

Luke Chapter 7 v 24 - 35

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. We don't leave Jesus behind in that sense.

We follow him and live for him and live with him throughout all our Christian lives. So just then, as you receive Christ Jesus, Lord, continue to live your lives in him.

[2 : 14] Live in his strength, in his power. We live in the assurance of the forgiveness of sins he's brought for us at the cross. We live lives which seek to please him.

And our first song, all our songs are going to be on the screen behind me. Jesus is Lord. Creation's voice proclaims it. Let's stand and sing that hymn together.

Let's stand and sing that hymn together. It's because of Jesus that we can come to God in prayer together.

So let us all pray. Our most gracious and glorious God in heaven, we come to you this morning in the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for that wonderful person, that eternal, everlasting person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We thank you that before the world was made, the Father, the Son and the Spirit, that perfect Trinity, enjoyed fellowship together, lived together, were happy together.

[3 : 31] We thank you that in your togetherness, in your unity, in your oneness of mind and heart, that you, Father, Son and Spirit, determined to create this world, to make this world.

And to make people in your image. We thank you, O Lord our God, that you created us and made us. You made us to bear something of your likeness, to bear something of your image, to be made to know you, to enjoy you, to glorify you.

And Lord, we thank you again that you have made a wonderful and a glorious and a beautiful universe. And Lord, whenever we stand and stop and stare and look at your creation, we are amazed at the beauty.

Even though there's ugliness there, we know that's not part of your creation. The ugliness in this world and the wickedness in this world is due to our sin. Due to our rebellion against you.

Due to the fact, O Lord, that even from the very start, human beings chose to do what was wrong instead of what was right. And O Lord, we know that each one of us is tainted with that same sin.

[4 : 46] That same arrogance. That same determination to do what we want rather than what you want. And we see around about us the fallout. The cost. The suffering.

The heartache. That our continuing selfishness and godlessness brings upon this planet and the people of it. And so, Lord, you knew all this amazingly and wonderfully even before we sinned against you.

You knew that we would need a savior. You knew that we would need someone to come and to sort us out and to rescue us from ourselves. We thank you that, Lord Jesus, even then, as the Son of God, before the world was made, you chose and purposed and decided that you would be that savior.

That you would be the one to come down into the mess and the mud and the filth and the suffering of our world. That you'd be the one to take on to yourself our human nature. Just like us with all of our weaknesses and frailties and struggles.

Except that you never sinned. You lived that perfect, sinless life. You lived that life which was fully and completely in obedience to God, your father. And yet, Lord, even though you lived such a perfect and good and lovely life, men hated you.

[5 : 58] Men despised you. Men decided that rather than have you amongst them, they would kill you and murder you and put you to death. And yet, Lord, that was part of your plan.

Amazingly, incredibly. You knew that would happen too when you decided to come into the world. You knew that's how you would be treated. And you knew that's how you would die. And you did it, O Lord.

You did it, O Lord, because of your love for us. Because in your death we have life. Because in your death you took upon us, upon yourself, all the filth of our sin and our guilt and our shame. And you suffered the punishment that our sins called for from a just and holy God. You died. Lord, the most unique death.

Lord, and so provided and so have given, Lord, forgiveness for all and every sin. For all and every one who will look to and trust in and receive your grace and forgiveness.

[7 : 03] We thank you, O Lord, that your death was not the end. But your death was part of that purpose and process. And thank you that you rose again. You conquered death. You triumphed over the grave.

You not only have given us forgiveness for our sins, but you've given us life everlasting. Life eternal through your life. We thank you that you live today.

And that you shall never die. For you are the immortal and eternal God. We praise you and thank you, Father God, for Jesus, your Son. And for all that he's done for us.

And all that he's doing for us. Thank you even now, Lord Jesus. Though you have returned to the Father's side in heaven. And though you are waiting that day, as we've sung. That day when you shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

To come with all your glory. All your power. To bring an end to all evil and all wickedness. We thank you even now. O Lord, you are at work in our lives. You're pouring out your love, your grace, your strength to us.

[8 : 03] That we might live for you in these days. That we might be your people in this world. That we might share and proclaim your wonderful good news. Of forgiveness and life.

We pray, O Lord, that this morning as we come to you. We might come again with a real sense of gratitude. Appreciation and joy in what Jesus has done for us.

In all that he is doing for us. And all that he's promised us. Help us, O Lord, we pray, to worship and adore you. Help us, O Lord, to draw near to you. And bring to you our praise.

Help us, O Lord, to hear you speak to us in your word. Help us, O Lord, we pray, to be changed by you. For, Lord, you are working in us even today. Carry out your good will and work in our lives, we pray.

That Jesus may be honoured in us and through us. Not just today, but tomorrow and all the days to come. That we may live for his glory and praise.

[9 : 00] We ask these things, O Lord, our God, in his marvellous name. Amen. Amen. Let's read together now from our Bibles.

And if you'd like to turn with me to Luke and chapter 7. Luke and chapter 7. Those of us who are here regularly on a Sunday morning.

Now that we've been studying this wonderful record of the life of Jesus. And we looked just a little bit last week at verses 11 to 18 of chapter 7.

So we're going to pick up from verse 24. So Luke and chapter 7, verse 24. If you've got one of the red church Bibles, that's page 1035.

Page 1035. So verse 24. After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John.

[10 : 09] What did you go into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go to see? A man dressed in fine clothes?

No. Those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. What did you go to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

This is the one about whom it is written. I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you. I tell you, among those born of women, there's no one greater than John.

Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right because they'd been baptized by John.

But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves because they had not been baptized by John. Jesus went on to say, And you say, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

[11 : 47] But wisdom is proved right by all her children. So have your Bibles open to Luke and chapter 7, to those verses that we read just a few moments ago.

Let's go. Let's go. From verse 24. Is there anybody that you know that you would describe as great? Anybody in your circle of friends or family or acquaintances that you would call a great? You may call them a great friend or something like that.

There have, of course, been lots of people who've been described as great through history. Just a few years ago, there was a poll taken in Britain to find Britain's great, or rather the greatest Britain who's ever lived.

Winston Churchill, the prime minister during the Second World War, was given that title, the greatest Britain. And through history, there's been Alexander the Great, the Greek empire builder of over 2,000 years ago.

[13 : 03] In Russia, they like to call their leaders great. It was Peter the Great and also Catherine the Great, the Tsar, and then later on the Empress of Russia.

The boxer, Muhammad Ali, who passed away just a year or two ago, was always keen on referring to himself as the greatest. And by many people in the boxing world, he has often been seen as the greatest boxer.

Lewis Hamilton could become the greatest British racing driver later today. He's competing in the USA Grand Prix. If he wins it, he will have won the World Championship five times and become the greatest British racing driver of all time.

But all these people have been either given the name great or received the name great or the title by other people, by their peers, by those who judge them, people around about them.

But here in Luke and chapter 7, we have someone who's called great by the Son of God, by Jesus himself. In fact, it's there in verse 28. I tell you, among those born of women, that's all of us, no matter who we are, we've all been born of women.

[14 : 21] There is no one greater than John. Talking about John the Baptist. And we were looking last week at John the Baptist. He had a bit of a struggle when he was in prison about what Jesus was doing.

And we thought about that particularly last week and how Jesus helps him and helped him to cope with that and to deal with that. Now I wonder, do you think of yourself as a great Christian?

Are you a great follower of Jesus Christ? See, within each one of us, there is a very sinful desire to be thought of as great.

Everybody wants to be better than everybody else. We want to be thought of as best, greatest, great. And that proud, that pride desire within us exists in the classroom.

We want to be top of the class. We want to get the best grades. We want to be the best we can be. On the sports pitch, of course, we want to be picked for the team and do well for the team.

[15 : 24] It goes on into the workplace. University or wherever we are, it goes on into every part of life. And sadly, it also follows us into the church. Even as Christians, there still remains within us something of that pride, that thinking of ourselves as great or wanting to be great.

How do we overcome it? How do we overcome that pride? How do we overcome that sense of wanting to be great or being thought of as great or thought of as good or thought of as excellent and so on?

How can we overcome that? How can we overcome that? How can we overcome that? Well, here's John the Baptist.

And he was, according to Jesus, the greatest man who ever lived. Jesus wants you to be a great Christian.

Jesus wants you to be the best Christian you can possibly be. He saved you and brought you into his fellowship, his friendship.

[16 : 37] He saved you and brought you to himself because he wants you to be like him because that's what God wants of you. And Paul writes to the Christians in Rome.

He tells them in chapter 8, verse 29, He's talking about those who've come to faith in Jesus.

God chose to save you. God purposed and planned to save you that you might be the greatest Christian you could be, that you could be as much like Jesus as possible.

I wonder if you've got any older brothers or sisters. Perhaps you get told by other people around about you, Why can't you be like your brother?
Why can't you be like your sister? Because they do so well at school, perhaps, and get good marks. Or because they're really good at sport. Why can't you be as well behaved as them and do as you're told?

[17 : 43] Why can't you be as tidy as them and keep your room clean? Is that how you feel? Is that what sometimes gets said to you? Well, Jesus says he's our older brother.

We might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. Jesus is our older brother. He's left us an example for us to follow. And God wants you and I to follow that example.

He wants us to be and live like Jesus in this world. 1 Peter in chapter 2. Peter writes to the Christians there. They're going through a hard time.

He says to them, To this you were called. This is God's calling. This is what he wants for you.

Because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

So being a Christian isn't about judging ourselves or comparing ourselves with other people. and thinking, Am I as good as them or greater than them or better than them or more prayerful than them or whatever?

[18 : 41] It's about looking at Jesus and comparing ourselves to him and wanting to be and seeking to be like him. So how can we do it?

How can we follow Jesus and be a great Christian, a great follower of Jesus, a great disciple, especially when we live in a world which is so difficult and so much against being a good disciple, so much against being a Christian, when everybody around about us seeks to follow their own way and is not following Jesus?

Well, we might not think of John the Baptist as our best example. We could think of Paul maybe or Timothy or Barnabas or one of the other apostles or disciples.

But I want us to think about John. He's an example, I believe, to us of living the Christian life and being the best that we can be for God.

In these verses we have Jesus' description of John as he speaks to the crowd and to the people. The people all knew John. John had been out preaching in the desert before Jesus started his ministry.

[19 : 56] We don't know exactly how long, but certainly for many, many months, possibly even longer. People had gone to John and he told them to repent their sins and be baptized in water and to show that they really meant business with God.

And he was the one who had pointed out Jesus and said, look, here's the Lamb of God who's going to take away the sins of the world. He was specially commissioned to do this work.

Jesus now begins to talk about John and tell the people what he was like and in one sense to show that John was the greatest man ever lived.

The greatest man born of a woman, as Jesus puts it. So how can we be? What can we learn from John? What did John do? What was John like, as Jesus describes him, that helps us to be the greatest that God wants us to be, the best that we can be in this world which is difficult.

And it's hard. And in fact, everything seems to push against us living that life that God wants us to live. Well, the first thing I have to say is this.

[21 : 06] Be yourself. I've got three B's. Be yourself. We're always being told that, aren't we? We've been told, be yourself. By the world around about us.

Throw off constraints. Just be who you want to be. Be who you are. And I would say to you, dear Christians, whoever you are, young and old alike, that we are to be yourself.

And I'll explain what I mean by that in a moment. But let's go back to how Jesus describes John, verse 24. He begins by actually asking the crowd questions about why they went into the wilderness and what they expected to see and what John was like.

So he says, first of them, why did you go into the desert? Did you just go to see the vegetation? They're sort of not quite sarcastic, but they're rhetorical questions.

What did you go to the desert to see? Did you just go to see the wind blowing the reeds around?

No, of course they didn't go to look at those sort of things. If not, then what did you go to see? Did you go to see a man, fine and dressed in fine clothes, a rich man, a nobleman in nonsense?

[22 : 14] No, they didn't go to see a rich man, a nobleman, yes, because if you wanted to find a rich man, a nobleman, you go to the palace. You wanted to find a king or somebody like that,

somebody of importance, somebody with money and wealth.

You went there. No, why did you go then? You went because you knew there was a prophet there. You knew there was somebody who was God's messenger there.

You knew there was somebody there who had something to say of vital importance, a messenger from God. And so Jesus actually, in fact, tells us that John was somebody that God had promised to send into the world.

He quotes from Malachi in chapter 3. That's the very last of the prophets in the Old Testament. I will send my messenger ahead of you. Prepare your way before you. There's other places as well where John is promised, is coming, is the one who's going to point to Jesus, who's going to prepare the way for Jesus.

And so John was doing exactly as he should do. He was being himself. He was a prophet. And so he lived like a prophet and spoke like a prophet.

[23 : 23] And when people went out, they saw a prophet. Now, dear friends, you and I, the world around about us, our friends, our work colleagues, our neighbors, even our family, are watching us to see if we are the real thing, to see if we're real believers or just pretend believers.

See, John was a real prophet. He was a real deal prophet because he not only spoke about God, but he lived the life. He talked the talk and walked the walk. His life complemented his mouth. What he said, he did. He was himself, if I can put it that way. Now, dear friends, if you're a Christian this morning, Jesus says that you are a citizen of God's kingdom.

There in verse 28. I tell you that among those born of women, there is no one greater than John, yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. He's talking about believers.

He's talking about you and I. He's talking about Christians. You and I are in the kingdom of God. We're citizens of God's kingdom. Even if you think you're the least Christian or the worst Christian or the laziest Christian or whatever it is you think about yourself and you think everybody else is better than you, even though secretly in your heart you wish that you were better than them, the reality is Jesus says you are greater than John.

[24 : 52] See, John was the very last of the Old Testament prophets. That long line of men and women who'd spoken God's word throughout the Old Testament. They'd all spoken about the Messiah coming, the Savior coming, but John was the one who actually saw Jesus and met Jesus.

None of them did. He spoke about the one who was going to come into the world to rescue the world. He was the last of that era, that period.

When Jesus came into the world, the one who was promised, the one who was prophesied about, by his life and death and resurrection, a new chapter of God's work in the world was beginning. What was promised was becoming now a reality. And every disciple of Jesus, you and I included, are in that new chapter, that new reality.

John and all the believers in the Old Testaments lived in the shadows, as it were, of Jesus' coming. They looked forward to. But we, dear friends, as Christians, are living in the light of Jesus' coming, in the light of what he's done for us.

[26 : 04] We're part of that kingdom of God in a wonderful, marvellous way. And so you and I, dear friends, as Christians, are children of God, children of the King.

Therefore, we're to be who we are. We're to live as who we are. We've been changed. See, whatever our friends and whatever our colleagues, whatever the people around about us are, we are not.

We are not. Whatever the TV tells you that you should be, you're not. Whatever you read in a magazine or on social media about how you should be and how you should relate and what you should do is not who you are.

Whatever everybody else is doing is not what you ought to be doing because you're not one of them anymore. You have to be yourself. You have to be that person that the Bible calls a new creation.

Paul writes to the church in Corinth. He says, if anyone's in Christ, they're a new creation. The old is gone, the new has come. God's put within you his Holy Spirit which has made you someone radically different to the person you were and radically different to the people around about you.

[27 : 23] you're not that person. You've got a new heart which longs for and desires and loves things that you didn't love and desire before and in fact hates and dislikes things that you used to think which are okay.

You've got a new mind that thinks about the world in a different way and about relationships and the way you live and the way you speak in a different way. You've got a new view of the world. You don't see it in the way everybody else sees it anymore.

You've got a new way of living. New way of talking. Everything about you is transformed and different and you've got to be yourself in this world which is the world that you were once part of but not part of anymore.

And the temptation of course, the difficulty of course, the problem we've got is that around about us we feel this pressure trying to squeeze us and make us fit the pattern of the world in which we live. Everybody wants you to be like them. To enjoy the things that they enjoy. To say the things that they say. To join in with the things that they do. But you have to be yourself.

[28 : 36] See, John stood out. Stood out from the crowd. When people went to see him in the wilderness they knew he was a prophet of God. He was somebody who was different. He was somebody who was speaking God's word.

He was somebody who didn't go with the flow. He was somebody who didn't fit in. And neither must you. And neither must I. But to be who we are.

Be yourself. You're a believer in Christ. You're someone who has been saved. You're someone who is part of the kingdom of God. Living in this world.

But not a part of this world. Be yourself. John was himself. He was a messenger, a prophet. And he lived like one. Secondly, be alert.

The world needs alerts. Needs alerts. Be alert. Be alert. What's the biggest problem in the world today? What's the cause of the most accidents in the world today? Mobile phones.

[29 : 39] So get off your mobile phone. Listen to what I'm saying. You. Yes, you. No, he's following it. You've got your Bible on there, haven't you? Making notes.

Brilliant. See. That's okay. That's okay. That would have been really embarrassing if he wasn't, wouldn't it? But it's not now. Now he's lifted up. Now he's seen as being a great, great follower. No mobile phones. What's the problem? What do you do? What causes all the problems in the world today? People walking and texting on their phones down the street, don't they? And you've got to sort of watch out and get out of the way or else they'll hit you or they'll, if you're texting and walking down the road at the same time, you'll hit them.

People aren't paying attention to what's going on around about them. They aren't paying attention as to where they're going. Pay more attention to social media, catching up on hits they've had and followers they've had and all those sort of things.

It's important that you're alert to where you're going, the way that you're going. Because it has a real effect upon the steps you take and the decisions that you make. All the people who were listening to Jesus, we're told in verse 29, agreed or recognized that John was living and walking in God's way, the right way.

[31 : 01] Notice that, verse 29. All the people, even the tax collectors, tax collectors were the people who were considered to be the most ungodly people because they worked for the Romans who were hated.

They used to cheat, most of them, people out of their money and they were greedy and so on. But all the people, even those people who had got it wrong and when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right because they'd been baptized by John.

They'd come to John and they'd heard God's way, God's word, God's way of living from John and they'd been baptized to show that they were wanting to live God's way rather than their own way.

But then there were other people as well, verse 30, the Pharisees and the experts in the law. They were the people who thought they were great. They were the greatest of the great of the great.

They really thought they'd made it. They rejected God's purpose for themselves.

They heard God's word through John and they said, wow, we know better than that. We don't need to follow that. We know what's the best thing, the right thing, the good thing.

[32 : 05] They wouldn't listen to God's way and follow God's way. There's always a right way and there's always a wrong way to live as a Christian. We're living in what's called the postmodern world.

That means that there's no right and wrong according to the world around about us. You just do whatever you like, really, as long as you don't hurt anybody, as long as, well, everything's acceptable.

Everything's gray. We don't have black and white and all. We just have gray. Everything's all sort of okay. But no, in God's way of looking at things in the way that John lived his life and the way that he taught, there's a right and there's a wrong.

And for you, dear Christian, there's a right and a wrong way to live. Pharisees thought that they knew the right way and it wasn't God's way.

It was their own way. People who got baptized knew that they'd been going the wrong way and they'd repented. Repentance means to recognize you're going the wrong way and to turn around and go God's way.

[33 : 12] And they'd been baptized to show outwardly that in their hearts they knew they were sinners. They needed to be clean. How can we look and recognize the right way and go the right way rather than the wrong way?

How can we go God's way as the people recognize there? How can we keep following, as it were, Jesus and be the great disciple and follower of Jesus he wants us to be?

How can we manage not to be consumed with our phones and our media and everything else and what the world is saying and find ourselves really, if we do that, just wandering here and there from one opinion to another opinion?

Ultimately, it's simply this. we recognize God's way in God's word. What did John come to do? Did John come to bring his own message?

Did he come to bring his own ideas, his own thoughts about God, his own thoughts about how to live? Did he sort of study and think, well I've got this new philosophy, this new way of doing things and I think it's so good, I'm going to tell people about it.

[34 : 24] It's my new gospel as it were. New understanding of the world, new understanding of life. No he didn't, he approached God's word, he received the word of God and he preached God's word, he simply passed it on, he was a messenger.

Messenger doesn't bring their own message, a messenger brings the message from the one who sent them. And if you want to follow in God's way, if you want to be the great Christian Christ wants you to be, if you want to be yourself, then you need to know what God's way is and God's way is made plain and clear for you in his word.

It's his, it's his map. And here's the challenge to you and to me and to each one of us, how much time do I read God's word in comparison to watching the telly, on my phone, on social media, playing games?

Add all those things up in a day or in a week and then compare them to how much time you and I spend reading God's word. And reading God's word in this way, saying, Lord, I want to recognize your way for me.

I want to recognize God's way. Teach me, show me. I want to be influenced and shaped. I want to, I want to know what it is. How can I be better as a Christian?

[35 : 37] How can I be greater as a Christian? How can I be a better follower of Jesus? How can I be more like Jesus? Lord, speak to me in your word. I'm going to say that for myself.

it's less of the Bible and it's more of TV and computer and phone.

So I'm not pretending that I've got it right yet, but I'm challenging myself and I'm challenging you. You serious? Do you want to be yourself? Do you want to be that Christian that God wants you to be?

Do you want to live that life? Then you've got to get into God's word. That's why maybe some of you were here this weekend. But don't just do it at the weekend. Do it in the week.

Thirdly, dear friends, you've got to be yourself, you've got to be alert, you've got to be real. And again, I'll explain what I mean by be real. Let's go back to that social media, Facebook, Twitter, whatever it is.

[36 : 55] I'm not going to ask you to tell me, but how many friends have you got? How many followers, perhaps, have you got? Then let me ask you this.

How many of them do you actually know? These friends that you've got, these followers you've got, how many have you actually met and spoken to, in all honesty? You may say, well, you know, I've got, I've got, okay, I'm just going to pull up, figure out the air.

250 followers on my Twitter account. I've got 250 friends. How do you know that actually there aren't 250 really bored people out there who have got nothing else to do but just click yes to every friend suggestion that comes along?

How do you know if they're really your friends? We've got to be realistic. Yes, the temptation is we want to have friends. We want to be liked.

We want people to be on our side. We want people to think we're great. We want people to write nice tweets about us. But here's how Jesus describes the people in this world.

[38 : 07] Verse 31. Jesus went on to say, to what then can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? And I have to tell you that the people of that generation are exactly the same as people of this generation.

People are people, wherever they are, whatever their technology, whatever their background, ultimately, we dig under the surface and we're all the same. They are like children sitting in a marketplace and calling out to each other.

We played the pipe for you and you didn't dance. We sang a dirge for you and you didn't cry.

What's he saying? He said, people of that day and our day are like this. They're like children who sulk if you don't do what they want you to do.

So he's imagining in the marketplace in Jesus' day, that would be like where everybody gathered, all the adults would sit around and chat and the children would play games. One of the games they used to play was some of them would play on a pipe while the kids would dance.

It was like a party. You know, I'm going to play and then you dance. And then they might change it. They would sing a sad song and then you'd have to pretend that you were sad. It was a bit like Follow My Leader or whatever you want to call it.

[39 : 12] Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me. But basically, if you didn't do what they said, if you didn't join in the game, then you were basically, they were going to sulk at you.

They were going to moan at you, complain at you, call you names, and so on. And so Jesus says, well, that's exactly what they've done with John the Baptist and me. He says, verse 33, For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, he has a demon.

Now, John the Baptist was an exceptional character. We know that when he lived out in the desert, he wore camel skin, and he ate locusts and honey. So, that doesn't mean that we've got to eat locusts and honey, though if you want to eat locusts and honey, then I'm not going to stop you, but it's supposed to be quite tasty snack in the Far East.

But they said, you know, he's not normal. He's not normal. He's not like the rest of us. He's crazy. He's demon-possessed.

We're not going to pay any attention to what he says because, look, he doesn't do the things that we do or eat the things that we do. So, just going to ignore him. He's crazy.

[40 : 32] Verse 34, The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, here's a glutton, a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. So, here's John.

He's a bit extreme. He's an aesthetic is the word. He lives in the desert and he doesn't quite fit in with the norm because he's a prophet. That's what he's meant to be, someone different. And he's crazy.

He's mad. And then, here's Jesus. He comes and eats and drinks and joins in and he's normal with people and sits down with sinners and has a meal with them and tax collectors and all these people and they say, oh no, he's lazy and he's a drunk.

In other words, it doesn't matter what you do, you're never going to please people. Abraham Lincoln was the president of the United States when the whole of that nation was divided in civil war.

And I don't think this was necessarily his own personal invented saying but it's attributed to him. You can please all the people some of the time.

[41 : 37] You can please some of the people all of the time. But you can never please all the people all the time. And being real is accepting that fact that you cannot keep everybody happy.

And that no matter what you try to do, no matter how you try to accommodate people, no matter how you try to be like them, you will never be accepted. Because they're always changing their minds.

So what was acceptable six months ago? What was the latest gadget to have a few months ago? What was the latest thing to be on, involved with, or to watch, or whatever, six months ago is not what it is now.

So unless you are completely flexible, like some sort of spineless jellyfish, you're going to find that people are going to dislike you.

People are not going to be your friends. They're either going to say you're a loony, Bible bashing, crazy church person, or they're going to say something else equally unpleasant about you.

[42 : 48] Be real. Be realistic. Be yourself. And stick to being yourself. That doesn't mean you've got to be awkward and difficult and sort of walk around as if some air of superiority.

I don't do social media or whatever it may be. Some of us don't. I don't particularly do it either. But you don't have to give an appearance that somehow by not being involved in these things you're better.

But you do have to be simply real. There are people in your life who will take exception at what you do and who you are.

And no matter what you do, you're never going to win them or make them like you. So stop trying. Stop running around after them.

There are people who will accept you for who you are. There are people who will love you for who you are, who will understand you, who will support you, who will strengthen you, who will help you.

[43 : 52] And they're the people that you need to spend your time with and cultivate friendships with and enjoy company with and share with and pray with. And that's the church. You see, you are in the kingdom of God.

Thank God, though it feels at times in your classroom, in your university, or in your office, or wherever you are, you may feel at times very much alone because of the world around about you and the people that are there.

But the reality is that you're not alone and I'm not alone. We are part of the church of Jesus Christ. We are part of the kingdom of God. We are brothers and sisters and fellow citizens who are one with us, who've known the radical transformation of God's grace in their lives, who are seeking to be the best Christian they can be, and most of the time, like you, they're making a mess of it and failing and getting it wrong and tripping up.

But they're there for you and you need to be there for them. So be yourself.

Be alert. And be real. The reality is you're not in the world anymore. You're not part of that gang anymore, that group anymore.

[45 : 08] You're part of a new, transformed, dynamic people. Jesus closes his description of John.

Those words in verse 35, but wisdom is proved right by all her children. In other words, what is right, what is true, is recognized by all those who accept it.

Children means to follow after, to be like. There are many Christians here who've been Christians for 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, I don't know if I can go quite higher than that.

And what they have found and experienced is just what I've been saying. That living for Christ in this world, being the best that God wants you to be, is by far the best way to live.

our friends, our family, our relations, those we live with, are running around, trying to find something which will ultimately satisfy, something which will make them feel wanted, desirable, good, make them feel great about themselves.

[46 : 33] And all they can do is just hop from one lily pad to another in the pond of life, like frogs. and they never, ever get onto the solid ground of Christ.

And you have. So why get off the solid ground and back on the lily pad? Why not live, be, do, grow, and glorify God?

Well, let's pray together, shall we? Amen. Every one of us, Lord, is known to you.

Every one of us is completely, as it were, laid open before you. You see into our minds, our hearts, you see our past, you see, Lord, what's going on at the moment.

You see our struggles, you see our tears, our fears. You know us completely, oh Lord. We thank you that for each and every one of us who has trusted in Jesus as our Lord.

[47 : 58] Every one of us who has repented of our sins and received that wonderful forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. Each one of us, Lord, you've made us new.

We're new creations. We're transformed. And though we don't feel like it most of the time, and though, Lord, at times we wrestle with it, we thank you, oh Lord, that you are at work in us to make us to be the greatest Christian that we can possibly be.

Make us the best disciple we can possibly be. And Lord, you want to do that in us and you are doing that in us. And perhaps even today, we've, and over this weekend, we've been faced with that challenge once more.

will I just be mediocre? Will I just go along with the flow and be half Christian, half not? How will I live? Lord, you saved us to make us like Jesus.

You saved us that we might bear his image and likeness in this world. You saved us with this incredible, incredible purpose. And Lord, we ask that you would now take us that step further on.

[49 : 06] where we have found ourselves, Lord, bending and flexible, where we found ourselves compromising just to keep friends or to make friends or to feel good about ourselves.

Lord, set us free from that, we pray. And give us, Lord, that help of your Holy Spirit and the help of our brothers and sisters in Christ to be ourselves, citizens of heaven, to live by your word and to go God's way, whatever the cost, and to be realistic and accept that suffering must come and that we cannot please all people, but make it our goal, our desire, and our longing to please you.

Thank you that you're well pleased with us because of what Jesus has done. And we pray, oh Lord, that our lives may be lived for your pleasure and glory. Hear us then as we bring all these prayers to you now.

Help us and continue with us through this day and in the week ahead to hear and to live your word. For Jesus' sake we ask and for our joy we pray. Amen.

Amen. I want to know Christ. Yes, to know the power of his resurrection and the sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death and so somehow attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

[50 : 33] not that I've already obtained all this or I've already arrived at my goal but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to yet have taken hold of it.

One thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

Amen.