

Can You Be Reasoned With

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the urgent need for God's people to engage in honest reflection and repentance to reclaim their spiritual authority and influence in a troubled world.

Duration: 44:32

Scripture: Isaiah 1:16, Isaiah 1:18

Topics: "Social Justice", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

This sermon from Isaiah chapter one challenges believers to be reasoned with by God, to seek justice, defend the vulnerable, and speak life in a culture of darkness. It emphasizes the need for humility, obedience, and a transformation of speech and actions to align with God's ways. The message calls for standing against hatred, division, and violence, and being a voice for forgiveness, reconciliation, and righteousness in a society engulfed by godlessness.

Transcript

You'll turn with me this morning to the book of Isaiah chapter one. I want to share with you a message this morning called Can You Be Reasoned With? Can You Be Reasoned With? Isaiah chapter one. Now, Father, I thank you, God, with all of my heart.

I praise you and bless you for the presence of your Holy Spirit. Lord, I thank you for strength when our strength has failed, for wisdom when our wisdom has fallen short, for courage, Lord, when fear would want to wrap itself around the edges of our hearts and minds. I thank you, God, for doing what only you can do in this and in every other generation.

Almighty God, in Jesus' name, let this word this morning find a deep lodging place in every one of our hearts. Those of us gathered here today in Times Square and those that will be listening in the future online, oh, God, oh, God, oh, God, oh, God, the time for games is over. Lord, we're coming to the end of all things.

And we ask, Lord, that we may have the privilege, the great, great privilege of seeing another spiritual awakening in our time, perhaps the last before you return. Have mercy, Lord. Have mercy, God, on the people of this city.

Have mercy, Lord, on the people of this country. Have mercy, Lord, on the people in Europe. Have mercy, God, all over the world as people are beginning to rise up and pray again.

Oh, God Almighty, have mercy. Have mercy. Lord, we thank you for this with all of our heart today in Jesus' name.

Amen. Isaiah chapter 1, beginning at verse 15. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you.

Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean.

Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good.

Seek justice. Rebuke the oppressor. Defend the fatherless.

Plead for the widow. Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

You know, we use this verse, let us reason together. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they're red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

And we use it evangelistically. But yet, when you look in the context of this verse of scripture, this is not an evangelistic verse. This is a word written to the people of God of that time, who already had a relationship or should have had a relationship with the living God.

But it was a perilous moment in the nation of Israel. Isaiah prophesied during the threatening expansion of the Assyrian empire. Now, Assyria was an empire characterized by aggression, by dominance, by violence, and by assimilation.

In other words, you agree with us and you accept our worldview or you suffer the consequences. That was essentially Assyria. In the latter part of his ministry, a good portion of God's people had already fallen prey to this violent spirit.

The northern kingdom, which was 10 tribes of Israel, had already been overrun by Assyria, and they were already being dissipated and assimilated into the Assyrian viewpoint, way of thinking, lifestyle, etc. And all that remained was the southern kingdom of Israel, Judah and Benjamin, two tribes, and any remnants from the 10 who had escaped the north and came south because of their understanding and love of truth. But they were in danger as well of succumbing to the spirit of that time.

And it's to these people, and it's such a time that God says, come now and let us reason together. They were right on the edge, literally, of being overrun by a dominant social power. The days they were living in, perhaps very much are closer, very much in league with what you and I are facing today.

Isaiah saw that the pathway that many were on would eventually leave them without spiritual blessing, without protection, without influence, and without the authority that God had always decreed that His

people should have. We are called to be a living, a vibrant, an unarguable, indisputable testimony of life, of protection, of blessing. This is the portion that is yours in mind as the church of Jesus Christ.

But something had gotten a hold of the people of this time, and it was, first of all, rendering their prayers powerless. He said, when you spread forth your hands, in verse 15, I'll hide my eyes from you. And even though you make many prayers, I will not hear.

Your hands are full of blood. Now, what did he mean by that? What kind of blood was on the hands of God's people? And they would draw back in horror and say, how could you accuse us of this? We've not murdered anybody. What are you trying to tell us? They would be so offended by the words of God through the prophet Isaiah, which is the reason why that only about one in 10 or so were able to receive and to listen to his ministry.

God was trying to reason with his own people. Don't forget, the southern kingdom was also going to be taken captive. Most of the people that Isaiah spoke to were not able to hear, even though their captivity was right on the border, and God had sent in his mercy a very loving word to his own people, saying, I want to be your protection.

I want to be your guide. I want to be your God. I want to do, I want to push back the darkness through you.

But first we're going to have to reason together because you've allowed things, you've allowed something to come into your life. And because of it, you stretch out your hands and I can't hear you anymore. In verse nine of Isaiah 58, we get an answer to what some of this was about anyway.

He says, then you will call and the Lord will answer. You will cry and he will say, here I am. If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness.

You see, there was a spirit going on in the nation at that time, and God's people had opened the door to it and had become part of their culture in a sense, had become part of the, of how they lived out their day. And they were pointing the finger, looking to blame somebody, I guess, for the dilemma they were in. It's, it's their fault.

It's his fault. It's her fault. Somebody always, ever since the garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve fell, it's always somebody else's fault.

It's never my fault. It's, it's never, it's very rarely you find a man like Daniel who will fall on his knees before God, open his windows towards Jerusalem and say, Lord, we have sinned against you. Even though Daniel is a young man was taken into captivity and he was not, he was not part of, of that which caused the captivity into Babylon in the first place, but he identified with the weakness and frailty of all humanity.

And he said, God, to, to us belongs shame of face this day, but to you belongs righteousness Lord, because your ways are right and ours are not. And there's, there comes a point in the Christian life that, and that the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness must stop. And that's what is, that's the very dominant spirit that's characterizing this generation, folks.

Do you understand that? We are a generation everywhere. Everybody, somebody is pointing to somebody else. Very rare that anybody points to themselves anymore and say, I'm part of the problem.

Everyone else is part of the problem. It's because of what somebody else is doing, how somebody else's is thinking. And it's becoming, it's becoming so dominant that it's getting a hold.

The Assyrian value system is getting a hold of the people of God and the people of God are coming into the house of God, stretching forth their hands, but the same blood guiltiness of, of cursing our brother, of blaming somebody else for the dilemma that's in the nation is, is now encroaching itself into the very fabric of the people of God and rendering us powerless, taking down our defenses. It's, it's difficult today to even suggest that we should pray for our leaders. You wouldn't believe the bounce back when you even make the suggestion that we should pray for our leaders.

Can you imagine the apostle Paul writing to Timothy as he did and say, Timothy, pray for Kings and all that are in authority that you may live a godly and a peaceable life on this earth for this is the will of God concerning you. Can you imagine Timothy writing back to Paul? Are you suggesting that I should pray for Caesar? Don't you know that Caesar is heterophobic? He's Christophobic. He's anti-immigrant.

He doesn't care about the feelings or freedoms of others. He's all just about Rome and about himself. Paul, are you not even aware that Caesar thinks he's God? You know, the Caesar of that generation thought he was God.

And, and Paul, has it escaped your attention that he's the one that's got you and changed because of his dominant worldview and, and et cetera, et cetera, and all these things. And you can, you picture Paul writing back to Timothy, Timothy, where did you get these words from? They're not in the scriptures. They didn't come from the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Where are you getting this? How is this getting into your spirit? Why is this becoming part of your vocabulary? Timothy, do you forget that I was once, Paul would say, a leader of the people and I did everything that Caesar did, but I also hauled people out of their houses and I tortured them. And I was there when Stephen was murdered and I was holding the people's coats that threw the stones and I consented to his death. But God called an ordinary man called Ananias, who came to me.

He was just an ordinary man and he put his hands on me and he prayed for me. And Timothy, when he prayed for me, scales fell off of my eyes. Timothy, I understand the power of prayer and I know what can happen through the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man.

So Timothy, pray for your leaders. Timothy, pray for those in authority. The Bible is not calling you to agree with their agenda.

The Bible is calling you to agree with God, that he says, pray, pray that they may find salvation through Christ, that they may govern in a righteous way, that they may lay hold of God's value system. Timothy, there's no power. Ananias could have walked in the room with Paul and pointed at him and said, you murderer, you God hater, could have pointed at him.

And there was truth in that, but there's a higher truth than all of that. It's the truth of God. It's the power of God's kingdom.

That's why Isaiah could say to the people, you're coming into my house with many prayers. And I could see what a lot of the prayers were. They all knew the history.

They knew what was unfolding. They knew Assyria was swallowing the whole known world as they knew it. They knew that the Assyrian army was almost unstoppable apart from God.

So they're coming in and I have no doubt they're praying, protect us. Oh Lord, we know what happened to our Northern brothers. And there's just a few of us left in our armies can't match their army.

And God's saying, I want to answer your prayer, but your hands are filled with blood. You're pointing your finger, you're cursing out of one side. You're blessing me, but you're cursing those created my image out of the other side of your mouth.

And you can't have blessing and cursing come out of the same fountain. These things ought not to be the Lord says they ought not to be. And then secondly, unknown to the people of God at that time, their rejection of reason, may I put it that way was going to seal their own fate.

In verse 20, it says, but if you refuse and rebel, you'll be devoured by the sword for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. In other words, the violence that you're letting get a hold of your spirit will actually become your portion. In the end, it will consume you.

You know, the scripture says, whoever lives by the sword dies by the sword. Proverbs 18 21 says death and life are in the power of the tongue and those who love it will eat its fruit. Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

It matters what we speak. Do you understand? It matters. It matters before God.

It matters. It can take away the victory of Christ from his people. It can take the power of God out of the church.

It can allow the enemies of righteousness, spiritual wickedness in high places to literally overpower a nation when God's people are here. And we have been given the power and the authority to make a difference. Most of Isaiah's generation wouldn't listen to him.

By the time God called and commissioned him, they were so entrenched in their worldview that they wouldn't hear him. But if they could speak to us today, here's what they would say. It's from Proverbs 5. And you mourn at last when your flesh and body are consumed and say, how I have hated instruction and my heart despised correction.

I've not obeyed the voice of my teachers nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me. I was on the verge of total ruin in the midst of the assembly and the congregation. If they could speak to us today in New York City, they would say, we were where you are.

A dominant force that was ungodly was threatening to swallow the testimony of God's people, was threatening to take away our security as it is. And God sent a voice to us, but we wouldn't listen to that voice. We pushed it away.

We had created our own reasonings and God couldn't reason with us. He even said to us, come and let us reason together. But we felt that our arguments were higher than his and our thoughts were better than the thoughts of God.

We succumbed to that fallen nature of all of humanity that wants to be as God is and declare something that is evil, good, and something that is good, evil. We became entrenched in our position and didn't know

the peril of the moment until we ourselves were conquered. We ourselves were brought into subjection.

We ourselves were taken into a foreign place that we never wanted to be. While Isaiah was speaking to us, we were on the verge of total ruin in the midst of the congregation and the assembly, but yet we were thoroughly convinced that our ways were right and what we were being told by the voice of God was wrong. So important today for you and I to be able to say, God, you can, and I ask you to reason with me, reason with my heart.

Oh God, if I built iron barriers in my heart, if I have entrenched my mind in something that's destructive, and yet I'm trying to call it truth, God, help me. God, help me. God, help me to put away the ways of this world and help me, Lord, to have that new mind and that new heart and that new spirit that you say is the portion.

It's what belongs to your people. Help me, oh God, to be a man, a woman, whatever the case is, that can go into the closet of prayer and command the mountain to be moved. Help me, God, to be a person who can go into your presence.

No matter how dark, no matter how vile, no matter how distanced from God this society might be, that I might plead for them. And you may hear my voice, oh God. I might not have a microphone, might be in a prayer closet all by myself, but God, you will hear my voice.

And there's a certain voice that God can't resist himself, that you will hear me crying out before the throne of God as I cry out for the children, as I cry out for marriages, as I cry out for families, as I cry out for righteousness, as I cry out for our leaders, as I cry out, God, that my voice will count among those that you have historically used at moments like this to push back the forces of darkness. Your word says that when the enemy comes in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord will raise up a standard against it. God, may my voice be counted among them.

I want you to just think about this with me for a moment. In John chapter 11, verse 43, Jesus called a man called Lazarus out of the grave. And the scripture says, when he said these things, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

And in a similar way, the voice of God has called you and I out of darkness and into a life of light, a different life, a new life. We're born again by the spirit of God. We're called to be not who we think we should be, but who God has destined and created us to be.

It requires a yielding to God. It requires a humility. The proud will never understand the ways of God.

It requires a humility. It requires a heart and a life that can be spoken to. In verse 44, he said, and he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth.

And Jesus said to them, loose him and let him go. In a similar way, Jesus has called those of us who are around you to unwrap the garments of death that this world has bound you in. You come into the kingdom of God, you are bound with grave clothes.

This world has wrapped itself all around your mind, your eyes, your mouth, your heart, your loins, your feet. You are totally bound by the things of this world when you come into the kingdom of God, just as Lazarus was bound. Inside these wrappings are some sweet spices.

And we live in death without Christ. We walk in death. We think like dead people.

We act, we live in a way that the Bible describes as a way of death, which is the eternal inheritance of those who choose to live that way. But we wrap it up with some sweet spices. Many people, even in the house of God, wrap it up with some nice clothes on Sunday morning.

A change of vocabulary, instead of cursing everything around us, praise God, good to see you, God bless you. So we put a few little spices around the death that's all wrapped around us and try to masquerade what's really going on inside. I was a cop, folks.

If you've never smelled death, there's nothing in this world that smells worse than a decaying human body. The smell of it permeates the whole room. It gets into the carpets.

If somebody has been long dead in any place, you have to rip the carpets out. You have to paint the walls. I've gone in in uniform and had to take my clothes and you can't even get the smell out of your clothes through a dry cleaning.

It's so permeates everything. Death permeates its environment. All the smell of it can't be masqueraded by a few sweet little things that we try to put around it because ultimately it overpowers those sweet things.

It is an incredible thing. I've never smelled anything in my life worse than a decaying human body. And when Lazarus came out of that grave, he was wrapped in these grave clothes like many of us were when we came into the kingdom of God.

We come into the kingdom of God with wrong thinking, with wrong speech, with the wrong focus, with the wrong hearts. And it starts with an initial euphoria that we can actually hear God calling us. And we step out and we walk into the light as much as we know it.

And then the immediate thing is, you know, what I love about this is Jesus could have snapped his fingers and all the great clothes would have disappeared. All the spices, everything would have disappeared. But instead of doing that, he called those who were close to him and said, loose him and let him go.

That's the purpose of the ministry. That's my job here on Sunday morning. Listen, Ephesians 4 verses 10 to 15.

You can read it later, but I'll read it to you. Here's what it says. He who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.

And he gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. For the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edify, the lifting up, the helping of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of fullness of Christ. So this is the purpose of the ministry, is the purpose of preachers and teachers in the body.

If they are righteous people, if they truly care about you. Now, if they don't care, they'll just tell you how lovely you smell when you're filled with death, if they don't care. But if they do care, they'll try to get close to try to unwrap wrong thinking, wrong speech, that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine or every thing that comes along down the pike, everything that purports to be truth apart from the kingdom of God by the trickery of men and the cunning craftiness of

deceitful plotting.

In other words, that we would not be a people who are carried by false reasonings, false arguments. It would not wrap itself around us and lead us away from life and back into death. But speaking the truth in love may grow up in all things unto him who is the head, even Christ.

It all comes down to speaking. Isn't that amazing? All the ministry, all that God sends for you and I ultimately comes down to our speech because out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth will speak. Those who approached Lazarus were not his enemies, but his friends.

I'm not your enemy tomorrow. Today, I mean, as uncomfortable as you may seem, feel at the moment, I'm not your enemy. I'm not here to hurt you.

God sent me to unwrap the clothes of death from your mind, from your heart. All that Lazarus was called to do at this point was to let them do what Jesus called them to do. All he was called to do is yield.

He could have resisted it. Now the scripture tells us later on he was sitting at a banquet table with Jesus in John chapter 12 verses 9 and 11. It says, now a great many of the Jews knew that he was there, that's Lazarus, and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but they might also see Lazarus whom he raised from the dead.

And verse 11 says, and because of Lazarus, many people believed. You know, folks, many people come to see Jesus because of you. Isn't that amazing? They come to see Jesus because of you.

I want you to think that one through. They hear that you're a Christian, and so they come into the lunchroom, they visit you in your apartment, or they pay special attention to your vocabulary and mannerisms as you go to the local store to maybe buy some bread on the way home. And they believe that you're associated with Jesus, and Jesus has given you new life, and so technically it's similar to Lazarus.

They come to see Jesus because of you. Now what if Lazarus had resisted the unwrapping of the grave clothes? What if the smell of death was still on him? What if his lips were still wrapped up in the clothing of death? You know, what would people think at that moment? The scripture would, people would be sitting at that table going, wow, is that the best that Jesus can do? Is that all he can do, is leave people in their old condition, but yet somehow claiming that they have a living relationship with God? What has he got that I don't have? What has she got that I don't have? They live, they speak the same way I do. Their heart is just as dark as mine.

Their objectives in life seem to be in line with mine, but yet they've just added Jesus to it. But all I can hear is death, and all I see is death. You see, there's something about people of God.

When we are walking in righteousness, we are willing to be set apart for the kingdom of God. We're willing to speak healing when everyone else is speaking vengeance. We are willing to, we are led to preach reconciliation when everyone else around in the world is preaching division and vengeance.

What do people think that ponder Jesus because of you? It's a question I have to ask, and I'm going back to our opening text. Let us reason together. What do people think? And I want you to think about it honestly now.

In your home, your work colleagues that you work, what do they think about Jesus because of you? Are you a peacemaker or a divider? What do they think because of you? Are you advocating that we should pray for our leaders as the scripture says, or are you tearing them down with everybody else? What do people think of Jesus because of you? Do you speak for God or are you being assimilated by the violent culture all around us today? And this is a question that has to be asked now, because that violent culture is finding a place in the house of God. And I tell you today, it has no place among God's people. It has no place here.

Isaiah chapter one, verse 16, where we started, he says, wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, put away the evil of your doings from before your eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless, and plead for the widow. Seek justice. That by God's definition, not the world's definition, the justice that God speaks about is having people reconciled with God and each other.

That's the justice ultimately that Christ died to bring into this world. That humankind one with another would be reconciled first with God, and then subsequently reconciled with one another. There are only two great commandments.

The two greatest of all, love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. That means a personal yielding to him, a love for him. And the second is like unto it.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Seek justice in the world. Seek justice.

Seek forgiveness. Seek reconciliation. You might feel like a salmon swimming upstream when 500 are going the other way, but let your voice be the one voice that speaks for God.

Rebuke the oppressor. Rebuke those whose voices do not speak for Christ, and let the rebuke be just you. Do you understand? It doesn't mean you have to point out everybody's mistake.

No, that's wrong. That's not biblical. That's not the rebuke he's talking about.

Let who you are become a rebuke everywhere you are. Just as I told you, the smell of death will permeate a room. It will get into people's nostrils.

It will get into clothing. It can't be taken out. In a similar way, the smell of life is more powerful.

The smell of life can also permeate a room. The smell of life can dissipate darkness. The smell of life, that one voice that speaks for God can put to flight a thousand enemies of truth.

That one voice that says, no, folks, I recognize maybe that some of our leaders are some of the things that you are saying, but can we take a moment just to pray for this person or these people right now? Would you join with me in prayer? That's rebuking the oppressor. Would you pray with me right now and then pray, God, would you help this person? Would you help this group of people? Would you help them to see that they need a savior? Would you help them to know, God, that you are a loving God and willing to forgive them? It takes courage, but if you're willing just to step out of the crowd and say, I'm not going to let death permeate this environment any longer. I'm going to let the ... Doesn't the Bible say we are a fragrance of Christ everywhere we go? I thank God for that.

I really do with all my heart. A fragrance for Christ. Don't let that thought escape you.

That when we walk into a room, there's a sweet perfume of life that comes in with us. If we make the choice to just let that life emanate from everything we are, all we say, and all we do, suddenly darkness begins to dissipate. Suddenly darkened hearts begin to start to think there might be another way forward.

Maybe there's a better way than the way that I have been choosing in my heart. Then the scripture says, defend the fatherless and plead for the widow. In other words, stand up for those who have little or no resource and no strength to stand against the overwhelming spirit of this age.

Stand up for them. Stand up for them in your speech. Stand up for them in the prayer closet.

Stand up for them by standing up for Christ and allowing Christ to become the source of their strength. You and I are called to stand against the hatred of this moment in this nation. I make no apologies whatsoever for that statement.

We are called to be of a different spirit. We are called to stand against it in the strength of our God. We are called to be a voice for forgiveness and reconciliation among men and before God.

We are not called to foster division. We are not called to deepen. We're not called to pass it on to the next generation.

We are called to speak for God who said, father, forgive them. They don't know what they do. That's who you and I are.

That's what we are called to do. That is the calling of God on our lives. In verse 19, he says, if you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.

They couldn't hear these words. They failed to understand. He's not talking about lemons and watermelons and lettuce.

The good of the land was the promise of God made to Abraham and his descendants. The promise of being supernaturally multiplied and blessed and becoming a force for good on the earth. That was the good of the land.

That's what God through Isaiah was trying to get through to his people. Everything that you know in your history, everything you've ever been taught from the time you were a child, he was saying is still yours. If we can still reason together, if you would acknowledge that my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts, if you will do it my way, God was trying to tell them I can push back the darkness of this moment.

There can be the voice of joy and celebration can be in your streets again, instead of the voice of woe and mourning. Folks, what we choose to do will make a huge difference in this city and at this time, how we choose to live and how we choose to speak. You will have this incredible supernatural provision of Christ, the supernatural infusion of life that takes us and makes us more than we could ever hope to be, gives us more than we could ever hope to possess, gives us wisdom that is not our own, fills our hearts with compassion that we could never conjure in our deepest human effort.

We become free. We become clean. Our bodies are filled with light.

We begin to see by the grace of almighty God. It's time to reason again. It's time to say, Lord, I choose life.

And God, I'm going to have to trust you for this strength because there's so much death wrapped around me. I've been listening to the news too long. And I've been reading your Bible too little.

And the world is wrapping me up in death again. And I find death coming out of my mouth. I find that I'm unwilling to obey even the simplest of scriptures when it talks about forgiveness and reconciliation and right speech.

I find that as darkness has always done, I'm setting my word above the word of God. And so, Lord, I'm telling you today that my heart is still open and you can still reason with me. And so, Lord, I'm asking you to make me a voice for you, for your kingdom, for your ways.

God, I want to eat the good of the land, which is the fullness of the redemption of the cross of Jesus Christ, the immeasurable power of the Holy Spirit operating within my life, the wisdom, the character of God, the ability and prayer to push back darkness for the sake of our children, for the sake of the next generation, who, if we don't stand, are going to be so dark, it's almost unthinkable. We recognize, as they refused to do, that we are at a pinnacle in our nation of being swallowed by godlessness. And you are reasoning with your people perhaps one last time.

God Almighty, in Jesus' name, give us a humility of heart. Give us the willingness to hear these words. Give us the strength to walk humbly.

Lord, it has to come from your hand because we won't do it if we're left to our own resources. Help us, Lord, to put away wrong thinking and to be a force for good and for you, Lord, everywhere we go. Give us the courage to fight for those who have no strength and no resource.

Let our lives be a rebuke to darkness. Let our speech fill the room with life. Lord, deliver us from ourselves, Lord, and unwrap us, Lord, from any death that's trying to get a hold of our minds, our eyes, our voice, our heart, every part of us, Lord.

May we not join those who from heaven or hell today can say I was in total ruin in the midst of the congregation and assembly. May that not be our testimony. We ask you, Lord, that you would invade this city by your Holy Spirit.

We ask you, Lord, to flood our homes, our offices, our streets. Everywhere we travel, Lord, let it be like you've lit a lantern in a darkened city. Where there's a stink, let the perfume of your presence, Lord, go with us down every street, into every room, down every corridor.

Let our children, Lord, God, see you in us and desire to live for you all of the days of their lives. Give us a voice, Lord, to fight for the fatherless, to fight for the widow, those who are weak among us, Lord, and have no need of strength. Father, God, we yield our bodies to you for this purpose.

And we agree today that this is good, this is right, this is true. Lord, we ask you for a deliverance and a miracle, Lord, in every one of our lives. And we thank you for it.

In Jesus' name. Amen. You know, the Lord's spoken to your heart today, North Jersey and the annex and at home and here in the main sanctuary.

You say, God, I want to be that person. I want to be that person that speaks right. I want to be a peacemaker and not a divider.

I want to bring healing into the world and not bitterness, not further the bitterness. I want to pray with fervency for our leadership because I heard today what it did in the life of Paul, a literal madman who became the greatest apostle of all. I want to be that Ananias that you can call to pray for somebody and will make heaven's difference in their life.

I don't want to be among those who are filled with hate and trying to masquerade it with a little bit of perfume. I want life. I want life.

I want light. I want oil. I want to eat of the good of the land.

So Lord, make my heart tender. When I speak what I shouldn't, convict me right away. Help me to draw back and even say, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that.

This is what I should have said. Let my life literally be a light in this darkened city. Now, if that's the cry of your heart today and you know that God has to do something supernatural in your life for that to happen, there has to be a supernatural forgiveness in some people's hearts.

I'm not saying the injustices weren't there. What I'm saying is the law of God is higher and we need to let go of the one to embrace the other. You can't have the two at the same time.

God will give us the grace. God will. Let's stand together.

And if that's you and you want that in your life, come and join me here at this altar today or stand between the screens in the annex. We'll worship for a couple of minutes. Just come.

The balcony slip out of your seat. You know what you've been speaking. You know the words that have come out of your mouth.

You know what's in your heart. If you want to be on the Lord's side, I feel like one of those Old Testament moments where a line is drawn in the sand and the words, who is on the Lord's side are spoken. Who wants to speak for God in this generation? I'm going to ask you to step out and join those that are coming.

Move in close. We'll worship for just a few moments. Then we'll take a moment to pray.

Praise God. Thank you, Lord. You know, the New Testament intimates, at least there's a picture presented of a tongue that is under the control of God can steer a ship.

You know, I was thinking as we're worshipping of another volatile period in the history of this nation, when God raised up a man called Martin Luther King Jr. And he chose to be of another spirit than the spirit that was wanting to manifest at that time. And his words still move our hearts today. And he brought a way that is not the way of man.

It's the way of God. And may God give us that touch of heaven again in each of our lives that we would start speaking for heaven's side. Father, we thank you, Lord, for the solemn moment that you brought into the sanctuary for this is indeed a moment of reflection and truth.

Would you help us, Lord, would you help me, God, to be people of excellent speech, excellent speech. Lord, this has always caused your kingdom to advance when a man or woman of excellent speech could be found. Lord, you could use them to unlock prisons.

You could use them to touch the hearts of kings. You could set them on pinnacles so they could be heard throughout the whole city if they could be a person of excellent speech. And so, Father, we thank you, Lord, that you will anoint and ordain statesmen and stateswomen, Lord, in this sanctuary today, God, that wherever we are, we will speak for heaven.

We will speak for you, Lord, for your kingdom, God. Lord, give us the right spirit. Help us, Lord God, to understand and to be able to navigate these waters so that we will represent you.

All we can do, Lord, is yield our bodies to you as a living sacrifice. And you say it's a reasonable service. But we have to trust you for the power, Lord.

It isn't within us apart from you to do any of these things. So we yield to you, Holy Spirit, ask you to govern us, Lord, govern us, govern our voices, Lord, govern our actions, govern our thoughts, govern us. My God, govern us and help us, Lord, to be agents of life everywhere we travel in all that we do.

May the sweetness, Jesus, of your presence follow us into every room, into every conversation, at every table. May we bring the presence of God, the reasoning of God, into every situation. I thank you, Lord, for the touch of heaven, the courage that many young people especially are going to need to face this time.

Courage, Lord, courage and balanced speech that can't be spoken against. God, we see it in the scriptures. It says they could not be spoken against.

Nothing they said they could take an issue with. It was pure truth. God, thank you, Lord.

God, thank you. God, thank you. Send us into the city today and into our homes and communities wherever we're traveling.

Make us keenly aware of what we've heard today. We know in our hearts we've heard from you, Lord. God, help us now.

God, help us now. We thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/GWu6uT8V1-0.mp4>

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