zealand, who has traveled to India every year since 1980, reported that he saw, get this, he saw 80,000 decision cards stacked in a hut in the city of Raja Mundri, the results, quote-unquote, of past evangelistic crusades.

But he maintained that one would be fortunate to find even 80 Christians in the entire city. We must preach the gospel rightly.

We see this to be the case with the life of Jesus. And I'm going to get there in a moment where he gives the law to the proud. He tells the proud, the self-righteous, about the judgment of God.

[45 : 04] And he gives grace to those who are already humbled by the law and by the judgment of God. So they've already received that component of the gospel message and then he just simply gives them grace.

Now the law serves us in such great ways, beloved. Galatians 3, 23-27 says this, Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

So then the law was our guardian until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.

Now the picture that's happening here for them is that in this day a wealthy man who had a son who was young wasn't quite considered a son yet. While he had some lineage there, he was important to the father.

He didn't have all the rights of a son yet. And the father would hire for him what was called a guardian, a tutor essentially. And this man raised the child until the child was ready to be a son.

[46 : 12] And this is the language that Paul is using here. That's what the law is for us. It's like a tutor. It shows us how desperately we need to be saved. It shows us all our failings. It's the light that our dark hearts are exposed to so that we turn to Christ.

That's why it's significant in verse 26 he says, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. We've been granted sonship. Even you ladies, you want that in this case in this cultural understanding.

You want all the benefits of being a son of the living God. God. The proud need the law. Spurgeon in a sermon which was particularly addressed to preachers but certainly applies to anybody who claims the name of Christ and will be speaking the gospel says it is absolutely necessary to the preaching the gospel of Christ that men be warned as to what will happen if they continue in their sins.

Ho ho sire surgeon old English kind of for you. You are too delicate to tell the man that he is ill. You hope to heal the sick without their knowing it. You therefore flatter them and what happens? They laugh at you. They dance upon their own graves. At last they die. Your delicacy is cruelty. Your flatteries are poisons. You are a murderer.

[47 : 33] Shall we keep men in a fool's paradise? Shall we lull them into soft slumbers from which they will awake in hell? Are we to become helpers of their damnation by our smooth speeches?

In the name of God we will not is how he finishes that particular paragraph. That preaching the gospel wrongly gives false assurance to people.

Tells them that they just must be good enough and have a little Jesus. Walk down an aisle fill out a card and now they're saved. I've heard many many many times in my life that if you have any doubt of your salvation simply remember the day that you responded.

A lot of people will write it in the front of their Bible. There's a spot for you if you flip to your Bible.

The day that you became a Christian you go look at that and you go oh there's the day. There's the date. Right?

That is not how we are counted in Christ. It's by our fruit. The measure of that. The fruit that we yield. That's how we know that we're good soil.

[48 : 36] How do I know that I'm alive? I never think about my birth date. I get the evidence that I'm alive. I'm alive. I think before I am. I feel things.

Experience things. I know that I'm alive right now. Robbie Flockhart who was an 18th and 19th century English street preacher said you must preach the law for the gospel is a silken thread and you cannot get it into the hearts of men unless you have made a way for it with a sharp needle.

The sharp needle of the law will pull the silken thread of the gospel after it. Isn't that good? One of my very favorite missionaries is a guy named John G.

Patton who went to a group of islands called the New Hebrides now called Vanuatu in the South Pacific and he went to this little island of headhunters where one convert made so this man would stand over him with a musket while he was doing his studying and this man was so bold that these headhunters would come to him with loaded muskets ready to kill him and eat him and he would go up to the leader of the group and he would grab the musket in his hand and lecture him about how evil he was and the man would be so ashamed that he would go away and then a couple days later they would rebound and come back to him once again and he went through this massive process of this and ended up seeing many souls come to Christ in that incredible boldness just to go and tell people that there is a standard by which they are to live and that they've transgressed it and therefore judgment is theirs so the proud need the law the humbled need grace those who have already been humbled by the law by God's standard they need grace we've been potty training Judah the past couple of weeks which has been pleasantly enjoyable he actually has done a great great job with it all and he's very determined to get his pants off himself and his little cute little boy underwear off himself and get on his little froggy potty and make it happen and our tone has changed with him because we had in the beginning some just some accidents right he's just neglecting the work itself he's playing he's not paying attention you ask him if he needs to go he tells you no and then two minutes later he's wetting himself right and your tone with him then is not harsh but you go oh buddy like come on man like we talked about it I just asked you you gotta pay attention we gotta go potty now now he sometimes waits too long the other day he got himself in there and said

Judy need my help because you could tell he was in a hurry you need my help he goes no I got it daddy and he goes in there and all of a sudden I just hear him bawling and I open the door to the bathroom and he's standing like this just standing in a puddle with his pants like pushed down a little bit and it just like totally but he already was broken about it like he knew that he had messed up and he didn't need to go oh man come on I just asked you we tried I asked you if you needed help when he needed it for me to go buddy it's okay it's okay like it's alright you tried and that's good right like I'm not saying that's what we do with the law but there's a there's a tone change right you get you get what I'm driving at here there's a tone change Martin Luther in his commentary on Galatians said to the person who's broken already says send Moses away with his law to those who are complacent proud and obstinate and in these terrors and in this anguish lay hold upon Christ who was crucified and died for our sins right when you are already broken when a person comes to you recognizing that they are already guilty before God show them the mercy of God now I had a bunch of examples for you and

[52 : 07] I'm going to skip over them but let me just tell you this is what John the Baptist did this is what Stephen did is what Philip did is what Peter did is what Paul did and let's talk about what Jesus did so turn with me if you will to I'm trying to skip down a bit Luke chapter 10 verse 29 excuse me verse 25 if you're getting hungry don't be upset at me be thankful I just skipped a page and a half of my notes I just want you to see a good clear example of the way in which this was done by Jesus himself Luke chapter 10 beginning of verse 25 this is the parable of the good Samaritan your Bible probably subtitles it for you it says and behold a lawyer stood up to put him to the test saying teacher what should I do to inherit eternal life so here's a man likely a scribe who had a lot of religious training and the point of what he's doing is to put Jesus to the test this is a haughty thing this is not a humble thing what should I do to inherit eternal life and he said what is written the law how do you read it and he answered you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your strength with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself and Jesus says you have answered correctly do this and you will live but he the lawyer desiring to justify himself said to Jesus and who is my neighbor but define for me exactly what it is the thing I must fulfill and Jesus goes on to tell the parable of the good Samaritan very shocking to the people that would have been listening to this in fact that it was the religious leaders that pass around this man and it was instead the Samaritan the one that they considered totally unholy totally unrighteous the Samaritans were like a like an inbreeding of Babylonians and Jewish they were considered dirty to the Jewish people and he's the one that would be justified before God so he gives to this man the law another good example of that if you turn to Luke 18 there's a story of the rich ruler 18 18 and a ruler asked him good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life and Jesus said to him why do you call me good no one is good except God alone you know the commandments do not commit adultery do not murder do not steal do not bear false witness honor your father and mother and he said all these I have kept from my youth he's certainly a liar at that point was he not when Jesus heard this he said to him one thing you still lack sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you will have measure treasure in heaven and come follow me but when he heard these things he became very sad for he was extremely rich he worshipped his goods he worshipped his stuff he had neglected the mercy of the law he had not kept the law and Jesus exposes that in him right and unfortunately to this man's condemnation he goes away sad because he couldn't give up the things he had in this earth for eternal treasure in heaven now let's look at example of the way Jesus responds to a man who comes to him humble John chapter 3 now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews this man came to Jesus by night and said to him rabbi we know that you are a teacher come from God for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him this man would have been incredibly influential in this day and the reason he's coming to him at night is because the group he's a part of is opposing Jesus at this time but he says I've got to go talk to him right humbled comes to him to speak to him verse 3 Jesus answered him truly truly I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God Nicodemus said to him how can a man be born when he is old can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born Jesus answered truly truly I say to you unless one is born of water in the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit do not marvel that I said to you must be born again the wind blows where it wishes and you hear it sound but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going so it is everyone who is born of the spirit the Nicodemus says to him how can these things be he says are you the teacher of Israel and you do not understand these things truly truly I say to you we speak of what we know and bear witness of what we have seen but you do not receive our testimony if I've told you earthly things you don't believe how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things no one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven the son of man and as Moses lifted up the servant in the wilderness so must the son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life so you see this gospel presentation and then the ever famous rightly so John 3 16 is on the heels of this very thing do you know that this is who Jesus is talking about this leader of the Jews who comes to him humbled he says for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life for God did not send a son to the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him do you see the difference there even though Jesus doesn't expressly talk about the punishment of God for the sins of man he does recognize that

Nicodemus is already aware of this he already knows he knows the law and he knows his inability to keep the law and so therefore he gives to him the grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ there are literally hundreds of examples of gospel proclamation in the scriptures the epistles are full of them we see lots of them in the historical narratives in the gospels themselves in the book of Acts they abound as I said to you I would have liked to share with you all of the various ways in which let me encourage you to go and read those gospel proclamations right you're saying but still what do I say right you know the gospel if you don't know the gospel very likely you're not a Christian if you can't simply outline what it is that you've been saved from and how it is that you've been saved come to me I will explain it to you clearly that you might sort it out right you know the gospel if you're a believer Jesus Christ share the gospel Jesus Christ your testimony is not the gospel it's a result of the gospel you can very well tell your story and interweave gospel proclamation from the word of God but let's be clear that you telling your story about how you used to feel and how you feel now is not the power of

[59 : 18] God for salvation but the gospel is the power of God for salvation know your scriptures learn how to share your faith it's scary it's scary you're dealing with the things of God I tremble to get up here and preach every Sunday I don't know if you know that or not sometimes I want to throw up in the back of the room before I come up here we do preaching earlier in the service sometimes I wish we did it way at the end all of a sudden we're doing the offering I'm like what is it time oh my gosh I got to get up there now I'm extremely introverted maybe many of you know that about me like I got to really flip on a switch to get up and try to be quasi charismatic when I get up here right talking to people pressing into things getting uncomfortable I love to talk about politics I tremble talking about that I don't want to make anybody upset but there is eternal things on the line here right who cares if you're a Republican or a Democrat or a Libertarian in the large scheme of things but whether or not you're part of God's family matters forever let's be bold let's share how do we share it we share the word we get into this thing we understand it and we know it you guys are equipped so much beyond what you think and you have the spirit of God within you who will give you words to speak will give you words to speak so you see we must share the gospel we must share it regularly and we must share it rightly let's pray together