

TRINITY

BIBLE CHURCH DALLAS

The Sermon

Dr. Steven J. Lawson

Luke 5:33-39

"Out With the Old, In With the True"

May 12, 2024

TRANSCRIPT

So, I want you to take your Bible and turn with me to the gospel of Luke, Luke chapter 5. Now we've come to the end of this chapter and we're going to be looking at verses 33 to 39. The title of this message is "Out With the Old, In With the True." So, I want to begin by reading, starting in verse 33.

"And they said to Him, 'The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink.' And Jesus said to them, 'You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? But the days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.' And He was also telling them a parable: 'No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, "The old is good enough."'"

So, what all is being said here? Well, let's go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do ask for understanding that we would rightly handle Your word. It is written for our instruction, every word. In fact, every letter, every stroke, every jot, every tittle is inspired by You. And so this is for our good. This is for our edification in being built up. So give us eyes to see, give us ears to hear, give us a heart to receive and to believe, and make us yet even more like our Master and like our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We're grateful for this opportunity that we have to gather this morning, and we ask that, to the max, to the maximum, we would receive all that You have for us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

In these verses that I've just read, Jesus is once again confronted by the scribes and the Pharisees. This is the third time in this chapter alone in just rapid-fire staccato fashion there is this clash between the scribes and the Pharisees and Jesus. And the difference between the two could not be any greater. The kingdom of heaven that Jesus has come to establish in the hearts of men and women is completely antithetical to the religion of the Pharisees. There's no overlap. They are in juxtaposition. The scribes and the Pharisees were blind leaders of the blind, and Jesus is the light of the world. And the scribes and the Pharisees had contrived their own religious system, their own way of attempting to come to God, and it was false, and it was erroneous.

The Pharisees taught salvation by human works, Jesus by divine works. The Pharisees taught man-made traditions; Jesus, God-given truth. The Pharisees stressed rituals before God, Jesus stressed a relationship with God. The Pharisees stressed trusting self; Jesus, trusting God. The Pharisees emphasized the outward appearance; Jesus, the inward attitude. The Pharisees preached living separated from sinners, Jesus preached confessing that you are a sinner. There's a world of difference between these two religious systems. One is true, the other is false. They are both not true.

So, I want us to walk through this passage, and this is really escalating and coming even yet further to a head in a conflict. So, as we look at verse 33, I want you to see "the interrogation." And that's what's really taking place here, an interrogation of Jesus.

Verse 33 begins with the word, "And," and I'm going to you to stop right there. The word "and" here connects what follows now with the previous passage. It's all a seamless garment. It's all a continuous flow. So from this we are to understand that Jesus is still in Matthew's house, as you saw last week. Jesus is still in Levi's house, who has thrown a banquet in order for his friends to meet Jesus. And the scribes and the Pharisees have come along with sinners and tax collectors and the rest.

And so, it is in this same room in this same house of Levi's. And he was very well off because he was a tax collector. He had the franchise for this local area, and he worked for the Roman government and was required to take up a certain amount of taxes to send to Rome, and everything over and above and beyond he could skim off the top and it would be his to keep. And so it was obviously a very nice house, a very large house.

And so, we read, "And they said to him." We have to ask the question: Who's "they"? Who's doing the talking here? Who's doing the interrogation? And I think it goes back to verse 30 where it says, "The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples." It goes back to the Pharisees and the scribes. That's who the "they" is here in verse 33. And Matthew's account of this in Matthew chapter 9 tells us there is also a third party asking this question, which is the disciples of John the Baptist.

So this is quite a mixed crowd. I mean, we've got everything from tax collectors, to notorious sinners, to the hyper-religious Pharisees, to the scribes, to the disciples of John the Baptist. And this is just what happens when Jesus shows up. I mean, people start coming from every direction and they want to get as close as they can to the Lord Jesus Christ for a variety of different reasons.

"And so they said to Him," and when they did this, they're trying to put Him on the spot. I've been a pastor for 40 years and I've done a lot of Q&As and I've done a lot of congregational meeting Q&As and some of them you could almost cut the air with a knife there's just so much tension. And some, there'll be open mics, and people can ask me any question about,

"Why are we doing this? Why are we not doing that?" et cetera, et cetera. And sometimes the question is really more of a statement. I keep waiting for the question. And even if it's put in the form of a question, it's still a statement. And that's what's going on here, and the intent is to expose Jesus. The intent is to paint Him into a corner.

"And so they said to Him," – a friend of everybody – "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers." Now this John is John the Baptist, and some of John's disciples have followed Christ, and others have not followed Christ, and these are some I think we can understand are still kind of halfway but they haven't come all the way to Christ.

"And the disciples of John often fast and offer prayers." Now, fasting: in the entire Old Testament there's only one command to fast and that is just for one day out of the year. It's on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 11, it's repeated in Leviticus 23, you'll find it in Numbers 29), only one commandment for one day out of the year. Well, any other fast is just strictly voluntary. It could be a crisis in your life, it could be the death of a loved one, it could be an unusual need, it could be a time of national disaster – I mean, whatever, but it's just strictly voluntary.

But the disciples of John, really in some ways, have been influenced by the Pharisees. And the Pharisees are notorious at adding more commandments to the Bible such that they – not only do they believe the Bible, they go beyond the Bible, and if you go beyond the Bible, you're canceling out the Bible. And the Pharisees up the ante that you have to fast twice a week.

And so, in the parable that Jesus will tell in Luke 18 – we'll get to that in about a decade – in Luke 18, the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, and the Pharisee is just so proud of himself, and he says, remember, "I thank You that I'm not like this publican over here that's a tax collector. I fast twice a week." And so that is in the drinking water already. This is in the system.

And so, the disciples of John are fasting multiple times, we're not told exactly how many. But verse 33 continues, "and the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same," referring to fasting and praying. And the Pharisees, when they fasted, they wanted everybody to know about it. And so they would show up at church without combing their hair and looking all disheveled, and they would show up with a sad face, and people would ask them, "How are you doing?" "Well, if you fasted as much as I do, if you pray as much as I do, you would be very tired also."

And so it really became a badge of their spirituality as they would parade this in front of everyone else. And the Scripture did not require it. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount said in Matthew 6:1, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them." Beware. Do not be parading your righteousness in front of other men to draw attention to yourself.

Now, verse 16 is very important, Matthew 6, "Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do." Now the word "hypocrite" in the Greek language means one who puts on a mask, and it referred to an actor or an actress who would come onto a stage like this, and in a Greek tragedy, if it was a sad scene, they would put on a mask with a frowning face and a mouth that is drooping. And then at other times in the play, it would be a happy scene, and they would take that mask off, and they put another mask on in which they're smiling, and they would just play out a role, act out a part to be someone that they're really not, but they're just acting. And then when the play is over, they take the mask off, and they come down with the people, and they go back to being themselves. That's what the word "hypocrite" means. You're two-faced. You are just putting on pretenses to be someone that you're really not.

And so Jesus says, "Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full." Verse 17, "But you, when you fast, anoint your head" - that means put some hair gel on and some hairspray - "and wash your face," - verse 18 - "so that your fasting will not be noticed by men." And so Jesus

rebukes the Pharisees in the Sermon on the Mount and they're followers for looking so gloomy thinking that they are so spiritual.

So they show up at Matthew's house, and it's a mixed group, and over here on this side of the room, this side of the room are all the gloomy people and all the Pharisees and all the scribes, and they're just walking around the bland leading the bland, and they just are so unhappy-looking as they're trying to be so spiritual. Over here on this side of the room are the disciples of Jesus, and even the out-and-out sinners look happier than this group over here.

And so at the end of verse 33, they draw this now to a head, "but Yours eat and drink." They're not fasting, they're having a good time. They're eating and drinking. They're laughing. They're smiling. They're talking. They're feasting, they're going back for seconds. They're happy-faced. They're acting like they're at a wedding. And these over here are acting like they're at a funeral. And so the difference is so noticeable between these two groups, the contrast is like night and day. And so, the Pharisees over here on this side of the room come to Jesus in front of everybody and say, "Why are Your disciples not gloomy-looking like we are?"

A couple things need to be said here. Number one, no one's under obligation to fast. We're not even celebrating the Day of Atonement anymore, that was fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ. You can, but it's voluntary. It can't be imposed on anyone else.

But more than that, one of the distinguishing marks of being a true disciple of Jesus Christ is joy. Jesus said in John 15:11, "These things I have spoken unto you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." And Paul wrote in Romans 14:17, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, or it's not eating or not drinking". That has nothing to do with it. Paul writes, "It's joy." There is the distinguishing mark of the kingdom of God. And Paul will write in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice!"

And so, one of the distinguishing marks of your life as a true believer in Christ is joy. And God uses that even in your outreach in sharing your faith in evangelism, you'll attract more flies with honey than with vinegar. And the reality of joy in your life is very much a positive. And I think that what we learn here also by way of application, before we move on to the next verse, is that legalism like the Pharisees had (a tight, rigid legalism) never produces joy. Legalism suffocates joy and squeezes it out of a person.

Now, please understand, when I say legalism, I'm not talking about obedience to the Word of God, I'm talking about obedience to what's not in the Bible, that somebody says, "Well, if you're a good Christian," - I used to hear this - "you're not going to play cards." I played cards with my grandmother almost every vacation in the backseat of our car. We're just laughing and having a great time. Or, dancing. It may shock you to know I danced with my daughter at her wedding to the Temptations, "My Girl." I'm going public with it right now. But legalism is saying you cannot play cards, you cannot dance. Well, there's dancing, and then there's dancing. I'm talking about dancing.

And so, legalism just suffocates the joy out of a person's life and puts them in a straightjacket and it imprisons them. And likewise, when children grow up in that same atmosphere, that they can't even blink. As they've grown up under legalistic parents and they go off to college, sometimes they wonder why those children don't ever come back to church. Well, they've already had round one of bad medicines, they may not want any more. Legalism neuters joy. But where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is joy." [Ephesians 5:2](#), "For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," - it's number two on the list - "peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control," et cetera, et cetera. Joy.

Well, that was the interrogation: "Why aren't You sad like the rest of us, Jesus? Why aren't Your disciples moping around?" This leads us to verse 34, "the explanation." Jesus now brilliantly answers their question with a question. And so in verse 34, "Jesus said to them," He gives them a straightforward answer. And the word "and" indicates there's no pause,

there's no lag time. As soon as they say this, their words are in the air, Jesus is returning serve.

"Jesus said to them, 'You cannot make the attendance of the bridegroom fast when the bridegroom is with them, can you?'" It's a rhetorical question, the answer of which is so obvious it does not even need to be answered. The answer is obviously no. No one shows up at a wedding and acts like it's a funeral, unless you're the old boyfriend who got jilted. She traded up.

But at a wedding, the attendants – and here the attendants would be in our culture like the best man, the best men. I can't even remember what you call the other guys that are standing up there. The what? Groomsmen. Thank you. And then the bridesmaids. When they're standing up there, they're not sad. There is an excitement in the air. And some of them may have been the one to introduce them to the bride who's about to come down the aisle. And no one's fasting at a wedding. I mean, at a wedding, you've got cake. I mean, you've got a buffet. I mean, it's a time to eat, it's a time to be happy, it's a time to laugh, it's a time to smile.

So no one shows up at a wedding to fast. A wedding is a time of great joy and festivity. It's a time of singing. It's a time of dancing. It's a time of laughter. It's a time of sheer joy. How inappropriate would it be for you to stand up there for those wedding pictures and you've got this gloomy face, and you haven't fixed your hair, and you haven't washed your face, and you just look like an advanced agent for the undertaker.

So, Jesus just is brilliantly dismantling their question which is intended to put Him on the spot. And in this analogy, this picture that Jesus is painting, I mean, His closest disciples are these attendants, and Jesus Himself is the bridegroom. And when the church is birthed on the Day of Pentecost, we become the bride of Christ just to extend this out. But for us to be associated with the Lord Jesus Christ, there ought to be more joy in this room than any place else in Dallas, Texas.

And so He continues in verse 35, "But the days will come," - it's looking to the future - "when the bridegroom is taken away from them," - when the bridegroom is suddenly snatched away, suddenly removed. And it is a veiled allusion to the arrest of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane when the Roman cohorts came and arrested Him, and He was taken off, and He stood six trials and then was crucified the next day.

That's the allusion here in very veiled language: "The bridegroom is taken away from them," - from them, the disciples - "then at that time they will fast in those days." And that points to the time between the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. And after the resurrection, there will be explosive joy, there will be exuberant joy.

Jesus said in John 16:22, this will help tie that down: "You have grief now," He says this in the Upper Room Discourse right before all of the arrests will take place. "You have grief now," because He's already told them, "I will be leaving you." And Peter goes, "Where are You going? We want to go with You." And Jesus says, "Where I'm going, you cannot come now." And then He says, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." Obviously, their hearts were troubled that there was going to be this separation.

So Jesus says, "You have grief now, but I will see you again," And that's pointing not to the second coming, it's pointing to the post-resurrection appearances that Jesus will have with them. "But I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you." And that early church was so filled with joy.

Now, let me just say this. Jesus even said to these disciples, "There will be a time when you're sorrowful, and then there will be a time when you're joyful." And there are things that happen in our lives that are tragic. And there are times we weep and we mourn, and we have to acknowledge this. And it doesn't mean that you're unspiritual. Ecclesiastes 3:4 says - well, let me start with verse 1: "There is an appointed time for everything." Verse 4, "A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to

dance." And so under the sovereignty of God, there are appointed seasons in our lives and times: could be the loss of a spouse, could be the loss of a parent, could be the loss of a child. I mean, there are times that we do mourn.

And Paul will say in Romans 12:15, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." It would be inappropriate to rejoice with those who are weeping; you need to enter into their sorrow and their loss. And James does say though in James 1:2, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance."

So that's Jesus' explanation: "This is why My disciples are not like your disciples because My disciples are with Me." And when you have close proximity to Jesus, you have joy. And so if you need increased joy today, draw closer to Jesus, abide in Christ, fellowship with Christ, set your mind on things above and not on things of the earth, and you will find your joy increasing.

But this leads us now to verse 36, "the illustrations." Now, Jesus drives this home with the use of two parables that function or serve as two illustrations. And they really continue with the wedding motif - the bridegroom and the attendants. These two parables still are couched in this imagery of a wedding and joy.

So, He says in verse 36, "And He" - Jesus - "was telling them a parable." Now, the word "parable" simply conveys the idea it's an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. And literally, parable, "para" means parallel, laid next to each other. There are two things that will be laid down next to each other: one, the story; and then next to it will be the obvious application. That's what a parable does.

And so He was telling them a parable. And so here's Parable Number One, it's in verse 36. Parable Number Two will be in verses 37 and 38. So in

verse 36, first parable, "No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment." I mean, no one does this, it's just never going to match. The color is going to be different. The texture is going to be different. And the older garment has already been washed several times, which shrinks it a bit. And then the newer garment, when it's sewn in, it's not at the same elasticity. And it's just – you can't mix and match. You can't take this old swatch and sew it into a new garment and expect it to look good, and you can't even expect it to stay sewn together.

Jesus acknowledges this and He says, "otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old." Now, this is referring to the attendants who are at the wedding, and they need to dress up. It would be inappropriate for you to show up looking like someone who's fasting. And so the apparel – and here if you both tear the new and the piece from the new, it just won't match the old. There's no harmony. There's no agreement.

So, what's the point? Jesus is saying the true religion that He has come to bring cannot just be sewn into the Pharisees self-righteous system of religion. You can't mix and match. You can't just add Jesus to your life, to your old system of religiosity, to your old Pharisaical ways, to your old empty rituals and external routines and man-made traditions. You just can't patch up legalism by just adding Jesus but you still have the legalism.

The legalism has got to go if you're going to have Jesus and if you're going to have the joy of Jesus. And you just cannot be a conglomerate of a little of this kind of religion and a little of this kind of religion and a little of this kind of religion. No. It's all Jesus or no Jesus. It's all the kingdom of heaven or none of the kingdom of heaven.

So that's the first parable. It's glaringly obvious what Jesus is saying to His crowd there that day. And so, if you came from a legalistic home, if you came from a legalistic church, if you came from a legalistic background, you can't just come here and now add all of this to your background and expect that your Christian life is going to function and work. No. You're

going to have to burn your bridges behind you. You're going to have to let all that stuff go that's not found in the Bible, and you're going to have to stand with the bridegroom, close to Him, if you were to have joy.

Now, the second parable is in verses 37 and 38, and it's still this wedding metaphor. I mean, Jesus is just such a brilliant master teacher. He says, "No one puts new wine into old wineskins." Well, you serve wine at a wedding. I mean, read John chapter 2. They ran out of wine. Jesus said to the servants, "Go fill up six water pots with water and take it to the head master." And somewhere along the way, Jesus, by the authority that's His, is the Son of God and the Son of Man, He caused the miracle to happen and the water became wine. And it wasn't just grape juice, it was wine. And when this head waiter tasted it, he said, "Oh, my goodness, this is the best I've ever tasted. Everybody else gives the best first, and then when people's senses are dulled a little bit, then they serve the cheap stuff. You have saved the best for last."

And so, as Jesus now talks about wine, it's still about, like, a wedding feast. And He says, "And no one" – meaning no one in their right mind – "puts new wine into old wineskins." Now, why would you not do that? Because new wine is still fermenting and it's still sending off gases; and when you put it in an old wineskin that has already held old wine, the fermenting and the gases have already expanded the old wineskin as far as it's going to be expanded. Now you put new wine in this, it's going to expand it now even more. The old wine can't expand it anymore, but the new wine can, and it will expand it so much, it'll cause it to bust. It'll burst. It'll crack. And the new wine cannot be contained in an old wineskin.

So Jesus said, "And no one puts new wine" – and by the way, throughout the Bible, wine is a symbol of joy and happiness and laughter like would be associated at a wedding. "No one puts new wine into old wineskins," – into an old leather bottle or an old animal skin that's already dried out and brittle and hardened, Jesus says – "otherwise" – verse 37 – "the new wine will burst the skins," – it will cause the skins to crack and to burst and to spill – "and the skins will be ruined," – meaning destroyed. And so

the point is, new wine requires new wineskins. You can't take the new and put it into the old because the old can't handle it.

So, what is the point of Jesus' illustration? Well, Jesus is not saying that the Old Testament is old wineskin. That's not what He's saying. He is saying that the old, dead religion of legalism, of the Pharisees and the scribes cannot contain the kingdom of heaven. The old wineskins – which are pharisaical, and legalistic, and go beyond Scripture and impose this on other people – they're like, "If you're a good Christian, you're going to do this," but there's no chapter in verse to back it up.

The old wineskins represent the self-efforts of man to find approval before God by keeping someone else's checklist. No, the old wineskins, or the teaching of the Pharisees and the scribes, the old wineskins represent religion without grace, religion without forgiveness, religion without joy. It represents the unconverted heart, the spiritually dead soul. And you cannot just add Jesus to an apostate religion, even if it has the name of Jesus on it. So you're going to have to totally distance yourself from the religion of the Pharisees. You cannot play all ends into the middle.

So, in verse 38, Jesus said, "But new wine must be, must be put into fresh wineskins." There is a divine necessity about this. Not could be, should be, would be: "must be." "The new wine must be put into fresh wineskins." And the word "fresh" in the original language really means new. But there are two words used in the original language for time. One means *chronos*, like a chronometer, a watch. It means new in time. That's not the meaning here, like it was just made yesterday.

No, this word is *kainos*, which means new of a totally different kind. It has nothing to do with the time, it has everything to do with the kind. New wine must be put into a totally different kind of wineskin. It must be put into a new heart. New wine cannot be contained in an old, unconverted heart. It cannot be contained in the legalistic, pharisaical system of religion, it will not fit.

This is why you as a true believer will never be satisfied in a church that's legalistic. It's impossible, it won't happen. You can only be in a church that's like new wineskin for the new wine of your life to be plugged in. And there are many legalistic churches in this city, in this state, in this country, in this world. And many of them are caught up in false systems of religion. Some are well-intended, they're just not well-taught. Others are teaching a different gospel that does not save. And so every one of us needs to understand, new wine cannot fit into an old wineskin.

Several years ago, a couple decades ago, I was the pastor of a church. And when I went to be the pastor of the church, I really did not understand that the church was comprised of more Pharisees than there were disciples of Jesus. And I was there for eight years, and there came a point where I felt I can no longer be the pastor of this church. And the image, the metaphor that kept coming to the forefront of my mind is you cannot pour new wine into an old wineskin. The old wineskin will have to be thrown away, it will just have to be totally eradicated, and it will just be easier for me, one person, to leave with my family than to try to reconstruct this entire church filled with Pharisees, unconverted.

The two religions cannot coexist. They are going in opposite directions. They have opposite standards. They have opposite authorities. They have, really, opposite masters. And Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters."

Now, there's one last verse we've got to look at, and that's verse 39, and this is "the condemnation." Now, when I first read this verse this week, I misread it, and I had to look at it a second time and a third time and scratch my head and pray, and even pull down some commentaries from the best of the best commentators to explain this verse and open this verse up to me because it seemed to be the total opposite.

But what we have to understand is Jesus now ends His words with an ironic twist, as He will describe the Pharisees to the Pharisees who are entangled

in their dead religion. This is a portrait of the Pharisees: "And no one," meaning no unconverted scribe or Pharisee who is spiritually dead. And being dead, they have dulled spiritual tastes and senses. And it's still the wedding motif.

"And no one, after drinking old wine," now this old wine are the man-made rabbinical traditions that are not found anywhere in the Bible. They are the rules that the Pharisees have contrived on how to live in a way that would be acceptable to God. But they have not come from God. "No one after drinking old wine," and the Pharisees have been drinking this old wine for a long time, and they have developed a taste for this old wine, and they do not want to give it up. They love their old wine.

So He says, "No one, after drinking old wine wishes for new." In some ways, that's human nature. I've been wearing the same striped ties for years. Same white shirt, same black pants, same black belt. I mean, I'm painfully traditional.

So there's nothing wrong with being traditional in and of itself. I love traditional architecture. I love traditional art, et cetera, et cetera. But it says, "No one, after he's tasted the old wine wishes for new," and He's talking to the Pharisees that "you do not want the new wine that I have come to bring. You still are attached to your old wine."

And this is what the Pharisee says at the end of verse 39, "for he says," – for the Pharisee says – "The old is good enough." He stubbornly clings to his old traditions that profited him nothing, in fact, harmed his spiritual life. He's not interested in the new.

So, we ask the question then, "How in the world would a Pharisee ever be saved?" God must perform a miracle in that Pharisee's heart, just like He must perform a miracle in your heart, whatever your background, wherever you've come from. You cannot work your way to heaven like a Pharisee. You can't pull yourself up by your bootstraps up to the heights of heaven.

You cannot be like a disciple of the Pharisees and go to heaven. They're not going to heaven, they're going to hell.

There must come a time, there must come a place in your life, a crisis moment when the realization has come, "I cannot continue to be a disciple of the Pharisees. I can no longer work my way to heaven. I can't meet the standard, I'm not good enough." There must come a time where you realize that you must become a disciple of Jesus Christ who has done all the work to save you.

The only contribution that you and I make is the sin that was laid upon Christ at the cross. That's all we bring to the table is our sin. And God does everything else. God even arranges the circumstances for when you heard the gospel. God was the one who convicted your heart of your sin and need for the gospel. God is the one who sent His Son into this world to die for sinners. God is the one who crushed Him on the cross. God is the one who raised Him from the dead. God has done it all. God has sent the Holy Spirit to bring conviction to your heart and persuade you of your need for Christ. All you can do is receive the free gift of God, which is eternal life.

That's what the Pharisees couldn't – it didn't register. It didn't connect. The lights didn't come on for them. It was too simple. Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. You just come finally to the end of yourself, and you deny yourself and take up a cross, and you begin to follow Christ.

Maybe that needs to happen in your life today. Maybe you need to finally come to the end of yourself and all of your self-efforts to raise yourself up to God because you can't raise yourself up high enough. His standard is perfection, and there's only one who's met that standard and that is Jesus Christ. And if you would put your faith and your trust in Him and just extend an empty hand to Jesus Christ, He would fill that hand with the fullness of forgiveness and righteousness, and along with that, joy; and for the first time in your life, you would experience the reality of Christ in your life.

If you've never done that, this could be the greatest moment in your life, this could be the greatest day in your life. And there is no reason for you to hesitate or to procrastinate. The Bible says, "Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, today is the day of salvation. When you hear His voice, harden not your heart."

So if you know that this is what you need to do to take that step of faith and to come through the narrow gate, then do not harden your heart, but humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you, and He will save you, and He will forgive you. It's the greatest offer you'll ever hear in your life. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, we stand in awe of our Master, the Lord Jesus. He just always knows what to say. He always knows what to do. And we haven't even come to the end of Luke's gospel where He will die upon the cross for our sins and be raised from the dead. Just even as we observe Him through the three years of His earthly ministry, we are lifted up. We are elevated by just walking in His footsteps and hearing His voice. And I pray that it will be internalized within us.

For all of us here today who know Christ, may we become more like Christ. And for those who have never yet come to Christ for the very first time, oh, may today be that great day of salvation in their life. So, God, bless everyone who has come here today, in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

A very short benediction from the book of Romans 15:13, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." May you know His joy, joy inexpressible, full of joy this day. God bless you.