



## **Obstacles on the Road to Christ-Part 2: Propriety Luke 11:24-26**

You're free to imagine being in the scene there of Luke 10-11, which we've been studying over the months. Living in Judea in southern Israel and having Jesus, whose reputation precedes him, coming into your village or your town or your city, and, I mean, clearly you'd be impressed with the Messiah. He came with his credential on display. But certainly you would take note of his followers. You'd be surrounded by a group of people I-I no doubt would be extreme in your mind. (1:06)

I mean, here at the head of the group is a guy named Peter who's so outspoken and unrefined and, you know, in your face passionate promoter of Christ. I mean, clearly he would get your attention as an out of the box kind of guy. There's another Simon in the group. And to distinguish that Simon from the other Simon, they called the other Simon, Simon the Zealot. Which is what the first Simon was, but of course you'd say, well if you know your Bible, so well that was a political group in the first century. Yeah, but it attracted a certain kind of personality. And you can imagine Simon Peter and Simon the Zealot just promoting Christ, and coming into town and talking about Christ, and pointing people's attention to Christ. It would be, it'd be quite a spectacle, I suppose, to spend some time with those guys. (1:50)

And then there was two guys in the group that were so catalytic in their personalities, made such an impact on people just by their behavior, that Jesus gave them the nickname together, Sons of Thunder. What would it be like to just carry on a conversation and have them try to convince you of Christ and his credentials. That would be a, quite an experience. (2:09)

Now if you're an outsider that's what you'd think. This is an extreme bunch of people. I mean, they all left their day jobs to go and follow Christ. And while some left the middle income jobs, like a fisherman, to go follow Christ, there were several with high income jobs. Guys like Matthew, Levi, who were tax collectors and on the take, and probably had so much money. You had others, you know, that were working for the government that were clearly making good salaries, and they left it all. Including Luke, the author of the book we've been studying. And he left that to become a traveling missionary with the apostle Paul through the Book of Acts, and it was filled with persecution, and trial, and shipwreck, and trouble. And these were guys who were willing to give their all for Christ and his kingdom. (2:51)

Now, once on the inside you'd look at those guys, I trust, and you'd say, well those are dedicated guys, sacrificial guys. I mean, they went all out. They were, as we say around Compass, they were ATAPAT, which is our acronym for "any thing, any place, any time." They would do any thing for the kingdom, they would go any place for Christ, they would do it at any time in their life. They were ready to serve, no matter what. (3:12)

Your neighbors though, that you live on the street with there, if they were to encounter them, they wouldn't call them dedicated and devoted and sacrificial. They'd call them crazy. They'd call them nuts. They'd call them fanatics. These guys are fanatics. Because your neighbors, like every generation of non-Christians since the apostles, they have a desire every now and then to know something about God. They certainly have an interest and a curiosity from time to time in their



lives about Christ, but they certainly don't want to become fanatics. I mean, they see something like that, this all in, sacrificial, do anything for God, and they kind of put them in their minds to the fringe, and say, well, I might be interested in some of the God that you're promoting, but I don't want that much of your God. I don't want to become a fanatic, and a crazy, and an all in kind of person. And I'm not looking to radically transform everything about my life. I don't want a new job and have to travel to some remote place, or give my money to a church. I just want enough God in my life to fix some of my problems. I'd like Christianity that you're trying to pitch to me, but I want just enough Christianity to kind of quell and corral the chaos in my life so that everything would be—I'd like to have a powerful friend on call, so that if I do have a crisis he could swoop in and fix the problem for me. (4:23)

I mean, that's pretty common. If you think about it, though, that desire to have God be my problem solver, or my therapist, or my financial advisor, or whatever it is that they want out of God, is really in essence, though it seems like a positive move towards Christ, it is nothing more than barrier that is erected between Christ and your neighbor. Your coworkers wanting a little bit of Christ, just enough Christ to help their life, is really a tactic to keep Christ at arm's length. 'Cause Christ didn't come to be just those things. Matter of fact, in some cases he'll really surprise you when he does get involved in your finances, or your health, or whatever it might be. Christ came to save us. He came to change our status before the Father. He came to pull together a band of radical followers. And as I've said so many times in print, and from this platform, radical Christianity in the Bible is normative Christianity. And what people don't want is they don't—they don't want anything radical. Ah, I'm interested in your God insofar as it will help me, but I don't want it changing the perception in other people's minds about me. (5:34)

That barrier is the second one we find in our study of Luke 11 as we reach verses 24 through 26. We've come on the heels of this moment in time where Christ deals with a phenomenal situation. Now on the surface it looks like a guys that's just fallen into some problem that has impaired his speech and he's mute. But what we learn from Christ in the encounter that we studied last time we were together is that there was demonic activity involved in this, and that that demonic activity was ultimately the catalyst, or the impetus, for that, what was going on that man's life that created a problem, a physical problem. And Christ comes on the scene and relieves the man from the physical problem by dealing with the source of the problem. And the source of the problem wasn't neurological, it wasn't biological, That was the means of source of the problem, which was demonic activity in this man's life. (6:26)

Now that's a phenomenon that many of you are new to, and you, if you're visiting or whatever, or haven't read much of the the Bible, or you just, you know, all you know about that is horror movies, I would invite you to turn over the worksheet. And on the back I've re-listed some resources I referred you to last week, that are bracketed off this time, they're segmented off, that deal with the phenomenon of demonization as we call it, or as I call it, at least. What the average person would call demon possession. The phenomenon in the Bible and the reality of demonic activity behind the scene in the invisible world in which we live. Now, if you're new to that, and you need a rational, logical presentation of that, and I invite you to listen to what we've done in the past on this topic. And also a few books that I've also segmented off in the block under the resources that would be good for you get a hold of. There's a lot of crazy things written about the unseen world, but I invite you to those few books that are bracketed off there with corresponding

titles. (7:21)

And I say that because while I'm very interested as I read verses 25-26 to you right now to spend our entire time looking at the phenomenon that is further explained as Jesus talks about a cast out spirit, but that's not really not the focus of the context. We've dealt with that earlier in the book. The context here is look at how people respond to Christ. And there is implied in this the absence of the response that Christ is looking for. Follow that, now. In these three verses that I'm about to read that we're going to study this morning is implied that the response that Jesus is looking for is not taking place. And he illustrates it like this. (8:00)

Verse 24. When an unclean spirit has gone out of a person—now that, if you look back at what we've just looked at, last time we were together, that was some someone, unclean spirit was gone, the man was returned his speech and he was fixed. He was healed. And that was something that now you think, well what about that spirit. Jesus gives us some insight what happens. Well he goes out, passes through—let's out it this way—uninhabitable areas, waterless areas, arid areas. Now these are illustrations because you know what demons don't need? They don't need a drink of water. They don't need bottled water. They don't need water at all 'cause they don't have an esophagus, they don't have a tongue. They don't have pores or sweat glands. They don't need water. Because they're not physical, they're spiritual. And because they're spiritual, this is an illustration about the spirit wanting to go out and do more work, and he can't find what he needs to do the work that he's required to do. So he goes looking around, can't find any place to do his work. Finding none, it says, he says, it says, I will return to my house from which I came. Now again, this is not about houses. This is not about, you know, stucco and timber, and roofs and shingles. This is about people, as we see clearly at the end of this description in verse 26. We'll get there in a minute. But we're talking about a person like a house, and a demon leaving that person and all the activity in that person's life. He goes looking for other marks, if you will, and not finding an adequate mark to work with, he comes back to check in on the mark that he left. (9:30)

Verse 25. And when he comes he finds the house swept and put in order. Now we're gonna have to interpret that. The idea of a life now that doesn't have the maladies and the problems that were there when the demon was doing his work in the person's life. Things were fixed. Things are organized. Things seem to be better now. Everything's back to normal. (9:49)

Verse 26. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. Now, there's something very clear about the reality of what Christ does in a person's life that would prevent this reality. In other words there's something about a response to Christ that we'll see, and I'll prove to you as we get to it, but clearly the Bible says when you get right with the living God the Spirit of God invades you, and there's something that wouldn't allow for a description like that. So whatever happened to the man that was delivered from demonic activity, whatever happened in his life did not prevent the recurring of the problem. Only in this case, this spirit brings seven other more evil than himself, and the last state—here's his commentary, bottom of verse 26—of that person is worse than the first. (10:39)

So we've got someone who seems to be relieved from some bad problem. It's a spiritual problem with physical manifestations. And that person gets his life in order, and things get nicely organized. And then, unfortunately, he's still vulnerable, and he is re-inhabited by eight evil



spirits. And Jesus says what a terrible tragedy that is for someone that has been a recipient of the goodness and grace and deliverance of God on one level, but never really got a relationship with God that would prevent an even worse tragedy. The kind of oppression, or possession if you care to use that phrase, that would cause worse things in his life. (11:22)

So let's figure this out a verse at a time. Take your worksheet out if you haven't already. Let's think through verse 24. Let's start just with our thinking about what we know in the Bible about the effect on a person's life through demonic opposition. Go to Job in your mind if you need to. In the book of Job we know what's going on behind the scenes in that book, and that all of a sudden everything goes wrong for Job. But we know it's not just "oh, it just so happens". Everything that happens to him is happening because there's a spiritual battle behind the scene. Now what are the things that happen? Is it—does his table levitate? Does his wife's head spin around? No, none of that takes place. What happens is criminals come in and steal his crops. A storm comes in and wipes out his kids' house and his kids die. I mean he has a body here that is subject to illness, and sure enough here comes the demons, if you will, or Satan himself and his henchmen, and they take his health away. So everything goes wrong for him, but they all have physical ramifications. They're the kinds of physical ramifications that when they happen to you or your non-Christian neighbor, all of a sudden now, like in some terrible crisis of life, we call out to God for help. And certainly Job does, too. (12:34)

And in time in the book of Job, what does God do? By the time we get to the last chapter, God restores his life. And the things that were wrong they get repaired, to the extent that they can. He lost his children, but he ends up having more children. His health is restored, his relationships. He ends up having a great blessing from God in the end of the book. So bad things happen to Job. They're physical. He calls out to God. And it takes forty chapters, but eventually God restores his life. And you have this picture of demonically caused issues in his life by God sovereignly letting the leash out on Satan to attack this man's life, and now you recognize: Oh, wow, those things are the kinds of things people deal with everyday. Sickness. Illness. Theft. Lawsuits. Problems. (13:18)

Now. In this passage it says in verse 24 that whatever demonic activity was in this man's life that was causing such trouble, he goes out. He goes looking for other marks, can't find them, comes back and checks in on the guy that he'd been messing with before. I just want you think of the feeling of relief when the restoration takes place. I mean, you end the book of Job with this happy ending and you say, well, look at that. How great it is. It'd be like Paul who calls his own chronic illness a messenger of Satan, a thorn in his flesh. And he calls out to God to have this illness leave him, and God says, no, you're gonna have to live with that because I have a purpose for it. But imagine how great it would be if Paul said, "I cried out to the Lord three times and he took it away"? That's what we all want. That's what your neighbors want, too. That's why over 75% of the people in this country pray to God. They call out to God. When? When they have trouble. (14:09)

I often give you the stats that even atheists pray, which is a very bizarre phenomenon. Think about that. What are the stats? I quote them often. And 30% of atheists in a survey I read—reputable, nationwide survey—30% of atheists pray occasionally, and 17% of atheists say they pray regularly. To whom, I don't know, but they're praying. It's kinda like the scientists that may



not believe in extraterrestrial life, but they're gonna put up these saucers, these radio transmitters and these receiver, they're gonna go listening, just in case. Just in case they're out there. Now, of course, some of those behind it believe there is life out there, but let's just think about that. (14:48)

Your non-Christian neighbor, even if he says I'm an agnostic, or maybe even an atheist, from time to time when things are bad they're gonna call out to God. Now let's just think about that. Maybe they're calling out to God in a crisis because there is some kind of serious issue going on, whether it's demonically initiated or part of being a part of the fallen world. They call to God, and let's just imagine God answers. Which I know brings up the question, does God answer the prayers of non-Christians, and the answer of course is yes. We see it throughout the Bible. Yeah. Does he answer like he does to his children? No, it's not the same. But from time to time, if every good and perfect gift comes from God, when your neighbor gets diagnosed with something and God gets them through that and their health is restored, of course God's involved in that. And if a non-Christian can call out to God and see that, and see the response the that, I mean they stand back and say, well thank you, God. They thank the man upstairs, or whatever it might be, but they're grateful. They've had relief. Now here's the thing. Like most people, they want God to fix the problem but they certainly don't want to become one of these fanatical followers of Christ. (15:49)

Let's start with that. Number one on your outline, just jot that down. We need to understand your neighbors, your coworkers, your friends, your extended family.

***1. They want fixes, but they don't want to become fanatics.***

That's the first thing we need to know They want fixes, they don't want to become fanatics. God, fix my problems. I have an issue. Fix it. I got a lawsuit. I lost my job. My house is upside-down financially, I can't pay my mortgage. God, help me. People will cry out to God for help, and oftentimes God is gracious to fix the problem. Luke 17 is a great example. Don't take time to turn there, but you'll remember the story of the ten lepers. Now, nothing's worse, really, in the first century, than being a leper 'cause you didn't have a nice place to go and get your treatment. What they did was rounded them up on the outskirts of town and created leper colonies. And you had to live there and stay away, and it was terrible, and disfiguring, and awful. And so they lived in these colonies. Well, they find out Jesus is in town and ten of them come out, and they find Christ and they call out to him, and they say, have mercy on us. Please help us. We hear you have this ability to fix the unfixable. And so Christ, in his mercy, goes and heals them. And he says you guys go show yourself to the priest, which was the sign that you're going to, you know, re-enter society, and as they turn to they are all healed. (17:04)

That picture of ten people calling out to God and God fixing their problem is great. But that's not the point of the story. You know the point of the story in Luke 17? The point of the story is that there's one of them that turns around, comes back to Christ, and I love this, praising God in a loud voice, falling at Jesus' feet, and he worships Jesus as the king, as the sovereign, as the provider. And he gives his allegiance and his submission to Christ, the king of the kingdom. And he says, wow, that's great. Extra credit. I'm so glad you went the extra mile to come back and thank—no, that's not what he says. Where are the other nine? Did I not heal ten? (17:48)



Now think about this. Here is ten people asking God for relief. God gives all ten of them relief. And only one comes back and gives the allegiance of his life to the healer. That, think this through now, is the one that Jesus—here's how the passage ends. We'll get to it, Lord willing, when we study Luke 17. But he says this: Your faith has—here's the Greek word, *sozo*—your faith has saved you. That's the word for in Greek, Greek New Testament, for salvation. Has saved you. Now, sometimes the translators don't know if we're talking about—are you talking about his faith had healed him? Some translations say, "made you well". Or is this the classic sense of the word *sozo*, which is salvation? Now, it seemed to make sense to me in the context, that you had ten that were healed. They were all healed, regardless of their faith and allegiance to Christ, but you had one come back and fall before Christ. And then Christ says to him, Your faith has *sozo*'ed you, has saved you. So here's ten people that get the blessing of God, but only one that's willing to be a fanatic and fall at Christ's feet with a loud voice, give him allegiance and bow before him, and he says you're saved. (18:57)

Now think about that. That's the thing that nine other lepers didn't care to do. They are like most people in our world. They're enamored with the gifts of God, and when they get them they're happy. But they certainly don't want to be fixated on the giver. If you sit here as a real Christian today, I trust you're the fanatic that is fixated on the giver. We love the gifts. And that's great. We love to pray and have an answer. But our focus is on allegiance to the king. And that's a different kind of life that most non-Christians are not interested in. And the problem for us is we get, we get duped. We think when something happens in my neighbor's life, they maybe know I'm a Christian, they maybe say can I go to church with you, maybe I can go to your Bible study. They may say come into my front room, and let's sit here and by the coffee table let's pray. Can you pray for me, I got a crisis, I got a problem. And they seem to now be interested in God all of a sudden, and we get really happy with that. It's as though the ten lepers say, oh, Jesus is in town? I need some Jesus right now. I only need enough Jesus to fix my problem. 'Cause only one in ten in that story wanted Jesus as his focus. And that's the problem. We sometimes get duped with interest in Christ when we need to realize I've got to recognize that it is not about you just getting gifts from God, it's about you seeing God as the giver of all gifts, including the most important gift he wants to give you, and that is forgiveness of your sins. But that can't happen without repentance and faith in him. And that repentant faith, that contrite trust, that turning and trusting in the provision of Christ, is something most people, ehh, I'm not interested in that part. Realize people want fixes, but they don't want to become fanatics. (20:39)

And let me warn you, as someone who's sharing the gospel with people, that it's easy for us knowing the appetite of people in this world, to take what we know about the gospel, or to take what we know about the Bible, and then just start saying, well, if that's what they want let me give them what they want. I mean, those verses are there. And God is a God who wants to give peace, and God is a God who wants to fix relationships, and God is a God who wants to do all these good—so let's just talk about that. There are entire ministries built on nothing other than finding out what people want from God, and then saying let's build a church, let's build a ministry, let's build a para-church ministry, and let's give them what they want. Oh, as long as I'm quoting the Bible I guess it's okay, right? (21:20)

Now I've given you this illustration far too many times. But you don't want your mailman at the



end of your driveway looking at your mail before he puts it in the box, opening up your letters checking out to see whether or not your electric bill is super high this month, and deciding how he thinks it will make you feel, and saying, oh, man, that bill's too high, put that back in the truck. You don't want your mailman sorting out your mail, do ya? I want my mailman just to deliver the mail. Here's a good homework assignment for you. Go through the book of Jeremiah. And in the book of Jeremiah, look at how in this indictment of a generation before the Babylonian captivity, is indicted for their sin and how often God keeps kicking into an indictment of their leaders. 'Cause he says you know the problem with this generation is not just the people are sinful, and idolatrous, and compromising. It's that the priests and the prophets kept filtering out the mail I was giving them to deliver to the people, and they said, well, they don't really like that message. Does this sound as familiar as what's going on in Christian radio, and Christian television, and Christian print media, and Christian blogs? In other words, let us take the stuff out that we think people aren't going to like. That's—I know this whole thing about fanatical, and sacrifice, and service, and giving, and, I don't know, persecution. Not to mention in evangelism I don't want to talk about the holiness of God, and the justice of God, and sin and judgment and hell. I don't want to talk about those, 'cause that, those kind of harsh people out. So, let's just give them the stuff that we can give them that's biblical that they like and have a palette for. That's happening all the time. Read the book of Jeremiah and see how often God says the real problem is the people delivering the ministry because they're not delivering all the mail, they're just delivering some kind of filtered, emaciated, anemic version of the word of God. (23:10)

That gets God to say some pretty amazing things in the book of Jeremiah. He says things like this: Don't listen to the prophets. Don't. Why? Because they're not giving you the whole message. I know that's going to be something that in in your own heart you're gonna struggle with, saying, well, there are fixes in Christ that will fix the temporal problems in people's lives. I'm all for sharing that. But make sure you provide the whole message. This is not about God giving you your healing, your fix, your support, your peace of mind, and not calling you to be a devoted, fully devoted follower of Christ. (23:43)

And by way, there's always a dual application of these sermons. For this whole series we're looking at barriers to Christ, barriers on the road to Christ. These obstacles that get in the way. And we're going to think quite often in these series about how we share the gospel with the world, that we need to understand how they function. But know that even as Christians we often function the same way. It's easy for us as real Christians to come into this relationship with God, and as we're walking through this Christian life and recognizing, you know what, God, you're demanding some things of me right now I don't know that I really want to provide. I don't want to go the extra mile. I don't want to stay the extra hour. I don't want to spend the extra dollar. I certainly don't want to be about any thing, any place, any time. I, there's, I got some limits on what I'm willing to do for you. And when you get into that rut, here's another homework assignment for you. Study Revelation 2-3. The seven postcards to the seven churches. Now, not all of them of have blown it, but many of them had. And Jesus says, here's the problem with you guys. You claim my name, you meet together, you say you're followers of me. But you are not willing to be obedient to me. As Jesus said in the ministry there that we've already looked at in Luke, as he looked at the crowds, why would you call me, Lord, Lord, and not do what I say? (24:59)

People want fixes without become fanatics. We need to be so careful that we understand that what people need is more than what they, in their own flesh at least, want to hear. We need to give 'em not only what they want but what they need. And what they need, oftentimes, is something that to them is too fanatical. Be uncompromising about the message and demands of the gospel. (25:26)

Number two on your outline, verse 25. You may say, well, I haven't had that experience yet. My neighbor going through a crisis and calling me over, knowing I'm the neighborhood Christian and so, they're asking for help and would I pray for them. Maybe you have, maybe you haven't. My problem seems to be verse 25, a life where everything is orderly and tidy. Like this demon finds this life now after the crisis had been averted, who knows how long before, but his life is like that house that's swept and put in order. Everything's in its place, everything is fine. Now that's a much more common response we have to the gospel. We talk about the need of repentance and faith. We talk about the problem of sin and the consequences of judgment. And people say I don't need that. Why? 'Cause they don't feel the need. I don't think I really need that. My life's okay the way it is. I got a nice, tidy, comfortable life, and I'm okay. So, stop with your you need Jesus thing, 'cause I don't really think I need Jesus. (26:25)

That's pretty common. And in this case, the demon comes and he's about the pounce on this guy. And the reality is, if some Christian came up and said, hey, you need to be a follower of Christ, the response: ah, everything's fine. Tidy. It's great. What we need to do in pointing out the realities that sit behind the excuses for Jesus is to let them know what they're really saying. What you're telling me is, even if you want to be polite and say maybe your scenario of God and prople of sin and the punishment that, maybe that's true. But, you know, if I signed up for that it may be so inconvenient for me I would lose my comforts of my present life, and I'm not willing to do that. We need to make this scenario clear. That what you're doing is you're passing on something that has eternal consequences to keep something that only has temporal effects. In other words, you're willing, number two, you're willing to trade the kingdom for a comfortable life. Jot that down, if you will. (27:23)

## ***2. You're willing to trade the kingdom for a comfortable life.***

This is the problem with people with nice, swept, and tidy lives. They're saying I'm okay. I don't need Christ. I mean, I may in some theoretical or some theological way, and I may not be ready to debate you on that, but I just don't have any pressing needs to say man, I really need to repent. By the way, that's what makes preaching in south Orange County very difficult. It's like the picture of the Titanic that I painted for you before, going down the hallway and knocking on stateroom doors and saying, "We need to get out. The ship is listing, it's going down. Please make your way to your lifeboat." Now, people struggle with that to the proportion that they have a nice stateroom. Follow me, now. I mean, if my room is comfortable, I'm in the middle of my program, I got room service just delivered. I'm not thinking about going down the hall right now. I don't feel the need. I'm not feeling the ship listing, I'm fine. See, to the extent that my life is comfortable, I'm gonna struggle with the need of repentance and faith (28:34)

Think about this when you think about the rich young ruler. Matthew 19. Here are all these





fishermen, and some guys that, you know, left lucrative jobs like Levi, but you had the fisherman that speak up when they're thinking about the transaction that Jesus is presenting to the rich young ruler. Hey, follow me. You can have eternal life. There's one thing you lack, and what you're lacking and what you need to do is, you need to follow me. And here, all this stuff you have, I got an idea. Since now I'm going to be the lord of your life, I'm gonna tell you sell everything you have, give it to the poor. You follow me. I'll take care of your needs. You trust me. Just cash in all your assets and come with me. You know how that ended, the rich young ruler, right? Says he went away sad because he had great wealth. I got a lot here. Now, when Peter left his nets he left something, but he didn't leave as much as that rich young ruler was asked to leave, and it made it harder. And that's why Jesus' response to that situation was what? He turned to the disciples and he said, how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. To the extent that you're comfortable you've got a problem in that it makes it harder for you say, mm, yeah, I'm gonna get in the lifeboat. (29:44)

And by the way, here's how Satan often works. Even though good things in our lives we can point to God and say that's a good thing, it's people getting upgrades from the standard cabin to the executive stateroom in the ship that are saying, hey, move up here. And now here, we Christians are saying come on to the lifeboat. Which do you want? Satan has got deep pockets. Have you heard me say that before? He's willing to give people what they want to keep them insulated from their feeling a need for Christ. And we need to recognize how that is. And people have a problem giving up what they feel is a comfortable life to follow Christ. (30:19)

Now, there's another group I preach to in the rescue mission or the jails. Some of you are in our ministries doing that kind of thing. And that group, they don't have the same problem. But you know the problem they have? Point number one. Lot of times they say, well I just want a fix. If God can get me out of my trial and my trouble. Well, here you got people when I preach outside of the rescue mission, or outside of the jails, now I'm preaching people who've got nice incomes, nice houses, everything's fine for them. Low interest rates on their mortgages, and they're doing just fine, looking for a new car. And now I say, hey you need Christ. They say, ah, I don't know, I don't feel that need. Things are going fine. And then you're gonna tell me stuff like, oh, I don't want to have to give. Now think about that. In our evangelism if someone came up to you and said, are you telling me if I become a Christian—now I know I hear you guys talk about giving. You mean, in your Bible, you're gonna tell me I gotta give a proportion of my income to the church, is that what you're saying? Now I know how most people in real time would say. Well, I don't—let's not talk about that, that's later, and you'll fall in love with God and you'll wanna give. Stop with that. Look your non-Christian in the face and say, yeah. Not only do you have to give as the Bible says, but the Bible says you need to consider all that you own as his. He may ask you to give 90%. Who knows what he's going to ask you. But yes, it's true. You need to see your stuff as his stuff, and certainly, Galatians, you know, 6, very clearly, you need to give. That's the kind of thing people go that doesn't compute. So basically you're saying my income, or my expendable income, is going to go down immediately as soon as I make this decision to follow Christ. Along with a lot of other things that he's looking at. The comforts and conveniences, and fun and pleasures, and activities and recreations, and all things that I like to do to entertain myself. All of these are going to be curtailed because I follow Christ. I don't really want to do that. (32:02)

Turn with me to this very short passage in the book of Matthew, Matthew 13. Put your eyeballs on these three verses. I know you know this, but I want you to see them afresh, because this is the reality that we have to spell out. We have to let people understand the transaction that's on the table. You are looking at temporal comforts. You need to look at those temporal comforts in comparison and in light of the eternal benefit that I'm presenting to you. Now, maybe as you turned to Matthew 13 I can give you a recollection of Luke 11 where we've been. In the passage that precedes, Jesus paints a picture about kingdoms. Satan's kingdom, if it's divided against itself how can it stand? He's trying to give the logic that it doesn't make any sense if you're saying I'm casting out demons by Satan. Then he says, but if I'm casting out demons by the finger of God, well then the kingdom of God is upon you. So there's two kingdoms. You'll live in one kingdom, and I'm asking you to be a citizen of the other kingdom. There's a transfer that has to take place. We're gonna go to this great place, but you first have to abandon the stateroom on the Titanic, get on the lifeboat, and we're going to go to a different kingdom. And that kingdom is great. Now the problem is people see the immediate problem of leaving my stateroom and my room service, and my TV, and I'm gonna get in a boat now that looks cold, and wet, and it's not comfortable and I don't like the people that are in it. They don't see the destination. (33:34)

Verse 44-46. Matthew 13. The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered it up. And in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and he buys that field. Here's someone sitting in his stateroom that uncovers in his own mind, and experience, and the teaching of the truth, he sees the value of the kingdom. He can look past the transportation and he can say, that's great. I'm willing to leave everything behind so that I can get to the destination. I can have the kingdom. It's a treasure. Verse 45. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. This is what he's into, he's into the pearls, he's searching for it. Now, some people stumble upon it like verse 44. Other people, like C.S. Lewis even as he thinks about the feelings in his own life as an intellectual looking at the problems in this world, and even ontologically in his own mind and his own heart, recognizing that his life, his heart, his conscience, was built for a different kingdom than the one he lived in. We have desires, and things that God has created in us as Augustine said, he's built us for himself. And so he recognizes, you know you, I'm looking for what that is. So some people are stumbling upon it, verse 44, some people are searching for it, verse 45. But when it is found, and the value of that kingdom is understood, verse 46. On finding one pearl of great value, the ultimate pearl, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. (35:12)

That's the transaction we'll get to in very, very clear terms in Luke 14, Lord willing, when we study that passage not too long from now, where Jesus summarizes two illustrations and says, so you too cannot be my disciple unless you renounce all that you have. And in some sense we need to present clearly to the non-Christian neighbor who's saying well I'd much rather be comfortable in my life, my recreation, my decisions, my values. I'd like to fit in down here. I don't want to be a radical in the kingdom. To say yes, you're right, through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom. You're gonna move from a comfortable stateroom into a very cramped lifeboat, but you know what? You gotta look at the value of the kingdom. You gotta really recognize that what you're saying to me is I'm trading the eternal value of the kingdom for temporal comfort. That makes no sense. Jesus put it this way in his teaching. Maybe you know the verse, as he repeats it often in his ministry, saying, listen, what a travesty it would be if a man even gained the entire world—you can have the whole bridge of the boat, you can have a deluxe, twenty



thousand foot cabin, you can have everything. What a tragedy it would be to have everything in this life and lose your own soul, and go down with the ship. That'd be awful. It makes no sense. As Jim Elliot, who ended up giving his life, you remember that, we quote it often. The missionary said, he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he can't lose. And that's the transaction that has to somehow be clear in the minds of people that we're sharing the gospel with. (36:43)

I just know people are more than willing, and they do it everyday, to trade the potential engagement with the kingdom, the citizenship in the kingdom, eternal life with everything that God wants to bestow on his children, and they'll say, for a temporary, comfortable life, I don't really want the kingdom. Jesus was out in Galilee and he'd fed the five thousand. And after that happened, people, I mean, he was a rock star to them 'cause man, they got a free lunch. Everybody was full, had all they wanted. They came searching for Christ, and he said, you know, you're not searching for me. You're not coming to me because I did those signs, and you saw what those signs pointed to. That I'm the king of the kingdom, you need to give your allegiance to me like the leper bowing down before, that's not why you're coming. He said, you're coming because you ate the loaves and you got your fill. That's temporal meal, that was something you want more of, the temporal stuff. He said, don't work for the food that perishes. Don't worry about a bigger house. Don't worry about a more comfortable life. Don't worry about fitting in with our society. Stop worrying about things that'll be gone in a hundred years. He says work for the food that endures to eternal life. (37:51)

That's a value change. It gets us beyond the headlines. I mean, I don't want to be a freak, I don't want to be a weirdo. I don't want my coworkers to think I'm not in step with the cultural norms. I'm not advancing and progressing and evolving like everyone else. I'm going to be this weird blockhead who just loves Christ and keeps quoting the Bible. Get past the temporary discomfort of the lifeboat. Get a glimpse of where we're headed. Don't be like those people that we encounter so often who trade the kingdom for a comfortable life. (38:21)

Verse 26. Luke 11. The tragedy of this whole story is how it ends, of course, and that is here's a life that's swept and put in order. Everything's arranged on the deck of the Titanic, and they're comfortable. The problem is, there's a tragedy on the horizon. That evil spirit goes, finds seven others more evil than itself. They enter and dwell in that person, and the last state of the person, at least is seven times worse than it was at first. It was terrible. Now I know that's a picture of this temporal lifespan that some, that got some kind of grace and deliverance of some problem. They called out to God, and God answered. And then they kind of got their life in order. They never became fanatical followers of Christ, which is the only kind of follower their is. And now they're subject and vulnerable to some terrible thing that's even worse than this life. We got to think beyond this life to the next life, 'cause that's really the perspective we're trying to paint throughout the New Testament. And that is this. That those nine lepers who said I'm not going back to give worship to Christ, I don't want to become of these crazy followers like Peter, James, and John. I just want the blessing of not being an outcast in this world. I'll take his blessings, and I'll go and do what he said as it relates to my gift, but I don't want to become a, like that other guy with a loud voice praising him at his feet. I don't want to do that. (39:39)

The question is how long did that blessing last? See, every time God gives a good gift, here's



something we need to note carefully. Romans 2:4. Romans 2:4 says every kindness of God is intended to lead us to repentance. The kindness of God is intended to get us to see our need. Now sometimes it has the opposite effect, and Satan's good at trying to put insulation around the gifts of God so that people don't see their need. But God says my intention is, when I let the sun rise on the evil and the good and I send rain on the crops of the just and the unjust, is so that the unjust can see the goodness of God and know there's a kingdom that's so much better than they can imagine this to be, so they can change their heart with repentant faith and be different people. That God can invade their lives, and that they can be my children. They can be adopted out of this kingdom of Satan and be part of the kingdom of God. That's what I want. The good gifts of God are to lead us to repentance. But until we are repentant followers of Christ, our lives are vulnerable, not just in this life but more importantly in the next. Jot it down that way. Number three, we need to know that people are completely vulnerable until they are following Christ.

### ***3. People are completely vulnerable until they are following Christ.***

And again, let me repeat it. Radical Christianity, what most people call fanatical, is normative Christianity. You understand that. You can't just get enough of Jesus to fix your life, or make it comfortable and normal and in step with our culture, and think that you have biblical Christianity. You don't. You gotta know that we are vulnerable not only to the maladies of this life, but we are in big trouble in the next life if we don't become followers of Christ. (41:23)

Jot this reference down if you would. John 10:27-28. Picture sheep that are subject to the wolf. Picture sheep that can be eaten by the bear. Picture these sheep that are vulnerable. Well, they need a shepherd to protect them. Here's the picture Jesus paints. After saying I am the good shepherd. I lay down my life for the sheep. He says, my sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. You know that verse. Now here comes the next one. I give them eternal life. They will never perish—that's the next life, now listen to this—and no one will snatch them out of my hand. That verse and up in the margin of Luke 11:26 should remind us whatever's going on in this guy's life, clearly he wasn't a follower of Christ or he would never be subject to the kind of indwelling of eight demons that's described here. It is impossible. Because real followers of Christ hear Christ's voice, and by that they become related to the real living God, and they become devoted followers of Jesus. And the Bible says no one can snatch them out of my hand. (42:27)

Now, can we be harassed by the enemy? Absolutely. Can there be trouble in your life because on the lifeboat between the sinking ship and the kingdom, I mean, Satan is lobbing torpedoes? Yeah. Absolutely. You can get rocks thrown at you. You can be shot at. The enemy's gonna work hard to make your Christian life difficult. But the Bible's very clear. Greater is he that is in you than he that's in the world. You've heard that verse? The reality of your relationship with God. You are protected in Christ from the kind of description that is here in Luke 11. There is no inhabitation of evil spirits. There may be an external war that takes place, but not the internal conflict, demonic activity that's described here and all that goes with it. We're vulnerable people vulnerable children, until we're adopted into God's family. (43:16)

And with this passage and its context, I'd like to take you now, just as we wrap this up, 1 Peter 1.



I want to show you how the book starts, and I want to show you how the book ends. The book of 1 Peter. Peter is writing to people that are scattered about and under persecution, but he reminds them of this. They're on the lifeboat, and they're headed to the kingdom. And as Paul would put in the book of Acts, through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. But Peter starts with remember where we're headed. There is no way you're gonna get tossed overboard and fed to the sharks at this point. It's not going to happen. You're gonna make it to the kingdom. (43:52)

1 Peter 1:4. You can just glance up at the preceding verses. All the great things that we have through the resurrection of Christ, being born into this hope, we know it's coming. And the point and the end of this game is this, an inheritance, verse 4, that is imperishable, never gonna go away. It is undefiled, it's perfect, there's nothing wrong with it. It is unfading, there's no principle of diminishing returns once you get there, it's, you're not gonna be bored in the kingdom. It is kept, or reserved, protected, in heaven for you. It's coming. And it's gonna come down out of heaven, the Bible says, like a bride adorned for her husband. And we're gonna live in this place, and it will be the fulfillment of everything we were designed to experience. It will be perfect. Who. Who? What are we talking about? Who, those that have this living hope, they've been born again. It says by the power of God are being, look at this word, guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time. (44:46)

Now there's a writer, under the guidance of the Spirit, telling Christians keep your focus on the kingdom. It's like Paul in Colossians 3. Set your mind on things above. Understand that being outcast, and crazy, and fanatical, and Jesus-freaks in this life—it's all gonna be worth it. We're gonna inherit the kingdom. It's protected, and kept, and reserved in heaven for us. Now, that means there's no suffering. No. Like I said, lots of suffering. Satan can't touch us. (45:13)

Chapter 5. Here's how the book ends. Reminding us, yeah, you're gonna be under attack, and it may be difficult. But during the attack you need to, verse 6 of 1 Peter 5, humble yourself. You just trust God. I mean you're in that lifeboat, you need to trust the captain. Trust under the mighty hand of God, humble yourself there, so that at the proper he can exalt you. It'll get bumpy. It'll get hard. It'll get cold and it'll be difficult, but he's gonna take care of you. He will exalt you. In the meantime, your anxieties, all the attack? Man, cast them on the Lord. Casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you. There's the reality of the Christian life. Be sober-minded and be watchful. Yes, you gotta know there are going to be torpedoes sent at the lifeboat. Your adversary, the devil, he's prowling around like a roaring lion. Roaring lion. He is seeking someone to devour. But resist him. I mean, it's gonna be a fight until we get there. Firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood around the world. And as we start to experience the beginning of some persecution in the United States of America, I hope you have a broad enough on the world to know that our brothers and sisters in Christ that are following Christ in other places in this world are under a lot more suffering than we are. And we need to understand that's part of being in the lifeboat. We've left the Titanic. We're not of that kingdom anymore. Recognize we're on our way, and we will be attacked. But cast your anxieties on him, because we are under the hand of God and no one can snatch us from that hand. (46:40)

We learned from John 10:27, and it says, listen, just know this. Verse 10. After you've suffered a





little while—and it will be as Paul said, light and momentary affliction compared to what we're going to experience in the greatness of the kingdom—the God of all grace—you don't deserve it but he's gonna give it—who called you to his eternal glory—we're going to an eternal home that will make our temporal sacrifices look like nothing—he himself will restore you. He will confirm you. He will strengthen you. And he will establish you. Chapter 1: kingdom's coming. It's guaranteed. God is gonna get you there. I know you'll be called crazy, I know you're gonna be attacked. Here's how the book ends. But humble yourself under God's hand, and you will get into the place of the kingdom with these great words, restored, confirmed, strengthened, and established. And that can hearten us in the midst of the battle. (47:32)

I can let us look at being outcasts and crazies and fanatics, and say it's okay. And in our evangelism that's the perspective we paint. Yeah, there'll be sacrifices. Yeah, it'll be hard. Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. But look at it. Isn't it worth giving up all that you have to be a part of that kingdom? Man, it's a great place to be. You don't want to be vulnerable, and people are vulnerable. Not only to the attacks of the enemy in this life, but eternal judgment when they die. The moment they die... man, it's not going to be a good scene if they weren't followers of Jesus Christ. (48:02)

I know a lot of our evangelism is about helping people see their need. I've heard so many stories of people going to the doctor's office, or maybe even the hospital for some kind of scan or some kind of blood test, or some kind of screening of some kind. And they go in there, and they find something that they didn't expect to find, and it's bad. And immediately the doctors say you need to be rushed into surgery. You've heard stories like that? Maybe that's happened to you. Terrible. And it's scary. And I can imagine sitting there, if that were me, I go in for a test and all of a sudden they say, uh, hey, Mike, you need to, you know, change, and we're gonna roll you into surgery, and we need to have the anesthesiologist get you under 'cause we got, we gotta get inside your body right now and get that scalpel, we're cutting your body open. Whoa. I'm not, I mean, I don't think so. I brought some reading material here. I just want a test. (48:56)

There are other people that don't need much convincing. They come through the back door, with the lights and sirens. They come in through the paramedics bringing them in the back on a gurney. They're in massive pain. They know they need something, and if they say we gotta cut you open, they're like, start now, man, 'cause I need help. We live in a culture, though there are some that feel like they're wheeled into the ER, a lot of people that think aw, I'm okay. The reality is whether you walked through the front door of the hospital and sat there with a magazine in the waiting room in the front, or whether you've come through the back on a gurney, the problem of mankind, every single person, is exactly the same. We got a sin problem that has to be solved in Christ. And our job is to help people see this. Christ isn't just about putting a little garnish around your life and fixing a few problems. He's come to be your savior. You know a comfortable life, it's really not about how comfortable you are for the next few, in this scenario, hours of—it's whether or not we get the sin problem solved. And when it comes down to it, you gotta realize until you get that sin problem solved, you are vulnerable. Death is one thing. It's the second death that we should be concerned about. Jesus said don't fear the one who can kill the body. There's a much greater risk on the other side. Be reconciled to Christ. (50:11)

That's our message to a lost world, and it may be that some of you, like the people in Hebrew 6,



are the kinds of people that sit through church for years. And they have all the benefits of church, and there are plenty of benefits. Kids go through some programs, they stay off drugs, they seem to be good students, your marriage is strengthened, you get wisdom from the pulpit, you apply a few things, get some convictions that keep you out of the ditches of life. And that's your experience. You get to see God at work in other people's lives and you're involved... but you're not saved. Those are the people described in Hebrews 6 that will end up in that Matthew 7 scenario, when Jesus on that last day looks at them says, "Depart from me. I never knew you." And their response is, what are you talking about? I was in church. I did all this stuff, I got all kinds of stories about church. "I never knew you." Make sure that your Christianity isn't the kind that your neighbors have. It may be on a different level and to a different degree, but don't say I just want enough Christ in my life that's just enough for me to feel comfortable, and to feel okay, and have my problems fixed. You're either all in, or your not all in. To be a follower of Christ is to be considered like Peter, James and John, and Simon and the rest of them. You're zealots. You're crazy. You're willing to follow Christ to the ends of the earth. You're a promoter of the kingdom because you're a true participant that sees the value of the kingdom that is greater than any thing, any approval, any riches, anything in this world. (51:33)

Let's pray. God, I pray if there are some here like that that I've just described it might be a moment where you're working on their heart and granting them biblical repentance and faith. Give them that by your Spirit the ability to look at their own life and realize their need. Which is not about trying to somehow control the amount of God they get so that it's still respectable, and proper life, and a life that people don't think is crazy. Let them realize that they are willing to do anything for you at any time, in any place, because they've entered the kingdom. They're on the lifeboat. They're headed to the kingdom, and you know what, I've left everything else behind. This world and everything in it, as Paul said, has been crucified to me, and I to it. God, we do thank you for your gifts, but we fear that so often those gifts blind people to their need. I pray that wouldn't be happening in our lives, and for those that are here that may have some pang of conviction when I talk about people that attend church but they're not converted, bring them to the place of repentance right now. We know if that's the case, radical changes will start today for them from the inside out. But God, as we think about the non-Christians in our lives, our neighbors, our coworkers, people we run into and rub shoulders with everyday, I pray that you give us wisdom in discussing with them the most important message of all. It has to be distinguished from a little bit of Christ that so many people want. Help us to help them to see their need as you work in their hearts and you work in our mouths. Thanks for this reminder from your word. Dismiss us now with a sense of your presence and a focus on you. In Jesus' name. Amen.