

All in a Days Work

by Alistair Begg

Jesus' teaching had authority and power, and it was a direct correlation to the power of God displayed in his miracles.

Duration: 44:02

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 4:14-44

Topics: "Jesus Ministry", "Kingdom Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker describes four scenes from the life of Jesus, focusing on his ministry of preaching and healing. The first scene takes place in a synagogue, where Jesus proclaims his authority and the arrival of the kingdom of God. The second scene occurs in Simon's home, where Jesus heals a woman and demonstrates his power over sickness. The third scene depicts Jesus preaching to a crowd at sunset, calling sinners to believe in him and announcing the kingdom. The final scene shows Jesus leaving the crowd and continuing his mission to proclaim the good news and train his disciples. Throughout these scenes, the speaker emphasizes that Jesus came to fulfill his purpose and calls believers to do the same.

Transcript

We're going to read together in our continuing studies in the Gospel of Luke from the fourth chapter. We're going to be reading from the thirty-first verse, Luke chapter 4, verse 31, through to the end of the chapter. Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people.

They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority. In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God.

Be quiet, Jesus said sternly. Come out of him. Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

All the people were amazed and said to each other, What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits, and they come out. And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area. Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon.

Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, You're the Son of God! But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ. At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place.

The people were looking for him, and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. But he said, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent. And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Amen. Gracious Father, with our Bibles open upon our laps, we come to ask that you, by the Holy Spirit, will be our teacher. We come with a sense of expectation--not that we would be stirred by the voice of a mere man, but that we would be encountered by the voice of the living God through human instrumentation, by the Spirit, through the Bible.

Will you meet us in the midst of these moments of study, as you have promised in your Word to do? For Jesus' sake we ask it. Amen. Jesus was an awesome preacher.

We can say that quite categorically, and in the strictest sense of the word, before it became valued in the San Fernando Valley and then spread eastward throughout the United States of America. Jesus was an awesome preacher. His message inspired reverential fear and reverential wonder.

His listeners were astonished at the power behind his teaching, and his words had a ring of authority that was not matched by that which they were used to hearing as they listened to the sermons of the religious leaders of their day. Luke tells us that on account of this preaching mission of Jesus, the synagogues were buzzing. We noted this last time in Nazareth.

We saw that far from being asleep by the time the sermon ended, the congregation in Nazareth was concerned to drive Jesus out and to throw him over a cliff if they could. In contrast, the silence that seems to be apparent here in the synagogue in Capernaum testifies again to the same striking, powerful authority of the Lord Jesus. These individuals had been falling asleep listening to the scribes and the Pharisees.

They had never had an original thought in their minds. They were always trotting out other people's news. Their sermons were like porridge that had been kept over a long period of time--that is, oatmeal to you--kept over a long period of time somewhere and was heated up every so often.

And oatmeal may not be particularly desirable, even on the day in which it was made, but I can guarantee you that kept over a period of time only to be reheated, it is not particularly palatable. And that was the kind of material that they were being served up as they went to the synagogue. They were familiar with sermons that started poorly and got worse as they went along.

They listened to talks about God, they listened to religious talks, and these talks were trivial, they were legalistic, they were joyless, they were weightless, and they were boring. And that is not something unique to the first century, because many of us have had a real fill of those kind of sermons. And frankly, we're sitting here this morning--or standing here this morning--wondering if we're about to have another one.

Is what we're about to hear going to be simply trivial, legalistic, joyless, weightless, and boring? Because one of the people don't like preaching is because that is largely how it is characterized. So it's hardly surprising to read that when Jesus spoke, it put these individuals on the edge of their seats. Here they were listening to material that was theologically accurate and was immediately applicable.

The sermons of Jesus were lively, they were authoritative, well-organized, practical, interesting, and they were true. None of us, if we had been present to hear him preach, would have left the synagogue saying to one another, I wonder what it was that Jesus was trying to say? Because Jesus was actually never trying to say anything. He was always saying something.

And when people heard him say it, they knew that it demanded their attention and also that it demanded a response. And it is, loved ones, with that kind of conviction that I come to our week-by-week study of the Scriptures. It is a conviction that runs through the totality of Parkside Church--that when God's voice is truly heard, you will find their dependence upon the Spirit of God and the offering up of the Word of God.

So it's hardly surprising that the news about Jesus, as Luke tells us, was spreading in ever-widening, concentric circles throughout the area. Look, for example, at 4.4. And the news about him spread throughout the whole countryside. Verse 37.

And the news about him spread through the surrounding area. Verse 15 of chapter 5. And the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. Now, there is something very moving about the way in which Luke is describing for us what is an unfolding drama.

And the earthly ministry of Jesus in these early days might be likened to the unfolding drama that may be contained in a play. And if so, what we're dealing with here in these early chapters is act 1. And act 1 has within it a number of scenes. And Luke brings these scenes before his readers in order that we may be in no doubt concerning the identity of Christ, nor concerning his authority or his victory over the powers of heaven and earth.

And largely what we have in these concluding verses of chapter 4 comprises a day in the life of Christ. I called my study this morning, in my own notes, all in a day's work. Because as I read and reread this passage, it struck me that people would perhaps have said to Jesus what they often say to us.

If they're inquiring about our employment, what we do, they may say, Tell me what an average day for you is like. I get that question. I know my colleagues do as well.

We sometimes are fearful that it is because you think we only work one day of the week, and you have only the foggiest notion of what we might do in the remaining six. And so, I try my best to explain what's going on. But if we'd said to Jesus, Give us an indication of what you do in an average day, what would he have said? Well, he may have said, Well, I avoid being stoned--that's one of the things that I do.

I try and make sure that I'm not thrown over any cliffs. I cast out a few demons. I heal people.

I preach. And eventually, before the twenty-four hours runs out on me, I try to get five minutes to myself. But it's really all in a day's work.

Will you look with me, then, at this day's work, as I describe it for us, in four scenes? I will spend longer on the first scene than on the remaining three, which will be no surprise to those of you who are regularly

here. Scene 1 is found in verse 31 through verse 35 and takes place in the synagogue. Scene 1 in the synagogue.

Now, synagogues had arisen during the exilic period of the people of God--that is, some six hundred years before Christ. They were away from Jerusalem, away from the temple, and in captivity. And in their captivity, they began to band together as groups, and those groups were described as the synagogue.

As time passed, synagogue came to describe the building in which the groups met rather than the groups themselves. And the synagogue buildings were very straightforward. They contained a movable chest, or an ark, if you like, which was a container for the law and the prophets.

That chest would be set up directly opposite the entryway to the synagogue building. When the readers of the law and the prophets read, they came and stood on a central and basic platform. And the very basic structure of the building itself helped to reinforce the purpose for which the congregation had gathered.

I want to say that again, and then I want to pause with it for a moment. The very basic structure of the building itself helped to reinforce the purpose for which the congregation had gathered. Architecture is not neutral.

You need only talk to an architect to find that out. And for us to suggest that it may be is to incur their wrath. They will tell us, you're a Philistine if you think the same.

You are lacking in insight and understanding. And there is no question that I am, and many others of us too. But when it comes to the architecture of, for example, a building like this and a room like this in which we gather, things have not been left to happenstance.

And individuals frequently ask me, Why is there so little in this room? It seems bereft of the kind of things that would make a worship experience what it ought to be. And I understand that by dint of background, people come with various expectations. But the very simplicity of this place is not by default, it is rather by design.

In order that we might at least try to emphasize in this place, in a way that will be markedly different in the Commons area when it opens in August or so--in a way that is markedly different--we want to say in gathering here just exactly what it is we're anticipating happening. And in order to reinforce this, I would like to quote, and let me explain why I'm quoting myself, but I'm quoting from something that I've just recently completed for Crossway Books on expository preaching. The reason that I'm quoting it is not to impress you by quoting myself--I know better than that--but in order to safeguard our time, because if I relay this event extemporaneously, I'm sure I will take longer than if I read the event.

So since I've written it down, this keeps me brief. And it reads as follows--it's in the middle of a chapter. Pulpits are for preachers.

We build stages for performers. Some years ago, I enjoyed the privilege of speaking at a convention in Hong Kong. The meetings were held in an Anglican church, which had a pulpit we did not use.

The organizers felt that it would be best if we were not to be six feet above contradiction, but down on the level with the people. So they provided a lectern to hold the preacher's Bible as he spoke. I was sharing the event with a kindly older man whom I had never met prior to the convention.

We both spoke each morning, taking turns in going first. When he began, his first action was to pick up the small lectern and move it off to the side, where it could neither impede his movement nor create the impression that he was preaching to the people. Instead, he was delivering a talk, and he was concerned that the listeners should relax and benefit from his conversational style.

When it came time for me to preach, my first action was to rescue the lectern and put it back in its central place for the occasion. The congregation laughed as this pattern repeated itself over the course of some five days. I would stand up and use it, my colleague would immediately remove it.

Before the week was out, there were two incidents which may or may not have been related. First, I explained to the congregation that the reason why I replaced the lectern each time was not simply that I might have a place for my Bible, but because I did not want to forego the symbolism that was represented in having a central pulpit with the Word of God and pride of place. After all, I observed, if the preacher were to fall down or disappear, then the congregation would still be left with its focus on the right place--namely, the Scriptures.

I know that my preaching partner did not take this as a personal rebuke, which is what made the second incident all the more telling. A day or two later, he confided to me that he felt that he had lost any real sense of passion or power in the delivery of his message. It was very humbling for me as a young man to sit and listen as he poured out his heart and with tears reflected upon this diminished zeal.

It's far too simplistic to suggest that his removal of the podium each time he spoke was a symbol of a faltering conviction regarding the priority and power of Scripture, but I have a suspicion that its removal was more than simply a matter of style or personal preference. The layout of many contemporary church buildings, including our own, at least flirts with the danger of creating the impression that we have come to hear from man rather than to meet with God. When churches or pastors begin to think of the place from which messages are delivered as being a stage, then the congregation will expect to be entertained, and the preacher will be under the dreadful, dreadful burden of trying to become an entertainer.

What was it about this synagogue that made everybody excited? Nothing. What was it about the way that Jesus looked? Nothing. What was it, then, that put the people on the edge of their seats? It was the power and authority of his proclamation.

He simply took the scrolls, he took the law and the prophets, and he made much of what was there. I found it very, very interesting, as I studied this week, to reflect upon the fact that on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the voice of the Father is heard from heaven concerning his Son, he says from heaven, This is my beloved Son, and then what is the verb? Listen to him. He doesn't say, This is my beloved Son--as he may have said--worship, love, follow, obey, trust, honor him.

He says, This is my beloved Son, and I want you to listen to him. What he has to say is of crucial importance. It is that same truth that dawns when we fast-forward the video to the very end of Luke's Gospel, and we hear the men on Emmaus Road talking with one another after Christ has been made known to them.

And what they reflect on is not what they saw but what they heard. This is what they said. Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us? And on another occasion, when the Pharisees inquire of the guards why it is that they never arrested Jesus as they had been sent to do, the guards respond by saying, No one ever spoke the way this man does.

The words of Jesus gripped the minds of his listeners, reached their consciences, and stirred their hearts with a laser-like directness. And as the congregation sat rapt in attention, listening to him speak, how amazing it must have been, into the silence the voice of a man, Ha! What are you doing, Jesus? Why have you come to us? We know who you are. You're the holy one of God.

People looking over their shoulders, in the way that people do in the cinema when somebody rustles a bag of candies, or when their cellular phone goes off, saying, Who brought this character, and what's he all about? And this man is demon-possessed, Luke tells us. And Jesus doesn't engage him in dialogue. He simply delivers him.

Two terse statements, and the demon is out of him. Two straightforward words display the power and the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who has decisively repelled the advances of the evil one in the temptation on the mountainside discovers with no amazement that the devil seeks to bring all of his minions now to bear upon his agenda, which is to hamper and to hinder the proclaiming of the news of the kingdom of God.

So Jesus, as he stands with power and authority, encounters this great cosmic battle. And notice how he responds to it. It's a small surprise that the devil should choose to use demonic possession as one of the means of opposing the establishing of God's kingdom.

John tells us that part of the reason for Christ's coming in 1 John 3, 8 was that he might destroy the devil's work. Oh, you say, doesn't it say here that he came in order that he might preach the gospel? Yes, the two things are virtually synonymous. It is in the preaching of the good news of the kingdom, as we saw earlier in the chapter, that the work of transformation and liberation is performed--that there is sight for the blind, there is freedom for the prisoner, there is release for the oppressed.

And it is in the Word of God. Now, when you read your Bibles, you will discover, as you read even through Luke's Gospel, that demonic possession is all over the place, and Jesus delivers people with frequency from the power of these evil spirits. And every time that Jesus casts out an evil spirit, it is anticipating the ultimate overthrow of Satan's kingdom.

Because there is going to come a day when finally the evil one and all of his minions will be cast down into hell. There is no question that the victory is Christ's. This is not dualism.

This is not some cosmic struggle between the power of God and the power of the devil. The devil is a defeated foe. But still, in the economy and providence of God, he works his purposes through.

And here Jesus says, Listen, I want you folks, as you see this, to understand who I am and why I came. And so the demon throws the man down but is unable to injure the man. And look at the reaction of the people in verse 36.

They were all amazed, and they said to one another, What is this teaching? Isn't that interesting? What is this teaching? I found it interesting this week. At least I don't know about you. We might have anticipated that he would say something else--that this would be a diversion from the teaching.

That he would see, if you like, his healings and his exorcisms as something over and apart from the teaching of the Word of God. But no! They understand that there is a direct correlation between the proclamation of God's truth and the power of God displayed in these dramatic ways. What is this teaching, they said? With authority and power, he gives orders to evil spirits, and they come out.

It's akin to the response of the disciples. Remember, when the storm comes up on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus is asleep in the stern, and they decide that it is important now for them to wake Jesus up and to let him know that they're all about to go to the bottom of the Sea of Galilee. No, I'm not gonna shake him, you shake him.

No, you shake him, I'll shake him. Oh, fine, I'll shake him. Excuse me, Jesus, we just want to let you know that the thing's about to go down, and we wanted to know, frankly, if you care, that we're all about to drown.

Jesus stands up, rubs his eyes, looks out on the sea, and he goes, Okay, cut it out. And immediately the sea became calm, and the keel of the boat was settled in the water. And what did they say? The same kind of response as you have here in verse 37.

What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the waves obey him? Now, this is what Luke is establishing, you see. People are asking, Who is this Jesus, as they're asking today? Is Jesus just one of the other religious teachers on the planet? Is this just somebody who came and adds his ten cents, as it were, to the opportunities of religious experience? No! This is God come on earth! How would we know that it is God? How would we know that he is the King? Because he exercises his kingly rule. Where? Everywhere! Over what? Over everything! People said, I've been coming to this synagogue for a while, but I never heard one of these sermons in my life.

Now, it's interesting that while the people wondered in verse 36 and 37--and they were essentially saying, Who is this?--the demons were in no doubt about who he is. Because, as James tells us, the demons believe, and they shudder. The hosts of hell understand who Jesus is.

They have an orthodox view of the Bible, if you like. They have an orthodox view of the Trinity. And they know that only destruction awaits them.

Well, that's the first scene. Let me go to the second scene with you, which moves from the synagogue to the home of Simon, verse 38. Just in the same way as you and I will look forward to having lunch together with someone somewhere, and perhaps in a home, so at the end of the Sabbath worship, they would be looking forward to going off for a meal.

Where do you want to go to get a Sabbath meal? They might have said to one another, and Simon Peter volunteered. He said, Why don't you come over to my house? There's no mention of his wife, incidentally. I don't know where she was.

Perhaps off for the weekend. But his mother-in-law is present, and he must have said, My mother-in-law will be able to take care of things for us. Incidentally and in passing, I can't miss the opportunity, somewhat naughtily, to point out that this is rather inconvenient information for some.

What is that information? Well, it identifies Simon Peter's mother-in-law. Who is Simon Peter? Apparently the first pope. Who established celibacy, apparently.

Rather inconvenient, this, isn't it? We're in the home of Peter, and it's his mother-in-law who's lying sick with a fever. Luke says it's a high fever. I believe him.

He's a doctor. He knows the difference between a fever and a high fever. A fever, your mother puts her hand on your forehead and says, Go to school.

I don't want to hear your nonsense. A high fever, even brushing your teeth, is like having a troop of soldiers march through your head. So a high fever lays you on the floor.

And apparently she was either on the floor or she was in her bed, because we're told that Jesus bent down over her, and he rebuked the fever, and it left her. Apparently they were anticipating lunch. They come up the path, there's no indication of lunch.

There's no fragrance coming from the--there's no smell of pot roast or anything. There's no chicken on the grill, as it were. And when they get inside the house, it's obvious that things are not as they had anticipated them.

The table is not set, there is no preparation being made, and eventually somebody goes through and comes back out and says, Hey, bad news, my mother-in-law is absolutely--she's flat out. She's useless. That was a comment on her sickness, not a generic statement about mother-in-laws.

Although shame on all of you who snickered when I mentioned it in that way, because the thought had never crossed my mind. And that's the truth. And so, Jesus, we'd like you to help her if you could.

And help her he does. And he rebukes the fever, and it leaves her. And the end of verse 39 is an indication of how quickly and how completely she was transformed.

She got up at once and began to wait on them. The power of Christ is such that in verse 35 the demon instantly obeys, and the power of Christ is such that in verse 39 the fever immediately leaves. And I'm sure that's the significance of the sentence.

There may be some indication that what she does in the preparation of a meal is an indication of gratitude, but it is certainly this. It is an indication of the fact that it wasn't that. She was lying in her bed, and she wasn't feeling too good, and Jesus went over and said, Hey, we just came from the Sabbath services, and I'm sorry to hear that you're not feeling so bad, and I hope you'll feel better as the day goes on.

And eventually, somewhere in the middle of the afternoon, she drags her sorry carcass out of the bedroom, and she comes through and says, Would anyone like soup or anything? No, it's not that. It is, here's a lady, and she is useless. And then here's a lady, and she's going, Okay, what are we gonna eat? Did you ever have the flu? Yeah, of course you did.

You know that feeling. You know your legs are like lead, your head is like the size of a medicine ball, your arms ache. You're just useless.

And it takes a while to come through that. Jesus comes and says, Okay, let's go. And immediately, the fever having left her, she got up, and she hastened out into the community to talk about the fact that she had been healed.

No. She got up at once, and she began to wait on death. The impact of the power of Christ in an individual's life is so clearly--and I don't want to be guilty of playing with the text here--but it's so clearly, not only here in this little vignette but everywhere, it is that he intervenes in our lives, not so that we may go out so much and talk about the intervention, as that we might do that for which we've been created.

And let me say a word to those of you who share in the strategic ministry of a home, who share in the ministry of a stove and a cooker, who share there at the very heart of humanity, and who are tempted from

time to time by the pressure of the world and others around you to believe that somehow or another all of your days and all of your deeds are marginal, and if something dramatic could happen to you, then perhaps you could write a book about it, or you could go on Christian television, and you could talk about it, and it would be so wonderful. You would be the lady from Capernaum who was once sick with a high fever, and now you're healed and read all about it. Such a snare! No, when Jesus comes, he comes and picks us up in order that we might get on and do that for which we've been created.

There's more in that scene, but I must go. Scene 3, verse 40. Scene 1 in the synagogue with the people listening.

Scene 2 in Simon's home with the lady being healed. Scene 3 at sunset with the crowds gathering. You get this picture, don't you? And forgive me, I'm thinking in dramatic terms or in terms of a film.

I don't know what my problem is, always thinking about films or camera lenses. But it seems to me that the camera crew would say, Now, if we're going to shoot this, we're going to need a different kind of lens. The light is gone.

It's not as it was in the synagogue. It's not the way it was in Simon's home. And let's make sure that we get this, because this is dramatic.

And you get the picture of the sun going down. It's the end of the day, and just the time when Jesus and others might legitimately have said, Why don't we make a run for it and get out of here before anybody else finds us? Just at that moment, they were bringing all kinds of people to Jesus, and he was dealing with their sicknesses, and demons were coming out of many people. Now, what is happening here is directly related to the words of Jesus in his sermon previously in Nazareth.

Because at the end of his quote from Isaiah, he had said that he was proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor. That passed over the heads of many of us. Those of us who thought about it for a moment or two realized that the year of Jubilee was, in Old Testament terms, an event that happened every fifty years.

And so, every fifty years, debts were canceled, slaves were freed, the land lay fallow for a year, and everything was essentially rejuvenated. Jesus reads that prophecy, and he says, I want you to know that you're not going to have to wait fifty years for the next year of Jubilee. In fact, you're not even going to have to wait fifty seconds, because the year of Jubilee is now.

It's absolutely now. It has come. My preaching has authority.

My word has exercising power. My touch is able to heal all. The Messianic age has dawned.

Eventually it will find its fulfillment, when the lion will lie down with the lamb. But the events that are now taking place, as recorded by Luke, are indications of the fact that the King is here, and his kingship is being manifested. Now, the apostles understood that by the time that Peter is explaining things in the home of Cornelius in Acts chapter 10.

This is exactly what he's saying. Let me quote this. You needn't turn to it, but you can find it later for your homework.

Acts chapter 10, verse 37, You know what has happened, says Peter, throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit

and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. Now, this raises inevitable questions about these things today. What about demon possession today? What about healing today? What are we to think and believe about this? Well, we'll come to that.

We may even come to it this evening, but we're not going to stop on it just now. It is important. I'm sure it's triggered in your mind, but it is outside of the framework of the concluding verses of Luke 4. Will you notice, as we come to the final scene, the kindness of the Lord Jesus? The kindness of the Lord Jesus.

All were brought to him who had various kinds of sicknesses, and he laid his hands on each one, and he healed them. And he silenced the demoniac shouts, kindly but firmly. They knew he was the Son of God, but he tells them, I don't want you to be going around saying that.

Why--or the answer to the why question--has gained a number of theological students a PhD, most of which are deadly boring. But it surely must at least be this, that Jesus was working to a divine calendar, and he didn't want a half-baked idea of his messiahship to become the basis for insurrection. Because there were people in his day assuming that Jesus would champion their political cause and overthrow the authorities.

And so Jesus does not want that to become the message that gets out, because that clearly isn't the message. I resist the temptation to apply that to the late twentieth century, but you know my mind on that in any case. And at the same time, if Jesus is going to use, if you like, a sales team to let the world know who he is, he's certainly not going to use a bunch of demon-possessed individuals as his public relations officers.

So he says, Okay, guys, just button it up. I don't want you to be saying that. Scene 1 in the synagogue, scene 2 in the home of Simon, scene 3 as the sun is setting, and scene 4, verse 42, at daybreak in a solitary place.

It's clear that Jesus leaves unnoticed, and he goes away to seek quietness. Hardly surprising, I think you would agree. After all the demands of the previous hours, it is legitimate that he would get some time on his own.

But look what we discover. The people were looking for him, and they eventually find him, and unlike the group in Nazareth who were delighted to be rid of him, here he faces the opposite problem. So he preaches in one place, and they're saying, Good riddance! And he preaches in the other place, and they're saying, We would like you to stay here and become our pastor.

Because there would be quite a bit of kudos, you see, attaching to the synagogue in Capernaum if they were able to say, You know, Jesus is the regular preacher in our synagogue. I think there is at least the hint here that they want to keep Jesus for themselves, the way that many of us are tempted to keep Jesus for ourselves. Now, Jesus, we're so glad you're at Parkside Church, and frankly, we would like you to stay here, and we don't want you to be running off evangelizing anybody else.

Just stay with us, Jesus. We like it when you're here. We like being able to hear you.

We like being near you. All of that is perfectly understandable. And the sympathy of Jesus would be such that he understood that, even as he understood these people's requests.

Stay with us. There are so many more people just around here, Jesus, to whom you can minister. But notice, he doesn't accede to their requests.

Because by divine calling, he has other places to go, and he has other people to teach. I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God, he says, to other towns also. That's why I was sent.

And so, the final shot, as it were, of Act 1, scene 4, is this. Not of Jesus with a little cluster of people sitting around him in rapt attention, listening to his every word, but the final scene is this, and it's a long shot, and you can just see dust coming up from the heels of Jesus and those who are with him, and he is off and he is on his way. And eventually, he goes off over the horizon, and the lasting impression is, Jesus is now about to do somewhere else exactly what it is that he has been doing here.

He has been going to proclaim his authority, to release the news that the kingdom of God has come, to call sinners to believe in him, to let them know this wonderful news of the kingdom. He's going to go and preach publicly and in private. He's going to preach by doing question-and-answer sessions.

He's going to preach one-on-one. He's going to announce the kingdom, call people to faith, train his disciples, explain the Scriptures. Now, let me end with a word of challenge and a word of comfort.

Here's the word of challenge. You remember the words of Jesus? As the Father has sent me, so send I you. In other words, we must at every point resist the temptation of turning the lifeboat station into a marina, of taking the army and giving everybody an honorable discharge, and hanging the uniforms and the swords around the walls so that we may sit with one another and say, that was a wonderful campaign, and that was a great day back then, but how nice it is that all of that going is over, and here we are, we've got enough, and we're quite content with what we have, and let's all just be here and quite happy.

Oh, we can evangelize, or we can fossilize! Where am I on this continuum to see unbelieving people become committed followers of Jesus Christ? First of all, I may be an unbeliever here this morning. Well, I don't mean someone who doesn't believe that there was a Jesus or doesn't even believe that Jesus was God, but somebody who doesn't actually believe into him, doesn't trust in him, doesn't come and give up on all their expectations and their religious desires and designs and say, you know, there's nothing I can do to put myself in the right with you, O God, and therefore I come to believe implicitly in your Son as my Lord and Savior. If you're an unbeliever, then the challenge to you is become a believer.

If you're a believer, then you're a follower. And the challenge to you and to I is this. Let's be a committed follower.

Let's not be halfhearted. Let's not be half-baked. Let's not have an intermittent consecration.

Let's have it sixty seconds a minute, sixty minutes an hour, twenty-four hours a day--all of our days and all of our deeds counting for the extension of Christ's kingdom. That's the challenge, and here's the comfort. And the comfort comes poetically in the words of a hymn written by a man at the end of the nineteenth century.

He died just a hundred years ago now. This is an evening hymn. I know it's the morning, but I'm sorry he didn't write a morning hymn.

He wrote an evening hymn. We're not going to sing it, I'm just going to quote it. And I quote it as a means of comfort to each of us.

Taking the scene that we have just viewed in chapter 4--that is, scene 3--at sunset, Henry Twelves writes this. At even ere the sun was set, The sick, O Lord, around thee lay. O, in what various pains they met! O, with what joy they went away! Once more tis even tide, and we, Oppressed with various ills, draw near.

What if thy form we cannot see? We know and feel that thou art here. O Saviour Christ, our woes dispel, For some are sick and some are sad. And some have never loved thee well, And some have lost the love they had.

And some have found the world is vain, That is, empty, Yet from the world they break not free. And some have friends who give them pain, Yet haven't sought a friend in thee. And none, O Lord, have perfect rest, For none are wholly free from sin.

And they who fain would serve thee best Are conscious most of wrong within. O Saviour Christ, thou too art man. Thou hast been troubled, tempted, tried.

Thy kind but searching glands can scan The very wounds our shame would hide. Thy touch has still its ancient power. No word from thee can fruitless fall Here in this solemn morning hour.

And in thy mercy heal us all. And now, unto him who is able to keep you from falling, And to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, Both now and forevermore. Amen.

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