

Luke Chapter 5 v 33 - Chapter 6 v 11

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 July 2018

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] We're going to continue in our worship, in our thanksgiving and praise to God as we pray together. So let us now all pray. O Father in heaven, our gracious, loving, merciful, great, wonderful God, we come to you this morning as those who have experienced the joy of meeting with Jesus, your Son, our beautiful Savior and wonderful Counselor.

For each one of us who is a Christian this morning, we know that you are the God who lives, the God who hears, the God who speaks, the God who acts. You're not some dumb idol, you're not some statue, you're not some false pretense or idea or theology or philosophy.

You are the living, the true, the real, the tangible God. And we thank you for the fact that you have come to us and met us and dealt with us according to not our sins, but according to your loving kindness and grace.

Thank you that those of us who are Christians, we can associate with David and associate with this hymn we've sung of you hearing us as we've cried to you. For Lord, life is hard and tough and painful and difficult.

And Lord, there are times when we can do nothing else but cry out and call out to you. And Lord, we thank you that when we do so, you hear us. You hear us, O Lord, and you answer.

[1 : 35] You don't turn a deaf ear. You don't turn away. You don't say you're too busy or you're not concerned or you don't care. Thank you that, Lord, you are always, always, always concerned for us.

Such is the greatness of your love. We come to you this morning. We come to you from this week that we've had. For some of us, it's been a really good week, an encouraging week, a busy week.

Some of us, it's been a tough week. It's been a time of perhaps sorrow or grief or loss or hardship. Yet, O Lord, we thank you that in every circumstance, you rule and reign just as we sang.

It means, O Lord, that we can trust you. We can trust you with all the affairs of our lives. We can trust you with the problems. We can thank you for the joys. We can rejoice in your continued steadfast love.

And, O Lord, we can know your faithfulness when times are tough. You're the God of the day and the night, the winter and the summer, the rain and the sun. You do not change.

[2 : 41] We pray, O Lord, as we come this morning, we may come with thankfulness to you, praise to you, worship to you, that we may come with that same commitment of which we've sung, that all our days, all our life, we might live for your praise and sing your glory.

We pray, O Lord, that you would speak with us and meet with us in this time together. For, O Lord, we need you. And we know, O Lord, that it is your will and your desire to bless us and do us good.

Help us to be receptive to your word and to your Holy Spirit. For we ask these things now in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our beautiful Savior.

Amen. Amen. Gather from God's word. And we're going to read from the Gospel of Luke. So, if you've got a Bible to hand, that would be really, really helpful.

And we're going to read from chapter 5 of Luke, beginning at verse 33. If you've got one of the Red Church Bibles like this one, then that's page 1033.

[3 : 45] Page 1033, beginning at verse 33. So, Luke chapter 5, beginning at verse 33. Those of you who are here Sunday by Sunday, you know that we've been journeying our way through this wonderful record of the life of Jesus in Luke.

They said to him, that's Jesus, of course, John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.

Jesus answered, can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? For the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them.

In those days they will fast. He told them this parable. No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.

No one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins. The wine will run out, and the wineskins will be ruined.

[4 : 57] No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. No one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say the old is better. One Sabbath, Jesus was going through the cornfields, and his disciples began to pick some ears of corn, rub them in their hands, and eat the grain.

Some of the Pharisees asked, why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath? Jesus answered them, have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?

He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. He also gave some to his companions. And Jesus said to them, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

And another Sabbath, he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus.

So they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking. And he said to the man with his shriveled hand, get up and stand in front of everyone.

[6 : 08] So he got up and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath? To do good or to do evil?

To save life or destroy it? He looked round at them. And then said to the man, stretch out your hand. He did so, and his hand was completely restored.

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious, began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus. We're going to look at that passage a bit later on in our service together.

Turn, if you would, to Luke and to chapter 5. We were just a few minutes ago, Luke and chapter 5.

And if you've got the Church Bible, page 1033. And we read from verse 33 of chapter 5 through to chapter 6. And verse 11.

[7 : 09] Every day we're bombarded by advertising, whether that be on the television, the radio, whether that be billboards and signs or shops or whatever.

And, of course, advertising is a very lucrative business. And people will pay a great deal of money to get their events, their products advertised and out there.

But how do they go about selling to us products? Particularly products that have been on the market for a very long time. Things that have been around perhaps for many, many years.

Well, of course, one of the great techniques to get us to buy that product is by labelling it new and improved. New and improved. And if you take, for instance, the Ford Fiesta, the small car, that's actually been around since 1976.

And it's still being produced in 2018. The Fiesta. 42 years. But, of course, now the one that's sold is in its seventh series, its seventh generation, its seventh product.

[8 : 27] And in so many ways it's changed. It's changed a great deal from that vehicle of yesteryear, which first rolled off the factory. But, in lots and lots of ways, it's still got a great deal in common with that very first Fiesta.

It's still a small hatchback. It's still got four wheels. It's still got seats. It's still got an engine in the front and front wheel drive. It's new and improved, but so much of it is just what it was.

And it's the same with every product, isn't it? Where you go, you'll see shampoo. That's new and improved. Head and shoulders or whatever it is. A well-known brand. A cooker or a washing machine.

Or washing up liquid. Fairy. And so on. We're encouraged to buy these things because that's a new and improved formula. Old and new.

When Jesus began to preach the kingdom of God and call people to follow him as his disciples, he was not simply churning out a new and improved type of religion.

[9 : 31] His message and his ministry was something completely and radically new. And it met with two very opposing responses.

We've seen that earlier on in chapter 4 and 28. There were those who were the religious leaders. They responded to Jesus and to his teaching in this way. All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this.

The words of Jesus. But there were others later on, the crowd and the general populace, who were told they were amazed at his teaching. Because his words had authority.

And along the way as we've been looking in Luke, particularly after his baptism and his temptation in the wilderness. We've seen as his ministry begins, he's starting to draw followers to himself.

Disciples to himself. Those very first ones, Simon Peter, his brother Andrew, James and John. But others too, Levi or Matthew as we saw last week. And this whole passage is about being a disciple of Jesus.

[10 : 39] Following him. What it means, in all intents and purposes, to be a Christian. But, as we get to verse 33, we find again this criticism of Jesus.

There's people having things to say to knock his teaching or knock his way of discipleship. Or the religion that he was bringing. Surprisingly, it seems that these people were disciples of John the Baptist.

We're not told that here, but in Matthew's parallel account of what happens, we're told that it was John the Baptist's disciples who came and spoke to Jesus. They found fault in his training.

They said to him, John's disciples often fast and pray. So do the disciples of the Pharisees. But yours go on eating and drinking. They thought it quite unacceptable that the disciples of Jesus enjoyed banquets.

There'd been one just previously, hadn't there, that Levi had held when he'd brought together all the tax collectors, his friends, the riffraff, as they were accounted by the Pharisees, to hear and to meet with Jesus.

[11 : 46] The disciples of Jesus were there at this feast. John's disciples were a little bit put out by that. And the Pharisees too, no doubt. Why don't you ever fast?

Well, if you don't know what fasting means, it was to deliberately go without food for a set period of time. It could just be one meal. It could be a whole day. It could be more than a day.

Often to spend that time in prayer. In the Old Testament, God had said there was only one day that the people had to fast on. That was the day of atonement, the very highlight of the whole year.

But the rest of the time, there was no commandments that you should fast. However, the Pharisees, by the time that Jesus appears on the scene, have made it almost a rule of stipulation amongst themselves, anyway, that they were to fast two days a week.

So why didn't Jesus command his disciples to regularly fast two days a week? To pray just like John's disciples and the Pharisees. Surely, if Jesus wanted them to please God, then he would get them to do the things that other people did who wanted to please God.

[12 : 56] Well, Jesus answers their criticism with three illustrations. And the illustrations he gave don't just relate to fasting and prayer. They relate to what it means to be a Christian.

They relate to what it means to be a follower of Jesus. It relate to what Jesus was teaching and bringing into the world. And each of them shows us something fresh.

First of all, we see that following Jesus means sharing his joy. Verse 34. Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he's with them?

Can you imagine you've been invited to a wedding, your friend of the bridegroom, and you're going to the wedding, and they're there at the reception or whatever it is, at the party and so on. And you're saying, sorry, I'm just not going to eat.

I'm not going to share in the celebration of this wonderful day with you. That would be rude, wouldn't it? That would be completely out of order. You've been invited to share in the joy, the delight of the bridegroom.

[13 : 57] Now, Jesus is the bridegroom in this parable. We know that because many other places throughout the Bible, actually, God is spoken of as being the husband or the bridegroom to his church, his people, to represent that loving relationship.

Marriage itself, the Bible teaches us, is given as a picture of the love of Christ for his people. A love which is inseparable, unbreakable, and eternal.

The Pharisees, however, when they fasted, they imposed upon themselves a sort of a misery, a sort of a sobriety.

So when they went and fasted, they'd put ash on their heads, and they'd go around looking solid. Jesus describes it in Matthew 6, looking somber, disfiguring their faces to show others they were fasting.

They wanted to impress people when they fasted. They want people to look at them and say, oh, wow, they are so godly. They're so holy. They're so good. Look at them, fasting and praying.

[15 : 01] Oh, Jesus said they've got their reward. They've got what they want. They don't really fast and pray because they want to please God. They fast and pray because they want to look good.

Jesus doesn't dismiss fasting. He says there's a right time for it. He said that his disciples would fast and pray. When? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them.

That phrase, taken from them, is a violent phrase. It's much more than our language. It's a sense of being snatched away. He's talking about his death, his suffering when he goes to the cross.

Yes, they will fast then. They will be mournful then and sorrowful then because Jesus is taken from them. And fasting is something that as Christians we are to practice.

We are to participate in it. It's something which we are to do. Not because we must, as the Pharisees had to, or because they thought that their rules said, but because we want to seek God in a special way.

[16 : 05] We see that in the book of Acts from time to time. First of all, in chapter 13. While they, that's the church at Antioch, were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

So after they fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. This was a serious matter. These were being sent by the church. They were being commissioned to take the gospel. There was an important event taking place.

And as Christians, it's good at times when there perhaps be an important decision or choice to make, to set time aside. It may just be a meal. It may just be a day. Just set those time aside for fast and pray.

But what Jesus is saying here is this. Following him is sharing in his joy. But then he brings two other illustrations. First of all, following him means separation from that which is worthless or useless.

And he uses an everyday illustration, perhaps one we may even be able to understand. Jesus explains what happens when you try to unite human religion, which is worthless and foolish, and living faith, that which he came to bring.

[17 : 22] Faith living is like a new garment. Something beautiful, something untainted, something lovely. Religion and the observance of religion is like an old worn-out rag.

He told them this parable, verse 36. No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. That's unthinkable, isn't it? You don't take a new shirt or blouse or whatever it is, cut a big hole in the back of it so you can stick it onto something which is already worn out and ragged.

What will happen? Otherwise, you've torn the new garment, you've wrecked the new, and the patch from the new won't match the old. It just won't go together.

It won't work. Jesus is talking about is something called syncretism. It's a big word, so you might know it.

I had to look it up. Syncretism means the combining or putting together of two thoughts or worldviews or religions. It's something that has happened again and again.

[18 : 27] It's something that's happening in our own generation here in the UK, with many churches even, sadly, trying to bring together the worldly way of thinking, the world's way of view of God and Christianity together.

We can put them together. It's something that the Roman Catholic Church have done a lot of in the past, particularly in South America when missionaries went there. They sought to bring the people to faith in the Roman Catholic Church by adopting their festivals, their pagan festivals, their pagan gods, calling them saints and adopting those festivals for Christian holidays.

What you end up in the end is this. It's neither fish nor fowl. It's no good. You've ruined what may be good, and you've not done anything to help what was bad.

Christian faith that Jesus brings is new. It's not to be cut up or added to, because it's perfect. It's complete. It's whole.

Following Jesus means separating from that which is worthless, that which is unhelpful. And thirdly, we see in this illustration, following Jesus means selecting change.

[19 : 44] I had to find another S, so it became selecting. Choosing change. Determining to have change. Selecting change. And he uses another illustration, perhaps one we don't know so well, unless we make our own homebrew, or have our own winemaking kit, or something like that.

But if you don't, then let me explain. In Jesus' day, the way that liquid was carried about was in usually a goat skin.

So like a leather sort of a pouch, and wine included. Of course, when you had it at home, you had it in maybe a clay jug or whatever else. But if you were carrying it anywhere, water, wine, it was in this goat skin.

And like any leather, then over time, that goat skin would lose its suppleness. It would become quite rigid over time. An old wine skin was known for that.

But new wine has to ferment a little. It has to let off a little bit of gas from time to time. It has to expand a little. So if you put new wine into an old, hard, tough, inflexible wine skin, one thing's going to happen.

[20 : 54] It's going to burst. And the wine's going to be lost. The goat skin's going to be ruined. No, you've got to put the new wine into a new wine skin, which has some give in it, some flex in it, so that it can cope with the change.

And so that's Jesus' illustration. What is he saying? He's saying simply this. You cannot put his teaching into a man-made religion, like that of the Pharisees, because that's what it was.

It wasn't truly the Old Testament. It wasn't that Jesus was saying, oh, the Old Testament, you mustn't listen to that, because this is new. That's not what he's saying at all. In fact, we know that, because he quotes from the Old Testament.

He exalts the Old Testament. He points to the Old Testament again and again, and through the New Testament. The Old Testament and the New are one wonderful stream of God's salvation being revealed.

No, he's talking about the religion of the Pharisees, man-made religion, religion that's based upon man's ideas of God. He's saying this. If you try to put the faith, the living, wonderful, spiritual faith of Christ and following him into something which is a hard, informal, stiff religion, then it will only break.

[22 : 09] It will only ruin the good, and it will destroy the religious. However, that was the attitude of the Pharisees.

They were unwilling to embrace that which was new. They were unwilling to give up the old, and so he closes that illustration. No one, after drinking old wine, wants the new. They say the old's better.

I wonder, are we tempted to say that as well? Dear friends. I know, I mean, I'm getting on a bit now. As you know, it's my birthday earlier this month, so I'm knocking on the door of 52.

So, I had a youth as well, and I look back and think, oh, wasn't it lovely, and wasn't it great, and wasn't it good when you were young? But the reality is that the world as we know it has always been the same.

And though things seem to be in better, there's many things about the past that were not good, and there's many things about the present that are also not good. But one of the real temptations that we have is to stay put, to not change, because we're afraid of change, because actually we say, oh, this way of doing things is the best way.

[23 : 23] Sadly, that's what the Pharisees were doing. They were saying, our way is the best way. The way it's been done for the last 100 years, 200 years, 300 years, and what the rabbis have passed down to us and the Pharisees, this way of law and legalism and formalism, that's the best way.

We don't even want to think about the new. That can be a problem for many people as well who are not Christians, can't it? I've got my own ideas.

I've worked out my own philosophy, my own thoughts. I've got my own faith, my own religion. I'm not even willing to consider thinking seriously about the Christian faith, because I think I've got a good handle on everything.

Dear friend, you haven't. Because Christianity is not about my thoughts or somebody else's thoughts. It's about God's truth and God's word.

The attitudes of the Pharisees was this, we aren't even going to listen to Jesus. We like the old. Even if it's wrong, we're going to stick with it. Isn't that a terrible thing? Isn't that a terrible thing as believers?

[24 : 27] We stick with the old because we're just not unwilling to change. We need to, dear friends. We must, because that is the very vitality of the Christian faith.

If anything is living, what is it doing? It is always changing. We are changing because we are living. So it was that they were unwilling to change because they had not the life of God within them.

So, two more events. Two more events actually go to show just how different Jesus' life, way of life and following him is from the Pharisees of his day, from the religion of the world, any religion.

We don't just have to take the religion of the Pharisees with their religious observance. We can look at any man-made religion throughout the world, even today. And we see that it has the same problem as the Pharisees.

It is dead. It is formal. It is strict. It is lifeless. And there's two very, very important and powerful things that come out in these two events here that we're going to read of in chapter 6.

[25 : 39] First of all, the Pharisees, those who hold to their religion, they say no, but Jesus says yes.

Their religion says no, but Jesus, following him, being a disciple of him, says yes. Verses 1 through to 5 in chapter 6. Jesus is travelling from town to town.

We know that because he's been doing that the last couple of chapters, Capernaum and other places, Nazareth and so on. And wherever he's went, he's gone with his disciples and they've travelled and then gone to a synagogue to preach.

On the way to one of these towns, they're passing through a field of corn or wheat or some sort of grain and being peckish or hungry or not having time to eat. We know they're very busy.

They would take a head of corn or wheat, rub it in their hands and then eat the grain. Perhaps you've done that yourself when you've walked through a wheat field.

[26 : 39] Not destroying the plant, not walking through and destroying the, but you know, along the path and things like that. There's nothing wrong with that, in fact, and according to God's word in Deuteronomy chapter 23, he allows that.

He says if you walk through a neighbour's field and you pluck some heads, that's fine, just don't put a sickle. You can't put a sickle to your neighbour's field, but you can pluck some heads for yourself. But the disciples, sorry, the Pharisees took great exception to this.

Why did they take exception? Well, because they were doing this on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was a day that God had given to his people right from when they were in the wilderness, a day of rest, a day of ceasing of labour, a day of restoration for them spiritually and physically.

It was a blessing, a wonderful blessing of God, knowing the limitations and needs of his people. But the Pharisees had built almost the whole of their religion upon the observance of the Sabbath.

They had specific rules about all the things that you couldn't do on the Sabbath. And in fact, one of them was that you couldn't carry anything or you couldn't carry a burden.

[27 : 50] But they did describe what burden you could carry. There were things you could carry and this is their description. You could carry food equal in weight to a dried fig.

Okay? Enough wine for mixing in a goblet. Milk enough for one swallow. Honey enough to put upon a wound. Water enough to moisten an eye salve.

That was like a powder that you'd put on your eye. Paper enough to write a customs house notice. Ink enough to write two letters of the alphabet. And read enough to make one pen.

So you can imagine all the way down on every minute of life they had described what you cannot do. All they could say is no, you cannot do this, you cannot do that, you cannot do the other.

They thought that pleasing God was just about don't. It was utterly, completely negative. We find that again sadly in the world's religions in which we have.

[28 : 54] It's do this, don't do that. Don't do that, do this. It's about works, it's about keeping regulations, it's about keeping rules. Many people think that's what Christianity is about and it's not.

The Christianity that has simply rule making at its basis is a false Christianity. Christianity. It's not the Christianity of Jesus or the Bible or of God's word.

Sadly, even as, that's how non-Christians view Christianity. Simply, it's about not doing bad things. Sadly, even as Christians, isn't that the case sometimes?

We fall into that trap of thinking being a Christian is that I just avoid those things that are bad. That isn't what Jesus came to bring. So Jesus turns to the actions of David to bring him an answer.

He goes to the Old Testament to the greatest figure in the Old Testament, the man of God, David. What did he do? Well, one day he ate bread from the altar which was reserved only for the priests.

[29 : 56] I'm not going to go into all the story. You can read about it for yourself in 1 Samuel. Well, basically, David and his companions are fleeing from Saul and they are hungry and they arrive at the tabernacle at Shiloh and he says to the priest, can I have the bread?

God had ordered that every day there would be bread laid out on the table and at the end of the day it would be gathered up and the priests would eat it but nobody else was allowed to eat it and then fresh bread for the next day just to show that God was the provider of our daily bread.

And so these men come and they're desperately hungry and David takes the bread as the priest gives it to him and they eat it and they're restored. So the question is what pleases God?

What pleases God? Is he pleased that his people starve so that a rule is kept? Or is he pleased that his people are provided for and a rule is broken?

That's a big thing, isn't it? Jesus says this. In one sense, he's saying, look, God's will is not that we are enslaved by law that cripples us but freed from it, delivered from these things.

[31 : 10] This comes out most of all in Paul's letters and Peter's letters all the way through the New Testament. We realize that the message of the church, the message of Christ that spreads to the world is this. It's for freedom that Christ has set you free.

Galatians 5 verse 1. Stand firm then and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Let me ask you about your Christian faith.

Well, let me ask you first of all about what you think about Christianity if you're not a Christian. Do you think it's simply about do's and don'ts? Then you've got it wrong. And dear Christian, if you think that as well, if the whole of your Christian life is built upon me avoiding doing that but just doing that, then let me say to you, rethink that.

It's much more than simply structure, stricter and rule. Now, another Sabbath day, verse 6.

Luke has put these all together. There's a message here for us to understand. And it's in that second event we've realized that they, religion, said law but Jesus said love.

[32 : 23] It's a local synagogue. We're not told exactly where it is. Jesus has been teaching. And there in the congregation there is the Pharisees and the teachers of the law.

Don't you get the feeling that they're following him around? They're stalking Jesus. It seems pretty clear that they are because we're told there they were looking for some way to catch him out. It's like, they're really good followers of Jesus, these Pharisees.

wherever he went, they would be there to trip him up, to see if he would heal on the Sabbath so they could really pull him apart. But in the congregation as well, there's a man, a man whose right hand has some sort of disability.

We don't know. We're told it was a shriveled hand, whether that means he just lost or strengthened it or whatever. We're not sure. But clearly, it would have been a terrible difficulty for him if his right hand was shriveled.

He wouldn't be able to work, at least not very well. He wouldn't be able to care for his family. It would have been a great disgrace and sadness to him. So what's Jesus going to do?

[33 : 27] They're looking. Is he going to heal on the Sabbath? Well, Jesus, wherever he went, did heal, didn't he? Wherever he went in every situation, he healed all the people who came to him. Chapter 4 and verse 40.

At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of illness and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. But now the Pharisees are watching him. Now it's the Sabbath.

Is he going to be scared off, if I can put it that way? Is he going to keep their law? It's not God's law, their law. Should he stop healing because of the Sabbath?

And Jesus asked their opinion. He says, okay, you're here to check me up. I'm going to ask you, verse 9, which is lawful on the Sabbath? To do good or to do evil?

To save life or to destroy it? Can you imagine the situation? It's a bit like at a wedding when the vicar says, is there anyone here who knows of any lawful impediment why these two should not be joined in matrimony?

[34 : 28] And there's a sort of tense, humorous silence. But you can imagine in the synagogue, there's that tense silence. Are they going to say anything? Are they going to speak up, stand up for what they believe in?

No, of course they don't. Again, the question is, what does God want us to do? Does he want us to withhold kindness and healing, which is, of course, evil?

To withhold healing, to withhold care from one who needs it is just the same as doing them harm, isn't it? It's just the same and tantamount to hurting them. Well, does God want us to love, to care for anyone wherever we meet them and to help them whenever we can?

Now, the Pharisees had, again, built it into their sabbatical, sabbatical, sabbath laws that you could only heal or help somebody who was at the point that if you didn't, they would die.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. If their life was in severe danger, for them, keeping the law was better than love.

[35 : 47] Keeping rules was greater, they thought, in God's eyes, than kindness and mercy and love. Something that Jesus himself challenges when he speaks against them later on in Luke in chapter 11, and he says to them in verse 42, Woe to you Pharisees because you give God a tenth of your mint, your rue, and all kinds of garden herbs.

They do all these things in absolute detail, but you neglect justice and the love of God. Here's the crux of the matter.

What it means to follow Jesus, to be a disciple of Jesus, really is called love. Jesus was asked, what's the greatest commandment?

And he gave them the greatest commandment. He told them the greatest commandment is this, love the Lord your God with all your mind and heart, soul and strength. The second is like this, love your neighbor as yourself.

Do you see, that contains the whole of God's will. The whole of God's desire for humanity, the whole of what it means to follow Christ is to love God and love others.

[37 : 02] Loving God comes first because as we love God, we're able to love others because we realize that in loving God, he first loved us and gave his son to die for us and to save us from our sins.

We know what love is like when we know the love of God and love him because it's a love that forgives, a love that is generous, a love that is unconditional. And therefore, that's the sort of love that we are to take and to show with others.

Unconditional, generous, merciful, gracious love, forgiving love, loving even our enemies as Jesus taught us. Following Jesus is about being a revolutionary in the world just as he was.

It's about swimming against the flow of society. It's against, it's about standing up and going in the opposite direction to culture and to whatever sort of teaching and belief which is not of God.

That's hard. That's why Jesus was criticized. That's why he was stalked. That's why he was ultimately, we find at the end, verse 11, they were furious with him.

[38 : 17] They weren't just a bit peeved. They were angry, so angry they could burst. And then, from that moment, they set about what might we do with Jesus. In other words, how are we going to get him out of the way?

If you want to follow Jesus, then you have to be different. You have to be revolutionary. You have to be someone who is a new creation.

That's what the Bible describes. That's why Jesus says that to be a Christian is to have new birth. Paul calls it a new creation. It's new life. It's a new beginning. That's what God does in the believer by his spirit.

He transforms and changes us. It's the only way to follow Christ. The only way to know God's grace because he has said himself, I am the singular only way and the only truth life.

Let's sing together as we bring our time to a close. This morning, again, remember we'll be here this evening at six rather than in the West Cliff.

[39 : 38] We're going to sing 821, again recognizing that Jesus is our supreme example. To follow him, to be a Christian, is to be like Christ.

821, from heaven you came. through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.

And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Amen.