

The Sin of Unbelief

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon emphasizes the grave sin of unbelief and the necessity of humility and faith in recognizing Jesus' authority and love.

Duration: 59:15

Scripture: Mark 16:14-20

Topics: "Faith And Doubt", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher acknowledges that there is so much to cover that he can only touch on a small portion of it. He focuses on verse 14, where Jesus appears to the eleven disciples and rebukes their unbelief and hardness of heart. The preacher emphasizes that this verse contains a wealth of sermons in itself, highlighting the depth of its meaning. He urges the congregation to pray for deliverance from their stubborn will and to be open to accepting new truths from God. The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus' triumph over sin and death and the need to have open hearts to see and experience His presence.

Transcript

Lord Jesus, we invite you, as you promised, that where two or three are gathered, you will be in their midst. We ask that you would work through your Holy Word and by your Holy Spirit. Amen.

On Ascension Day, I wasn't here. And I wanted to preach about the Ascension of the Lord. We are kept by Him on this day.

People know it's the Ascension Day, but the real meaning behind it, what do they understand? It's not just a minor event, it is of great importance. And a day which Satan hates. And I plan to read from Mark 16, from verse 14 through to verse 20.

But unfortunately, there are so many things. It has got so many points to it that I can only touch the very fringe of it today. I'll only be able to preach about a third of what I thought I would speak about.

Maybe God in future will give us a time when I could speak about the other two thirds. If not, I hope that you'll go home and you'll carry on reading it and that God will reveal these divine truths to you. Let's read from verse 14.

Mark 16, 14. Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table, and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. I think just that verse is sufficient.

Now there is verse 15 which is a sermon on its own. And verse 16 is a sermon. Do you see here is a whole collection of sermons.

So this verse contains so much that we can never get to the end of it. Let's pray again. Lord wouldn't you once again speak to us, reveal yourself and speak to us through your word.

Amen. Ascension day is 40 days after Jesus rose from the dead. On that resurrection day Jesus collected together His disciples.

On that last day, those 40 days, on that last day He got together His close disciples as He was about to ascend back to heaven. The very last time. With His disciples there on the mount.

One thinks of the final occasion where Jacob was about to die and He collected His whole clan together and He spoke to this son and that son and directed His talk at each one of them. Often when a person dies His final words are of great importance. And here it is as if He reveals His final will.

It's a revelation of His testament, His will to His close disciples here on earth. Jesus had fulfilled His mission here on earth. He was about to ascend and be seated in glory on His throne, that throne that He had before the foundation of the earth.

He ascended with great glory, returning to His rightful place of authority in heaven. Before which, during those 40 days, He revealed Himself at different occasions to them. You hear that word revelation, revealing Himself.

He didn't stay with them as He had before when day and night He was in their presence. Now when He had resurrected from the dead He rose with His glorified body. And He would come on different occasions, just a quick revelation and then He would disappear again.

And now it was His 40th day, it was His final goodbye. What did He collect them together for? And where had He brought them together? There on the mountain. It was there on that mountain that the garden of Gethsemane was located.

It had been there that Jesus had suffered very much. There where Jesus had gone down into the final pit, it was the ultimate humiliation. Where even angels from heaven came down to strengthen Him, to comfort Him.

Where He was lying prostrate on the ground. In a great struggle to the point that He sweated, all His pores were sweating. So that it was as sweat drops of blood that fell on the ground.

The wrath of God was upon Him because of your sin and my sin. He had prayed, O Father, even if I must endure this, but let it not be my will, but let Your will be done. It was as if He had an eternal shroud of death around Him.

Hell itself was there. As He groaned in great pain to God, saying, O Father, if it is possible, let this pass from me. But quickly saying, but let not my will be done, but Thine.

He suffered. In a way, He suffered to such an extent that no human language is sufficient to describe His suffering. No human mind has the capacity to understand the deep grief which He suffered.

And the anguish, it was the ultimate suffering and humiliation. If I think of how people treat sin so lightly, superficially. Some handling sin and laughing about it.

And I can only say, they have not had a revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ and our God, our Holy God. If you have seen His suffering and that anguish of soul, you can never treat sin lightly again. Sin loses its taste.

You can never say, I like it. It has lost its attraction and you leave it alone. Not after many days, Jesus gathered His disciples on this very mountain where He suffered His greatest humiliation.

That anyone can suffer. In that we see the wickedness of sin, of breaking God's commandments. And I repeat, we see in that God's feeling regarding sin, what our Holy God feels, what the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, what their attitude towards sin, His attitude towards sin.

And I repeat, we see in that God's feeling regarding sin, what our Holy God feels, what their attitude towards sin, His attitude towards sin. Would that every person would taste of that and have a revelation of what happened there. That God would show it to you and see the wickedness of sin.

And Jesus gathers His disciples together there on that mount where Jesus had suffered and been humiliated. A fulfillment of the truth that he who is humbled will be lifted up. Take note.

It is the same thing we who are in the kingdom of God, it is the same. If we want to go up, if we want to grow, we need to know what it is to go down and be humiliated. To humble ourselves, to become great.

Jesus said, if you want to become great, be the servant of all. For if you make yourself great, you will be humbled. Pride never parts from a fall.

That's inseparable. When you become proud, exalt yourself, you will fall, not maybe. These are inseparable.

It will always happen that the one who is proud will fall. As sure as anything, a man should tell me a record that can be understood. And on that place where Jesus had been humiliated, suffered and been humiliated, it was there that he gathered his disciples just before he was to ascend.

Before I continue, listen children of God. If you are humbled, do not lose heart. Don't be discouraged and disappointed.

For God loves to lift you up, but he cannot lift you up until he has brought you down. He wants to give you life, new life, but not until you've gone down and died. There's no resurrection life before you have died.

Don't fight for your life. Don't defend yourself in an ungodly way. You've got to die before you can rise in resurrection glory.

So remember dear Christian, if you suffer and you are troubled, persecuted, if you are persecuted and fright comes upon you and you are hunted down or persecuted, tempted, and it's like one burden upon the other just being pressed upon you, till you say, Oh woe to me, I suffer so much. I am troubled more than any other person. Don't lose heart.

Don't be discouraged. You get to that point where you say, I am absolutely nothing. What do I have? My food is tears daily.

Through that God is showing that he loves you. And it shows you that he loves you so much that you are the apple of his eye. And his intention is to lift you up to great heights.

He wants to make you a blessing to all people. That's why he takes you down to the depths of despair and of humiliation. Have you heard that point? Can I continue to another? It says in our verse that he revealed himself to the eleven.

Not to the twelve because one had chosen his way. It was to the eleven. You will always find that there are those who turn aside.

So Jesus here appears to them at a meal. I once heard a preacher preach that it was as if these disciples knew that it was their final parting from him. That somehow they felt this is now the last.

So they went to this mountain. I don't say that it is like that. But it was interesting to hear somebody saying such a thing.

And they waited and waited and waited for Jesus to come and he didn't come. Eventually they got their food, starting to eat. And he said as they prayed that God would bless the food, suddenly the Lord Jesus appeared.

Because he says very often he appears to us in such holy moments when we pray. And he appeared to them, he revealed himself to them. For they could not see him just with their earthly eyes.

For our earthly eyes are insufficient, we see dimly. But their eyes were opened and he revealed himself to them. They saw him.

I wonder what they felt. Perhaps great joy at that moment when they saw him in his glory. And as they beheld his face they lost sight of everything else and people around them.

But they saw him as they saw him knowing that it could be the last time. For he was to speak his final words. What did they feel? What did they expect as he was to make his final words in this way to them? If you are to try and imagine it, what do you think he should have said when he met with them? Do you think it would have been more appropriate that he would have hugged them, embraced them because it was the final goodbye? Speaking very soft and tender words because it was his last goodbye? No? We read words that are amazing, that shock us.

For it says he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart. In German it says that he strongly rebuked them. He rebuked them.

He should have comforted them, embraced them. But here he speaks with a harshness, a strong rebuke. To the extent that we think, what didn't he love them? Because we also read that he loved them and he loved them right to the end.

Is this a lapse of love that instead of a warm embrace he uses this rod of harsh rebuke from his mouth? No? It is because of his great love that he speaks to them in this manner. Jesus' love is not a marshmallow love. In German there is an idiom that says a monkey-like love.

Just a love that is superficial. Remember the love of Jesus is not just a soft, shallow type of love. It is not a monkey-like type of affection.

His love, that monkey-type of love only directs people to Satan and hell. The love of Jesus is different to the affection of a monkey that closes an eye to everything. Like a parent who just closes an eye when their child sins.

Or a friend who if they sin that you just close an eye and try and ignore it. You do it, you spoil things and you direct people into death and destruction. Because of the love of Jesus he doesn't allow any type of sin.

He doesn't just behave softly towards it and is superficial. The love of God doesn't allow sin in a person's life without it being chastised. For Jesus wants to help them and to give them a greater faith.

To make them more upright in the Lord. This rebuke is not a hot-tempered rebuke. He doesn't come in carnal bad temper.

That's satanic. Don't think that Jesus, if you act in that way you act like him. His love is a holy love.

He is driven by a holy love that deals with the hardening of their hearts. For he wishes to cleanse them, to lift them up, to help them, to put them into truth. To cleanse them and wash them and to reveal their sin and to pull them into the light.

He wants them to have life and to be people that are not blameable. He wants them to have great joy, to have heavenly joy. It is dangerous if a parent doesn't have this type of love, the love of the Lord.

Let every preacher take note, let every parent look out and take note of this love that drove him to sharply rebuke his disciples in his love about their unbelieving heart. In a Christ like manner, rebuke them and teach them. May it be that everyone around you would be like that as well, that they wouldn't have a monkey type of affection, lest that leads you to hell.

Let me continue, I'd be glad though if you've taken note and understood this point. It doesn't mean bad temper, it's no excuse for a parent or leader to be carnally angered, that's satanic. Let it be the love of Jesus that drives you, not a monkey type of love or a carnal type of temper, but the love of God so that you can help people and protect them from going to hell.

What is it that he rebukes them about? What does he chastise them about? It is the awful sin of unbelief. It is a terrible sin. It is despicable.

Here he rebukes his disciples for their unbelief. Remember the women that came to them and said he is risen? Remember that even in the Old Testament it speaks about his resurrection. Remember too that Jesus had often spoken to them about the necessity that he dies and rises again.

And he had spoken publicly that this temple must be broken down so that on the third day it is raised up again. Nevertheless they still did not believe. Disciples came from Emmaus saying we have seen him, he is risen.

They still didn't believe. Their unbelief was of a stiff neckedness. Why so? Because of the unbelief and the hardness of their hearts.

That was the cause of their unbelief. The hardness of their heart. If the heart is hard, unbreakable, not willing to bow, you can talk till you are blue in the face and the person doesn't understand it.

Because your thoughts are earthly and are stuck in the things of this earth. And your mindset is hard. There are things that harden you.

Maybe experiences. Difficult experiences that harden your heart. And make you a skeptic so that when God speaks again you don't receive it for your heart has become hard.

They had gone through the experience of the arrest of Jesus. The experience of him suffering and betrayal. The experience of what Jesus had gone through had been so difficult it had overwhelmed them and made them hard of heart.

Things out of your past, things that you have experienced can harden your heart. And if God wants to reveal new truths to you, his glory, you are not receptive. You don't accept it.

Because these things have hardened your heart. Things you have seen, things you have heard, things that you have experienced, and these just harden your heart. God wants to reveal more to you, new truths, but you don't want to accept them because of the hardness of heart.

God wants to reveal more to you, new truths, but you don't want to accept them because of the hardness of heart. This was a moment of great triumph, of victory. Jesus had conquered sin and death.

He had risen, but they don't see it like that. Their hearts are hard. And when Jesus gathered them for the last time, he knew, like my introductory words, won't be honey around their beard.

And just sweet, sweet parents' love that isn't divine. He says, I've got to straighten them out. And he said, he spoke seriously to them because they were in grave danger of losing the glories of heaven.

And Jesus knows that despite his rising from the dead, nevertheless, they don't receive it. They are still hardened and like a person who is rebuked often, but he doesn't understand, refuses to accept it and prefers rather to go to hell. And he said, I've got to straighten them out.

And he said, I've got to straighten them out. And he said, he spoke seriously to them because they were in grave danger of losing the glories of heaven. And he said, I've got to straighten them out.

And he said, he spoke seriously to them because they were in grave danger of losing the glories of heaven. But that we would allow you to be free to come and to speak in the way that you reveal yourself. Be gracious to us, Lord, that your words would not be in vain to us.

Amen.

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