



Something Greater

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Well, it's helpful every now and then to step back to recognize there are only two categories of people in this world. And the same applies for this room. Only two types of people. There are those who are seeking to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ because they believe and they're convinced that Jesus is Lord and King and boss of everything. One day will come and we'll leave this entire world and it's wise for us to bow the knee to Christ to submit our lives to him now as he requires. And then there are those who do not live under the Lordship of Christ. They don't seek to live under the Lordship of Christ. And for whatever reason, they are not convinced that Jesus is boss and king and in charge, and they do not see the value in that.

Now, there are far more things you could say about the distinction between those two types of people, but certainly you can't say less than that because it's true that that is the difference. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 16, "You better figure out what you think of me. Who do you say that I am?" And that comes with a series of implications. Do you believe that Jesus is the King and the Lord and the boss of all things? He's earned that right and that he should be the boss and King and Lord of you? I mean, that's critical. And as an evangelical pastor, your evangelical pastor I assume, I hope you would expect me to want to see as many people in the first category as possible. Right? We'd like to see more people recognize who Christ is, to see him as Lord and King and boss and say, "I need to submit my life in penitent faith to him and let him call the shots for me." I mean, that's what I want.

And I would assume that you would consider that your evangelical pastor a week before Easter would want to leverage this week coming up because it is still an opportune time to have people who don't see Christ that way actually come because you've invited them to church and fill this campus up with a series of services. We got six of them going on this next weekend and a big event at the Community Center. You would expect them to come and you would expect me to, I trust, team up with you to say, let's try and convince them because they need to be convinced. And just because you want them to understand who Christ is and because you want them to submit to Christ doesn't mean that they're going to, they need to be convinced of that. And I know that's a monumental God-sized work, but it needs to be done.

Convincing is an interesting thing. It's something that is different in each person's life in terms of what they need to convince them of this, at least externally, as you analyze how someone comes to faith in Christ. But I want to take you to a passage that will help us kind of unravel this mystery a bit and understand what our task is, particularly at a time when someone is more inclined to come at Christmas and Easter, to come and listen to what Christianity is all about. Even in our day, it's still an opportune time and they're more likely to respond to our invite than at another time of the year.

So turn with me to Matthew Chapter 12 and I want to show you a group of people asking for Jesus, it seems at least, to convince them that he is who he says he is. And you would

assume, if that's what they're going to ask and if they're sincere in that, then maybe they'll respond if they had the right convincing. And yet his response is not what you might expect. Matthew Chapter 12. Let's start in verse 38 and we'll go through verse 42 and study this text. Let me read it for you first with comment, I'll just admit that upfront, and we will look at this text. Verse 38, scribes and Pharisees, look at it here. It says in Matthew Chapter 12 verse 38, "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, 'Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.'"

I mean, if you say to your neighbor, you know, you need to come to church because we're going to talk about Christ being King and Lord and boss of the world, and you should submit your life to him, it's right that they would say, "Well, I need some convincing, I need some proof." So this seems like a legitimate question, does it not? His response, though, verse 39, is not what you might expect. "He answered them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign.'" Now, you know what a sign is. A sign is pointing to tell you something, to clarify something. Here, go look this way. Jesus Christ claims to be the fulfillment of all the biblical prophecies of the Old Testament. He claims to be the son of David, the covenant son of David. He's the one who is to fulfill the redemptive plan of God. He's supposed to take sin and forgive it. "The lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." He's going to be the king and the monarch of the universe, and he's going to collect the citizenry, a kingdom of people. And so is he the one or is he not the one? We need a sign.

But he says, "No, you don't need a sign." But that seems odd because he seems elsewhere to give people signs. Matter of fact, this chapter's filled with signs. Look back up at verse 22. Matthew 12:22, "A demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he was healed." Now just think about this. A guy who's blind, can't see. He's mute, he can't talk. And he's described here diagnosed as being demon oppressed. And all of a sudden now it says, "He was healed so that he spoke and he saw." Wow! You're doing something miraculous. You're doing something supernatural. You've done something that's amazing. That's pretty convincing. That's a sign. That's convincing that I might need. "And all the people were amazed, and said, 'Hey, is this the son of David?' Can this be the son of David? Maybe this is the one."

"But," verse 24, "when the Pharisees heard it, they said, 'It is only by Beelzebul.'" And even if you're not, you know, keen on history or deities and demons, you know that's not good, right? Especially because of the next line, "Beelzebub, the prince of demons," it's by the prince of demons, "that he casts out these demons." Oh, he's got power, all right. But the power is really because he's just a bad guy. He's Satan. Okay. So the Pharisees, same title for the same group of people. Now, this will not be the same exact group of people, but this group of people has been notorious in the gospels for rejecting Christ. They reject it even when they have the proof right before their eyes.

So back down to our passage, verse 39, you might make sense that he says, "Hey, you guys want more signs? You got signs." You know, it's like you come to me saying, "If you just preach us a sermon, Pastor Mike, we would listen." Well, that's what I've been doing every single week, right? You've heard a million sermons from me. Jesus says of course I've given



you signs. You don't need another sermon. You don't need another sign. "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign." Particularly the kind of people like you who just keep asking for more and more signs. "But no sign will be given to it." Period. No, not a period. The sentence keeps on going. We don't even have a comma here. "Except for the sign of the prophet Jonah." What in the world are you talking about?

Verse 40, "Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish," remember the story, "so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." We're not talking about the molten core of the planet. We're talking about in a sepulcher, in a grave on a weekend. And then he going to pop out of that, just like they tossed Jonah overboard from this ship as he's heading off to Tarshish and they left him for dead in the middle of the Mediterranean because he said, "Toss me over. I'm the cause of your problems." And then he ends up getting swallowed by a big fish, spit up on the shores, and then goes into the capital of the Assyrians into Nineveh and he talks about judgment and they all repent.

And they're thinking, this guy, this dude, we found him on the shore, all bleached from the acid of some stomach of some great fish and here he is. And he was left for dead. And now he's alive and he's telling us to repent. A lot of parallels there, except for the fact Jesus is not eaten by a fish. Right? He's actually dead and put in a grave after being professionally executed by a bunch of Roman executioners. So he says that's the sign everyone's going to get. No more magic tricks for you. I've done a lot. You've seen a lot. You've had enough. Talk about convincing. You don't want to be convinced, but everyone's going to be left with this resurrection.

And then some interesting words. Verse 41, "The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation." That's an interesting phrase, is it not? You got people living there back in the eighth century B.C. who are going to stand before their maker, "appointed for man once to die, and then comes the judgment," they're going to be before the God of the universe and hundreds of years later, the first-century people, the scribes and Pharisees and all the people in the villages will come and stand before their maker, and then they're going to have a conversation here and the men of Nineveh are going to condemn it, you idiots. Right? Like you fools. Why? Because they back there in Assyria, in Nineveh, they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And that was a remarkable story, but one you can still hear about people having some weird encounters of being swallowed by whales and stuff. And it's like, wow, that's interesting. And it's remarkable, maybe even miraculous on the GT-1 category, if you know what that means. Here's a God Thing on a supernatural basis.

Sure it's supernatural, but he's not the fulfillment of all the prophecies of the Old Testament. There's a lot that doesn't go with Jonah that goes with Christ. And Jonah is remarkable. And yet it's not as remarkable as Christ. And he says they're going to condemn you guys for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and behold, something greater, some preaching is greater, some proof is greater, convincing is greater, something greater than Jonah is here. Which, by the way, all your neighbors, all your coworkers, all the people you run around with, rub shoulders with, stand in line at Costco with and the DMV. All those people are going to



stand at the judgment before God, and they're all going to sit there and compare notes, apparently as it was in this context and say, "Hey, there are some who repented based on this amount of convincing. Some also repented based on this amount of convincing. And then there were some who had this kind of convincing with Jesus and they didn't repent." And they're going to go, "You guys are dumb. Dumb dumbs."

Verse 42. "The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment." Who? The queen of who? Where? What? Do you know that story Sunday school grads? Sheba. The bottom of Arabia. Probably modern-day Yemen. There's still debate historically about where exactly Sheba was, but somewhere down south, way along through the desert, down south in the 10th century B.C.. Solomon's on the throne. He's the guy who said to God when God said, "What do you want? You can get anything you want, carte blanche." And he says, "What I want is wisdom. I'm living in the shadow of my dad, the great military leader, David. And I am young. I'm inexperienced. I need wisdom to make these people, you know, cooperate and thrive. And I just need wisdom from you."

Just think about that. Right? God says, "That's amazing. You could have asked for riches and wealth and power. You've asked for wisdom. I'm going to grant you wisdom and it's going to come out of your ears. I'm giving you so much wisdom, and I'm going to give you riches and wealth and power and reputation. You get all that as well."

But think about that. Here he is asking for a virtuous thing and then God endows him with a kind of wisdom that has exceeded all the people of the Old Testament. The wisdom of Solomon. Sheba is an all-that girl way down south in Yemen, and she is the ruler of the area and everyone thought she was the greatest. She hears about the fame of Solomon and she travels all the way through the desert with her big retinue, with all this caravan. She comes all the way up to Israel, all the way up into Jerusalem, climbs up that steep mountain in Jerusalem and comes to the palace of Solomon. And she goes, "I hear you're all that up here, so let's hear what you got." And he unloads all the wisdom and she is overwhelmed. And the Queen of Sheba is like, "wow, you are super wise, super smart. Everything I heard was true."

The Queen of the South is going to rise up at the judgment. She's going to die, stand before her maker, which, of course, she has already died. She's going to stand before her maker at the judgment and she's going to look over the people in that generation who heard Jesus' wisdom and teaching and she is going to go, "You guys are so dumb." Right? You don't want to hear this guy preach? I went a long way to hear that guy preach and this guy is so much wiser than that guy. You get the analogy here. "For she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, someone greater than Solomon is here." Greater wisdom, greater compelling, convincing to repent. Right? All of that. Jonah. Solomon. Something greater.

Okay. We sit here 2,000 years later. Everyone in our neighborhoods, everyone in our generation is going to die and stand before God. And I just wonder what the people of any generation are going to think of what we have in terms of access to knowledge, wisdom, information from the Bible. Access certainly in South Orange County, California, to churches



that are preaching the gospel. Churches like this one that are holding out the wisdom of Christ, teaching verse by verse through the Bible, saying, here is the gospel and trying to persuasively, knowing the fear of God, persuade you to see Christ for who he is and put your trust in him and submit yourself to the Lordship of Christ. And that's what we're doing.

And they're going to go, "Wow!" I know they are going to say, "Hey, you may not have been front line when Christ was incarnate doing miracles and making the blind and the mute speak and see. But I'm telling you what, there's a lot you had there that should have convinced you that Jesus was the Christ. We have something greater than Solomon. We have something greater than Jonah. We have something greater than a lot of people. And I would say with all the breadth of knowledge from the apostolic library of the New Testament, we've got more than even the Pharisees and scribes had as they were sitting there watching the miracles of Christ.

Because we can watch them in the imagination of our minds, looking at the historical record of what Christ did and still say we have all of that, all the explanation of the redemption of Christ on a cross, all the implications of the New Testament of the resurrection of Christ, all of the facts of what was going on in the life, ministry, death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and all of his prophetic promises about the end of time, all of his preaching about the kingdom. We have all of that. And I'm going to say to your neighbor, your coworker who sits there and thinks about coming to church when you invite them, they have something so much greater that I think will make everyone else at the judgment, most everyone else, say I can't imagine you weren't convinced.

But let's start in verse 38. To say I want a sign, is that a bad thing? Well, it was clearly a bad thing because Jesus' response made it sound like a bad thing. But is it a bad thing? It's not a bad thing. We need to understand why. The variety of reasons why people want proof. Number one, "Know Why People Want Proof," and let's list some sub-points to answer the question. Know why people want proof. They want proof.

Well, number one, just by the nature of the demand. By the nature of the demand. Mark 1:22 says, "Jesus came preaching with an authority that the scribes and Pharisees did not have." And think about it. Even if you glance back up at verse 22 and following in that passage about the healing of this demon-oppressed guy who was blind and couldn't speak, they accused Jesus' miracles not to be by the power of the Holy Spirit, but by the power of Satan. And he says this: "Your sins will not be forgiven. If you attribute my miraculous signs that you just saw with your eyes, you attribute that to Satan and not the Holy Spirit, you will never be forgiven."

Now think about that. You're claiming that after I die, there are things that will not be forgiven. I am condemned. You're saying, "How do you know? Who are you to say that?" That's an amazing claim. Not to mention this. If you don't submit your life to Christ, if you do not bow your knee to Christ and confess that Jesus is Lord, you will be cast out of his presence into outer darkness where there's weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. If I say that to someone then it's like you better prove it.



In other words, if I said, listen, there's this guy named Jim Jones, he wants you to move to Guyana and he's got some Kool-Aid for you to drink and it would be really cool if you sell everything here, go with me down to Guyana and we'll make that happen. I hope you would say, "Well, you better give me some proof." In other words, if I say, "Jim Jones is Lord, he's boss, he's king, he's in charge. You better listen to him." Someone in the room ought to say, "Well, you better give me some proof. By the nature of the claim of authority that you say you got some insight into the afterlife, the point that my soul is basically hanging on my response to your message, you'd better give me proof." And Jesus expects to give people proof because of the nature of his claim.

And he says, I mean in the book of John, he says, "If you don't believe me for the words I'm saying, you better believe me because of the signs that I do." The signs are to authenticate the message. Matter of fact, there wasn't a prophet in the Bible who was coming into the timeline of biblical history and writing Scripture, who was not authenticating that message by the signs and wonders that he was enabled to do. And my point is, Jesus does not expect you to believe any, you know, authoritative claim without proof, of course.

So you can have at the very first level, why does someone want proof? If you say to your neighbor, Charles Taze Russell is boss, you better listen to him or your soul's in peril. Or Ellen G. White or, you know, whoever. If Joseph Smith, you better listen to him. He's got another testament of Jesus Christ that he is revealing to us through gold tablets. You better listen to him. You better say I need proof. That just makes perfect sense. The equation is too weighty, the authority is too strong. Your words are too extreme than for you to not have proof. Letter "A," why do people want proof? Because you should. You need proof. Of course, Jesus does not want you to take a leap into the darkness, even though people characterize Christianity that way. And you know that, right? They will say this is just a leap of faith. It's not a leap of faith in the darkness. This is an authenticated, rational message.

Paul starts talking about the afterlife before King Agrippa, and Festus says, "You're mad, you're out of your mind." Paul replies, "No, these are true and rational words," right? They comport with Scripture, they comport with facts, they comport with history, they comport with the testimony of eyewitnesses. No these are rational and true words. And he so cornered Festus and Agrippa that Agrippa is going, "Are you trying to convince me to become a Christian?" Yes, because it's rational and it's true. So we all need proof. No one should become a Christian without proof. Right? Some convincing. You need that.

Letter "B." People need proof not just to sit there like neutral beings deciding based on proof. They have something we would call a sin problem. And that sin problem makes them naturally adverse to saying Jesus is Lord. We have a problem that is so messed up in our lives that we are, the Bible would say this, Ephesians Chapter 2 verse 1, "Dead in our transgressions and sins."

And let me just put it this way. You're very much alive to yourself, right? You have a tendency to say, as every human being does, I want to call the shots for me. And what we're saying is, "Oh, Jesus, who is he? He's Lord, he's King, he's boss. He's got proof that he is that,



therefore you ought to submit to his Lordship." And people are saying, "I don't want to." And the reason we say we don't want to is because I'm a son of Adam or you're a daughter of Eve, and we are stuck in this situation where our propensity, our tendency, our penchant in life is to say, "I don't want anybody else being the boss of me, certainly not some person that maybe has a different agenda for me than I have for me."

We don't want to give up control of our lives. Sound familiar? Maybe in your testimony, maybe even the guy you're sharing the gospel with right now. "I don't want to lose that. I want to be in charge." And no one has to teach you that. Go work in the nursery. Go work in the nursery. You want to find out if they're wired that way, right? If your six-month-old was big enough to throw you in the closet, lock you in there, and say you're not coming out till you give me what I want, they would do it. Thankfully, God makes them very incapable at that age. They want to kill you. They want to hurt you. They want to destroy you. But they're so small and Grandma thinks they're so cute, but they are absolutely wired to demand what they want.

And you're just doing it as an adult. And I'm doing it as an adult, in a much more sophisticated way. But I still want to be the captain of my own soul and the master of my own fate. And I don't want anybody else being Lord over me but me. As Jesus put it, said it so well in that parable, "We do not want this man to rule over us." We don't want it. I want to rule over me. That's why, and I quote it all the time, Luke Chapter 14 verses 31, 32 and 33. These verses give us this picture of the fact that the whole point of Christianity is realizing you're not God and you have to now surrender to an army and a king that is bigger and stronger than you. And you have to, verse 33, "renounce all that you have." You're saying, I know that I cannot be God of my life.

The whole point is in category one, those who see the Lordship of Christ as legitimate, they're convinced of it, then they say he's boss, he's King, he's in charge, and I'm going to live now my life in submission to him. And we're motivated in part because I've got a sin problem that needs to be forgiven and Christ says he's done it for us as the "Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world." I got to submit my life to him. Okay. We need convincing and not just normal convincing. We need God-size convincing that sometimes comes in packages of human convincing. But we need God to do a work in our hearts to now make us people who say, okay, I surrender. So anybody, if I was neutral, would need proof to be able to say he's going to call the shots for me. Now I'm wired in to have no one else call the shots for me because I'm a sinner. Now I need, like, big convincing.

Let's go to the third level and get into the scribes and Pharisees, Letter "C." There's another problem that some people have when hit with convincing, with proof who say, "No, no, no, no. I don't care what you give to me, I'm going to call foul and say conspiracy and say, I don't care if I just saw it with my own eyes. Seeing is believing, but it's not, because for me, I'm absolutely in the grip of unbelief and I've doubled down and I now am willing to hang on to anything but the truth because I'm now fighting against this truth. I am suppressing the truth. You can put all the truth you want in front of me, and I'm going to suppress it, suppress it, suppress it. I'm going to become hostile toward the truth." And I might even say something



that sounds so contradictory is, "Hey, show me another sign and give me a sign. We wish to see a sign from you." Right?

And I've seen atheists do it in debates on stage. "Well, if God's real just strike me down. I mean, I want proof." But you don't want proof. You are entrenched as the speaker against the truth. And you don't want truth. And you would not believe truth. If you had a heart attack at that moment your wife would still say, "Well, he just had clogged arteries and so it wasn't God." Here's the point. You have people who God has turned over to their sin, Romans Chapter 1, who are so entrenched in it that no proof will be enough. And here are the scribes and Pharisees being the evil and adulterous generation, saying, I want a sign, I want a sign. I want a sign. I want a sign. They say they want a sign, but they don't want a sign.

And there are people, that's why they were not going to come to church when you invite them to church at Easter because there's no sense, they might come with their clipboard to critique it, but they have no interest in being convinced. They are doubled down in their unbelief. Do you follow what I'm saying? That's the scribes and Pharisees. So in the spectrum, and it's a very short spectrum here, just A, B and C, but from hey, if anyone were going to say they're going to be Lord, you better prove that you're Lord. Duh. To the Pharisees, "I don't care what you do, I will not believe you." To people who say, "Well, I am open to seeing what proof there is, but I got a problem in my heart, I do not want to submit to God." Right? We've got different categories here, and I just want to show you that people want proof and some people say they want proof, but they don't want proof because they're absolutely against it. They've been turned over, they give hearty approval to everyone who's fighting the truth.

People want proof. Well, they need proof. They say they want proof. Some actually need proof. You got neighbors who probably just need some proof. They probably never have even read all the way through the Bible. They know nothing about predictive prophecy. They know nothing about the historicity of the Bible. They know nothing about the transmission of the text. They don't know anything about why we know that the Old Testament is absolutely scientifically by factual artifacts of history was written before the New Testament. We know that. And if that's the case, we've still got to grapple with things like how does this book, unlike any other book, have these predictive prophecies that come true after it was written, hundreds of years after. I mean, we've got a God-sized problem here. God must have written this book. His fingerprints are all over it.

Even things like that, that there is a God who has revealed himself. All right, you can see how you become fools by denying the truth, as people do in their ardent and entrenched unbelief. So just you've got to look at the spectrum. People say, well, I just need some convincing. I could answer, I'm not saying I could, but let's just say I could answer every single intellectual, historical, philosophical question that your non-Christian coworker has. Absolutely everyone. And I sat down with him and I answered every question he or she has. If I said to you, "Do you think they'll become a Christian if I answer adequately every question they have," I think you'd be wise enough to, if you've been a Christian 5 minutes or more, you'd say, "No, I don't even think that would do it." Right? Because, you know the matter is not an intellectual one. The matter is a volitional one. And our volition is one that is not only bent toward doing wrong,



sometimes it's gone so far down the path of not believing the truth and not being fair about the evidence that they're entrenched in their unbelief and it doesn't matter.

They'll come up with whatever craziness they have to come up with to deny that God has spoken in his word, that it is his word, his communicate in writing, or that there is even a God. Right? Somehow we're just the debris from a cosmic explosion. There's no God behind any of this. And the Bible couldn't be more clear about people even denying nature itself in Romans Chapter 1, not that we're seeing any of that in the headlines these days. Wink, wink.

Jesus says, hey, that third group, "Evil and adulterous generation," verse 39, Matthew 12:39. "I'm not going to give a sign, except everybody's going to get this sign. The sign of the prophet Jonah. Three days. Three nights. Belly of a great fish. So the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," in a sepulcher, dead, professionally executed. The resurrection becomes, as Paul would say in First Corinthians 15, which God would say, is the predicate for the elements of the gospel. Right? The gospel itself he defines in First Corinthians 15 as I'll turn you to in your small groups this week, the whole point is it's predicated upon a living, resurrected Christ. If you take that out of the mix. We got a problem.

Every Easter, we have at least some discussion about that, the veracity, the truthfulness of that. And if the gospel is to be true and efficacious, if it's to have power to do anything to change my future, I've got to have a resurrected Christ. And so that becomes the bedrock. I even put some sermons on the back of your worksheet from past years of preaching through the historicity, the factual nature, the evidence-based discussion of is there proof for a resurrected Christ? Of course. It's been looked at from every angle. And we're like, okay, we're stuck with it. The preponderance, the overwhelming beyond reasonable doubt truth is that Christ was dead and now he's alive. If that's the case, then we have the foundation, the bedrock of something we should look at and say, if you want to sign, here's the greatest sign. The Christ of history is dead then alive. Okay.

I just want to show you that that comports with the realities of what we desperately need. Like the sign of Jonah. Jonah is a prophet who goes to Nineveh. And what does he go and preach to the Ninevites? Tell me out loud. What did he tell him to do? (audience says repent?) He doesn't tell him to do that. Sorry. I tried not to make you say it out loud to set you up, but, yeah. Read through the book of Jonah. It's never recorded that he says that. It says that they did do that, but the message that's recorded of Jonah, that it repeats over and over is this: "In 40 days you're going to be overthrown." The judgment of God is coming upon you.

Now, I know he didn't want them to repent. That's why he didn't go. But the message that's recorded in Jonah is you're going to be destroyed. Now, I just want you to think this through. They do exactly what Jonah doesn't want them to do. I'm thinking if he doesn't want them to do it, he's probably not going to be explicit about it, especially if the text of Jonah doesn't even say that he says that. But he goes in and he says you're going to be destroyed. Why? "Because the wages of sin is death." And that's written, by the way, upon the hearts of every human individual. Now, their conscience can be clouded, it can be seared, it can be poisoned, it can be cloudy and muddied. But the reality is that people know, just like when you do



something that no one sees and you know it's wrong, you feel bad about it even as a non-Christian, you felt bad about. It's called guilt.

Here he walks into Nineveh, the capital of Assyria where they're piling skulls of Israelites in northern Israel up in pyramids. These guys are killers and they're ruthless. And he walks in with the degradation of this empire and he says, "Repent." No, he doesn't. He says you're going to be destroyed. Well, again, you don't want to make a huge case about the absence of an argument from absence and silence. But let me just make this point. If I went into our society and said, "You guys are going to be judged, I think there will be some people in your neighborhood who've watched enough news headlines and read enough and seen enough and watch people chanting, you know, in state houses or claiming to take vengeance on our society, or, you know, claiming that the laws of nature are fantasy and seeing the perversion that's going on and the leaders of our country defending that, I think you'd have some people saying, "I get it." Right?

Because the nature of God as a backdrop, to speak of the wisdom of Solomon, that is embedded in human hearts, made in the image of God, that we have eternity in our hearts, and that the wages of sin is death. We ought to fear God and keep his commandments. That's the end of Ecclesiastes 12. They know that if we get judged, we understand it. We deserve it. Now, not everyone in society is going to see that. But if you go and say, hey, you got 40 days left and then everything's going to be destroyed by God, which is what Jonah says, I think you'd have some people go, "I need to fix this. I better change."

If in the days of Noah things are so bad and I go and I say, listen, everything's going to be destroyed. Right? I think some people, if they had any conscience left, if there was any common grace, they'd say, I need to do something about it. And a very few did. At least Noah convinced his family to get on the boat. But I'm just saying that makes sense, because of what he's saying. Judgment, it comports with their conscience and it comports with nature and they recognize there's an issue here. Just like if we send our people out this week and say to our culture what you're doing is wrong.

You're not going to come to Compass Bible Church and have some pastors patting you on the back saying, "Jesus loves you just the way you are. It's all fine. No big deal. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, plus Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. It's all great. He loves you. It's wonderful, loves you just like you are." Right? We can do that and lie to our generation. Or we can tell them the truth and have some people say, "Well, you know what? That's what I'm sensing in my conscience and our society's out of control. What do I need to do?" To say what they said in Acts 2. And we say, "Repent, you need to repent." And my point is we have to recognize that the resurrection of Christ from the dead ultimately is germane to that nub of what all of us by nature know.

I know that's a lot of talk. I haven't even given you the second point, but let me take you to Second Timothy Chapter 1, just to postpone the second point a little longer. Second Timothy Chapter 1. Is that what I said? Second Timothy Chapter 1. Let me tie this together because we're talking about Easter week, we're talking about the resurrection, we're talking about the problem of sin, we're talking about our culture that needs to repent. Do you think anyone



thinks our culture needs to repent? Individuals? Yes, we need to repent. We're out of control in the degradation of our society, whether it's the collapsing Egyptian culture, whether it's the collapsing Assyrian culture, the collapsing Babylonian culture, the collapsing nation of Judah, the collapsing Roman Empire, or the collapse of America, people need to repent. And now is our chance to talk about that, because repentance is based on an awareness of sin and its wages.

And here's what the resurrection is all about and one, because that comports with the core of people's conscience, I think you shouldn't be ashamed of it. And Timothy had a problem, and Paul points it out. Not just that he's young. That's not the problem. The problem is that he's timid and young people often are. They want to please their elders and please the people above them. Here's the deal. You can't be timid, Timothy. You have to give the message. Now, Paul is locked up in jail because he's not afraid to tell the truth. Timothy, just by inference in the book, is afraid to tell the truth. And sometimes he holds back and he's too timid. He's not bold.

Look what he says here in Second Timothy Chapter 1 verse 8, "Therefore," hey, Tim, "don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." And what did he say? He said, "You ought not fear the one who can kill the body and after that he can't do anything. You should fear the one who can kill the body and cast your soul into hell." Do you know that Jesus talked more about hell than he did about heaven? He's concerned about this: in 40 days, you're going to be overthrown. You're going to meet your maker. You're going to be cast into outer darkness where there's weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. He said that over and over again. The strongest evidence for the reality of a conscious hell comes from Jesus' own teaching. Right? But most people don't know that. They don't understand that.

And the reality is the testimony of our Lord, we need to speak up about what he taught. We need to recognize that if you hear his words and don't put them into practice you're like a fool who builds his house on the sand and the collapse is going to be great when the storm comes. And the greatest storm that's going to come is the storm of the Lord. That's what he keeps talking about. "Don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." Or of me because you think I'm so harsh and so hardcore. Like that pastor at Compass is always railing about hell. "Don't be ashamed ... but share in suffering for the gospel," the good news, "by the power of God," be strong and be willing to take a few hits, "who saved us," that seems like a gracious and wonderful and loving and merciful thing to do, "and called us to a holy calling."

And guess what? Holy, like we understand what gender means. We understand what nature teaches. We understand what ethics are. We understand what marriage is. Yeah. And that's a holy calling. We're not ashamed of it. We're going to proclaim it. Some mock us, "Oh, cause you're just better than we are. You think you're something special." No, "not because of our work, that's not why he saved us, "but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began." He planned this out. He plucked us from our own sin.



Verse 10, "which has now been manifest through the appearing of our Savior," that's what he came to do, "Christ Jesus, who abolished death." That's the concern. "Wages of sin is death." "He abolished death and brought life and immortality to light," that's the real problem I have is death, "to light through the gospel," the message, the good news, "for which I'm appointed as a teacher, a preacher, an apostle. I'm out there trying to get the message across, "which is why I suffer as I do." I'm not holding back on this, Paul says. "But I'm not ashamed," I don't want you to be ashamed, and I'm not ashamed.

I told you in verse 8 not to be ashamed. Don't be ashamed of Christ, his testimony. Don't be ashamed of me. "For I know who I believe, and I'm convinced that he's able to guard until that day," when the storm of the Lord comes, when he appears. When I got to stand before him, it's appointed once to man to die because of our sin, and then the judgment, and then it's whether or not I get eternal life or the second death. This is the big deal. "And I've entrusted my heart to him." I trusted him, I've bowed the knee to him.

Verse 13. "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you've heard from me, in faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." And it is love and loving for him to pluck us from our sin and the consequence of our sin, "by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you," not just the Spirit, but the message of the Spirit, which is the gospel of the forgiveness that "abolishes death and brings life and immortality to light." Every single coworker you have is going to die. Every single neighbor you have is going to die. Every family member that you have is going to die, Die, die, die, die. That's the problem and the promise of Genesis 3.

And now the question is, where are they going to be? What's going to happen after this life. And in their conscience everyone is enslaved up to a fear of death, the Bible says, they got to grapple with that. And we're giving the most loving message we can give them. Turn from your sin, trust Christ, submit yourself willingly in penitent faith to the Lordship of Christ. He's the King. Bow your knee to him because "one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess" and every forehead will be pressed on the concrete of the ground, saying, Jesus is Lord, but it'll be too late for those who don't do it now. Today's the day of salvation. Put your trust in him.

You shouldn't be ashamed of that message, because it really comports. That's the point. It is sympathetic with the conscience that says I really do suppress the truth in unrighteousness. And I really think can this really be going in a good direction, our country, really? Is this the liberation we want? Is this kind of progressive moralism really what we want to do, or is there a price to pay at the end of this road? Jonah comes on the scene and says, "You know what? I was thrown out of a boat, left for dead." But here's the thing. Christ was put into a grave because he bore the sins of every rebel on the planet who puts his trust in him, absorbs it completely so that they can be seen as forgiven. The resurrection of Christ all gets back to that. And this week we have a chance to say to our community, "Come and hear about what the resurrection is all about."



Number two. You got to "See the Resurrection as Ultimate Proof." In other words, Jesus says, "You don't need another magic show but every generation is going to get this. The sign of Jonah, which is the proof of the resurrection of Christ. They will date their checks by my life. Their contracts will have numbers on them that go back to me. And I am important, unlike every other religious leader because I died, I was buried and I rose bodily from the dead. And everything I said about myself was vindicated by that fact." That's the point. And you and I can't be ashamed of it when we say to our community this week, come and learn what that's all about.

Now, you can do that any day of the week, any time, any week of the year. But this week we get to team up at this. And what we want to do is say we have something greater than every other generation before Christ that had reason to see wisdom in God's teaching and the need to repent. And you can see the people, that's the last few verses here, 41 and 42. You can see the people of Nineveh rising up to say, "You guys had it so much better. You had so much more proof than we had."

And you can see the Queen of Sheba saying, "You didn't go listen to the wisdom of Christ that was articulated from pulpits across your country that have the truth of the apostles and Christ being articulated week after week? You didn't go to that? You didn't have time for that? You couldn't drive three miles? You couldn't give up golf for that? You couldn't give up your walk with your dog and your latte to go and hear that wisdom? What are you, a fool?" That's what the Queen of Sheba is going to say to Orange County residents. What are you, an idiot? Why aren't you going and hearing that?

And that wisdom that will lead you to see that God has sent his Son to "abolish death and to bring life and immortality to light through a message." There's wisdom in that. The wisdom that leads to salvation. And that's the point. You've got to get people in line with that wisdom. Number three, right? You've got to "Get Them to Christ's Compelling Wisdom." And it's better than Jonah's wisdom and it's better than Solomon's wisdom because it will lead you to clear repentance with the focal point of your faith in Jesus Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords. And you ought to stop doing your business according to what you think is best, and you ought to run your business according to the principles and the truth and the ethics and the godliness of God's word.

You should stop raising your kids according to whatever you learn in your book or your favorite podcast, and you ought to do it according to what God's word says. You ought to stop doing your marriage the way you think it ought to be done, and you ought to do it the way that God says everything about life needs to be submitted to the Lordship of Christ and the wisdom that is so compelling, that is available in pulpits and platforms and in the printed word that you carry around in your Bibles, the people need to need it. And there are people you work with and rub shoulders with every single week and they've never even read the book. They don't know anything about it.

And this week we've got a bunch of things going on, and the truth that they need is going to be hanging right there. And they can see it. They can hear it. It's in English. They get to know



it. The pastor is a little crazy, but there's truth being dispensed from the platform. And you and I can team together to get them in line with that. And here's the thing. It probably won't happen with one message. Maybe it will. I don't know. I don't know if God's gotten them right. If the harvest is white in that guy's life, in that woman's life, I don't know. But I'll tell you what, there's something about hearing the light of the wisdom of God being articulated verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book that sometimes hooks these people into saying, "Man, I'm starting to have ears to hear. I'm starting to have eyes to see."

And they're getting drawn to Christ as Christ is lifted up and the truth of a crucified Christ is presented before them and they start, and it takes ten sermons, 25 sermons, 50 sermons. You sitting down with them at a coffee shop, reading through the book of Luke. You sitting there thinking through what it means to be saved because you got an open Partner's Manual in front of you. Something, reading a book together from the bookstore that helps you understand what the gospels are saying. And they are having that understood through your word, your testimony, my sermons, the Scripture itself, God's Spirit drawing. And maybe six months from now, eight months from now, ten months from now, or two years from now, they submit their lives willingly, by God's grace to the Lordship of Christ.

But you've got to get them in line. As the old Puritans said, you've got to give them the means of grace. And the means of grace is the church assembled, preaching the word of God week in and week out, they're right there in the main highway where the Mack Truck of Truth is coming down the road to plow them down out of their old ways of denying the truth and now embracing the gospel. We just need to do some work to get them here. That's all I'm saying.

They need the truth. They need preaching. They need the Bible. They need your discussion so that they might reach repentance. Because I'll tell you what, they got more going for them just down the street from where they live, just down the street from where they work than the Ninevites, than the Queen of Sheba. I'm just telling you, we got the answers here. It doesn't mean we know it all, we're not saying, hey, we got it because of our works. God, look from heaven, he looked for the best people and picked us. Actually, he picked a lot of weird people to represent the truth. But we're here and we have the words of life, and we can offer them and extend them to our community.

Now, my goal most of the time, most of the time, and I mean this and some people think. "Well, the pastor can't say anything except the stuff that's in the Bible." Look, my ultimate authority as Paul said to Titus is for me to echo and repeat and articulate and explain and help you apply what God has said in his word. Right? That's the ultimate authority. As Paul said to Titus, he said, "You got to teach these things with all authority and let no one disregard you." That's why I can get all worked up on the platform about biblical truth, and I can just jam it out there. And I can say this: "You better not ignore this."

Okay. So most of the time that's the main job description of my life. Okay? Sometimes, though, as the pastor of the church, I step into a role of saying, hey, let's see if we can do this. Right? Let's together decide to do this. And today is one of those days. I'd like to ask you. And again, you can go, "I can't. I'm not going to do that." Well talk... take it up with God. Right?



Say, I didn't listen to my pastor. Great. But your pastor is going to ask you to do three things, okay? I want you to do three things. I'm asking not just as a dude on the patio. I'm asking you as your pastor, which carries some authority and it should. And I'm saying, yeah, you can disregard it, right? And you're not disregarding God. And yet God says you should listen to your pastor. So I'm just saying you can gamble with that saying it's ridiculous, I'm not going to do it. I don't know. That's way too much intro to these three things. It's not Guyana or Kool-Aid. It's just three things. Okay?

Number one, this week, it's Sunday, so you can do it today, tomorrow, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. You got five days to do this first thing. I'm asking you, please do these things. The first thing is this. I want you to take a, here's what I'll call it, people have called it, a prayer walk. A prayer walk. Now, some of you walk, some of you run. Slow down and just walk. That's what I want you to do. I want you to walk. And I don't want you to take a circuit and go, "I can walk three miles. That's what I like to do anyway." Don't make a circuit. I want you to zigzag through your neighborhood, walk, zigzagging through your neighborhood. "Well, I'm too important. I'm a CEO. I have no time to walk." Great. Do you get a lunch break? You're the CEO. Take a lunch break. Walk through your business park, walk through the apartments that are across from a business park. Walk. Take a walk and pray.

Now, you don't have to do this by yourself. As a matter of fact, as long as I'm making rules here, right? You can do it with another person. You can do it with two of your friends. Or you can do it with three of your friends. So up to four people. You can do it yourself. Do it with someone, do it with your spouse, whatever. Do it with someone. Take a prayer walk. I want you to walk through those neighborhoods and I want you to pray about what we just preached about. Right? That there is a Christ. He is in charge. Every knee is going to bow, every tongue is going to confess. And you want them to confess and bow now. So I just want you to pray. I want you to pray.

There are all kinds of things to pray as you're going through your neighborhood, right? I want you to look at those houses. People live in those houses, people who are made in the image of God. And as Lewis said, they are going to be something that you have no idea. They're going to live eternally in one place or another. They're souls, right? They are people who are going to exist forever. And I want you to pray as you're passing their houses. And I want you to pray that they will be saved, that God will save them. That's all I want you to do. Pray about that. Pray that they'll come in contact with Christ's wisdom. Pray that they'll one day understand and one day soon understand that the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ. Pray that someone will come into their life and give them the message of the gospel. Pray that their hearts will be soft and pray that their eyes will be open. Just pray.

If you're walking with a friend, just pray. Pray out loud. Pray. Just go back and forth and pray and ask God to bring them to repentance and faith. Our communities need that. And I mean, you'll feel like, I don't know, you're in the book of Judges walking around Jericho or something. Right? But the weapons of our warfare are not to walk to make the houses fall down. Right? It's to bring down the arguments that raise themselves up against the knowledge of God.



And while you're at it, it wouldn't be bad to pray for some common grace in our community because we need it now more than ever. Pray that God would restrain evil. Pray that people in those homes would be married and stay married. Pray that the parents wouldn't abuse their kids. Right? Pray that the kids will obey their parents. Pray that they have honest work. They won't cheat at work. They'll do the right things. They'll pay their taxes. Pray for them. And I want you to just to walk. You can walk a mile. Great. Zigzag for a mile. Walk for two, walk for three, walk for five. Just take a prayer walk either today, tomorrow, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.

And by the way, pray that some of them might come to our church to hear the gospel and if not our church another church that is actually preaching the gospel and not just, you know, the mammy-pamby like it's all great, Jesus loves the way you are, there is no big deal. You don't need to repent. We need a church that is preaching the gospel. So pray that they'll get there. Okay? Is the first one clear? One prayer walk. If you take five, Great. Take ten. Fine. I'm just asking for one as your pastor.

Number two. I want you to invite three people to church this week. I mean, three people. Find three people. I mean, you don't live in a hole, right? You're not a hermit. You know three people who probably do not come to this church, who don't go to church, who don't know Christ. I want you to ask them to come. We've got EGGstravaganza. Do you want to talk about a low bar? Dude, that's just putting the welcome mat out for our church. Have them come. If they got young kids? Perfect.

Invite them to Good Friday, which is primarily designed for Christians. And yet we're talking about the death of Christ. And you know, has anyone been to Good Friday? The pastor does weird things on Good Friday, memorable things. Right? I've got some memorable things. This could be the worst one ever. Don't applaud. You could say, what was he thinking? Invite your friends. It's going to be great. "Well... it's usually better than that." We're working hard on it. We're going to unveil it on Friday. Three services. Great even for non-Christians. We're going to describe what Christ did on the cross.

And then Saturday night and two Sunday morning services, Right? It's kind of full here now. We got overflow. Right? If you get skunked and none of your visitors come, we send you to the overflow and we get all of our guests in this room Saturday at five, Sunday at nine, Sunday at 11. Please invite three people in. It's not like, "Hey, you know, I don't know the pastor says you might come to church. Do you want to come? Oh, you're busy. Okay." That's not how to invite someone to church. You should read Second Corinthians 5 before you invite someone to church. "Knowing the fear of God, therefore, we persuade men." Right? "As though God were making his appeal through us, we beseech you." Have you used the word beseech lately? Probably not. We beseech you, we beg you be reconciled to God.

If there's ever a time for you to lean forward in a conversation and say to a friend of yours, would you please come to church? "I don't know. I'll think about it." "No, please, would you please come? I'd really like you to come." It'd be on a weekend where all the programs are



designed for them. Usually our programs are designed to strengthen disciples and send you out to live the Christian life. Evangelize. We have these services along with some Christmas services, but these services on Easter that are designed to present the gospel to them and the reason for Christ rising from the dead. Invite them and if you feel like, "I'm losing all self-respect, I'm begging them." Perfect. Right? Beg them to come. Okay. Three people. Invite to bring them, invite to drive them. Just invite three people. Can you do that? Three people, One prayer walk, three invites.

Here's the third thing. Right? And if you're really timid, this may be the only one you'll do. Right? But five cards that are invite cards. We got a big table out there. A big stack of them. Take five of them at least. Right? And just put them on someone's front door or on the porch. You can put them on a plate of cookies that you baked. I don't know. Do something. My wife has already done her baking and all that to give this to our neighbors. We do it every year. Take five of them. That's all I'm asking. Five. It doesn't have to be your immediate neighbors. You can run into somebody else's neighborhood with a ski mask on at midnight and just drop it off and run away. Have your Timothy moment. You can do that.

By the way, very economical. A lot of churches spend a lot of money mailing all these things out. Right? I'm looking right here at the USPS. You guys just go and put it on their front porch. Or if they've got a mailbox, don't put it in it. Right? That's not legal, but put it on it, whatever, put it next to it. Just five. That's all, five. I'm preaching to hundreds and hundreds of people this weekend. And if everyone did that, man, we would blanket your neighborhoods, our areas with that. Right? Those cards have been printed. Our printers have been working overtime to get those cards ready. So take at least five. And since this is the last service make sure we're cleaned out by the end of the patio time.

So one prayer walk between now and Thursday, right? Three invites between now and Thursday. Right? And then put those cards out between now and Thursday. You do those three things and I'm just asking you as your pastor, if I'm your pastor, if I'm not your pastor then fine, whatever. Don't do any of this. But if I'm your pastor and this is your church, I'm just asking you, please, to do this. Every couple of years, we're sending hundreds of people off to plant churches. You know that, right? I said the day we moved into this building, some of you were here back then, I said, if we do not use this campus we'll lose it. God will give it to someone else who will. So we want to use this place. And every couple of years, every 24 months, we're sending chunks of people, some of our highly committed people, out to these other churches. Right? To Boise, to Huntington Beach, to Tustin, to Texas, and off they go.

It just gives us space to do our work, which is to tell people the wisdom of Christ that they might come to repentance, put their trust in Christ, and join the group of people who are willingly bowing their knee to Christ, seeking to live under the Lordship of Christ with a penitent faith. That's what our church is all about. Let's get at it this week. We've got some great opportunities.

Let's pray. God, please, for your sake, not for ours, and if not our church, God, we're fine with that. Other churches that are preaching the gospel, please fill the churches in this decadent,



deceived, misled, sin-approving culture that we live in. May we pull the remnant, pluck people from this culture and be able to show them the wisdom of Christ, the power of God, the grace of God, the love of Christ to lay down his life for us, his friends. To bring the power of the abolition of death and to bring immortality and life to light through this one message that we have a chance to offer to this world.

God, we talk about world missions, we can think about the world at large and we can think about human history. But we are on the timeline right now. We live in this place. This is our place to do the things that we know because of experience, most of us in this room, saves our soul. We know it because you've said it and we've experienced it, and we understand what it is to be forgiven as hard as it is in our fallen bodies to live under the Lordship of Christ. We know there's no better place to be because one day you're going to come, Jesus, in the glory of your Father with the holy angels with you, and you're going to divide this world into two groups, two categories, and that's all there is. And God, we pray, I pray as an evangelical preacher and I pray that this church as an evangelical church would pray and work to see that first category expanded. May it expand this week.

In Jesus name, Amen.