

# No Half Measures

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The sermon warns against the danger of making inadequate decisions and emphasizes the importance of receiving Jesus into the heart for true commitment to Christ.*

**Duration:** 46:22

**Scripture:** Isaiah 42:1-4, Matthew 7:17-20, Matthew 12:9-14, Matthew 12:34-37, Matthew 12:43-45, John 12:2

**Topics:** "Full Hearted"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the response of the people to the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus. He highlights that some individuals made a negative decision, merely cleaning up their lives superficially without truly embracing the positive transformation required by Jesus. The speaker also mentions that Jesus' ministry elicited three main responses: wholehearted acceptance by a minority, incomplete understanding by others, and rejection by some. The sermon emphasizes the importance of the heart and the words we speak, as they reflect the true condition of our souls and will be judged by God.

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## Transcript

Let us hear the word of God as we have it recorded for us, the gospel according to Saint Matthew chapter 12, and commencing to read at verse 22. Matthew chapter 12 and verse 22. Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him so that he could both talk and see.

All the people were astonished and said, could this be the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, it is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons. Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself.

How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone

who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Make a tree good, and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad, and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

But I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken, for by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned. May God add his blessing to this reading of his holy word. And now the message by Dr. Owen.

Before you close your Bibles, unless you have already done so, I'm going to ask you to look a little further on in that 12th chapter of Matthew's Gospel, and I want to read as the basis of our message this morning, verses 43 to 45. Matthew chapter 12, verses 43 to 45. I thought it was wise to have the kind of background provided by the longer reading that Mr. Lowe has taken this morning.

And now we come to look at this passage that has been a challenge to me, and I believe to others, over many years. When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places, seeking rest, and does not find it. Then he says, I will return to the house I left.

When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean, and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself. And they go in and live there, and the final condition of that man is worse than the first.

That is how it will be with this wicked generation. It seems that our Lord's public ministry elicited three main responses from the men and women of his day. In the first place, we would mention the kind of wholehearted acceptance that was given him from the very beginning by a little minority.

They were few in numbers, and their response might be deemed almost inadequate in many respects, because their knowledge of who he was at that stage, and their knowledge of what his calling was, what his ministry was, what his message was, was likewise very incomplete, to say the least. Nevertheless, as far as they were able and as far as they could, they responded to him with a whole undivided heart. Or they were challenged down the line by some new manifestation of his power, some new claim that he made, some new teaching that he expounded.

But this little nucleus of men have left their mark upon 2,000 years of history. It's very significant. Here we are today, at this particular point in human history, and we owe more to this little handful of men than to any other group of men anywhere, anytime in the history of civilization.

Right at the other end of the scale, of course, there were those who wholeheartedly rejected him from the very word go. They had no year for his teaching, and they had no desire to accept the claims that he made for himself. Once they had heard him, it would seem they were poisoned against him, and they would have no truck with anything he required.

Now, in between these two extremes, you have another group. By far the larger group, I think. These folk apparently felt at various times, because we're covering quite an area of quite a period here, these folk seemed to have sensed that there was something altogether different about Jesus of Nazareth.

If you asked them what, probably they would reply quite variously, quite differently one from the other, but they were convinced that he was not the ordinary rub of the mill. Some of them would go much, much further than that, and they felt that somehow or other they must make some kind of response to him. You have an illustration of this in the Gospel of John in chapter 2. Now, this was at a fairly early period in the ministry of our Lord.

He goes up to Jerusalem for the first time to the feast of Passover, and we're told there in John chapter 2 that whilst he was there, many believed in his name. But it's the next word that really takes us by surprise. He did not believe in them.

They believed in him, but he did not believe in them. And some of the translations we'll put is slightly different, but it comes to this. He did not commit himself to them.

He did not respond to their apparent belief or faith, call it what you will, in him. They believed in him, but he did not believe in them. In other words, he sensed that there was something radically deficient in their response to him as the incarnate God of glory come down to manifest God before the eyes of men and to secure redemption for the lost.

Whatever they said, whatever they did, however they responded, it was inadequate. Now, you find this going on not just at that very early stage, but it goes on at least halfway through the public ministry of our Lord and perhaps even beyond that. Folk feeling that they must do something.

You can't just listen to a man like this and do nothing. You can't just sit still. He really has authority.

He really does work miracles and the miracles mean that surely God must be with him. You can't have a man like this, call him a man if you like, you can't have a man like this, teaching like this, performing miracles as he does, without responding to it. It's insane.

But the kind of response they made was so utterly inadequate that as Jesus indicates in the strange words of our text, the end of these people was worse than their beginning. And by the time we come to the end of the ministry of our Lord, it is beyond doubt that many of them were among the throng in Jerusalem who cried, away with him, crucify him. Though they've made their decisions and they've made some kind of a response, but it was inadequate.

Jesus here exposes then a feigned or partial response to himself and his teaching. You see, not every apparent conversion is a turning from sin to God. Not every new beginning is a token of regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

Not every man or woman that joins the people of God belongs to the God of the people. It is possible for us to make a profession of faith which is totally inadequate. And I believe, my friends, that this is a menacing danger in this 20th century, as you and I are passing through these spiritually wearisome years.

It is the danger, especially among those who are evangelicals and are bringing up children in this atmosphere, of pressing our children to make some kind of decision, and perhaps ourselves going the same way, without asking the question, what is the real, saving, eternally satisfying decision that God requires of us, and being determined to offer nothing else and nothing less than that. Now, I don't want to take too long at this, but I want you to see that there is a context here. There is an historical context that enables us to see how our text is a response to the contextual situation.

If you read John 12 here, for example, you will notice that people who are in the center of things all along are the Pharisees. I don't want to go back over the chapter in detail, but in verse 2 you find them, when the Pharisees saw this, that some of the disciples had been picking ears of corn on a Sabbath day, they were up in arms. Then again in verse 14, the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill him, of all things.

Then again in verse 24, when the Pharisees heard this they said, it is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that he is casting out demons. We can't deny the fact that he is casting out demons. He is saving men and women from the grip of evil power.

But what we claim, said the Pharisees, is this, he is doing it all because he is in league with a prince of devils. The Pharisees. And then again, look at verse 38.

Then some of the Pharisees, now accompanied by teachers of the law, said unto him, Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you. As if they hadn't seen one. As if it never worked a miracle.

Where have they been? They now want some clear unmistakable sign that will make faith unnecessary. That is what you do when you crave for signs that are compelling. You are saying, I want a sign to persuade me to believe without exercising faith.

You want the fruit of the Christian life without having the root of it. And these people, they said, no, just you show us one sign that will make believers of us all. As if they hadn't seen any.

You see, their eyes have been closed and their ears have been deaf and their hearts have been hard. All that has gone on to date has been just like water on the proverbial duck's back. But the point is this.

All of these people in some way or other had made decisions. Now I use that word all, not meaning everybody, but in the general sense. You see, there had been a great ministry before the ministry of Jesus that had caused hundreds and thousands of these people to make decisions.

There came striding on to the scene that amazing man, John the Baptist. And John the Baptist is a great man, however you look at him. Either from this side of the New Testament, or from yonder side, from the vantage point of the Old Testament, or from the vantage point of his contemporaries.

John the Baptist was a gigantic man, a man of God. However you look at him, he was a great man. Now he came on to the scene.

He didn't dress like other people. He didn't preach like other people. He didn't go to people and preach to them in the streets or in their homes.

He went, believe it or not, it sounds incredible to us. He went down into the wilderness away from the people. But the people went into the wilderness to listen to him.

And even royalty, even King Herod went to hear him in the wilderness. And we read that all Jerusalem and the district round around so and so and so and so. They all went and flocked after John.

You go back to chapter 3 of Matthew's Gospel. They went and flocked after John, and they begged John to baptize them. And among them there were many Pharisees.

You see what I'm saying? The thunderclaps of judgment had come upon them. John had scared them stiff. Not that he was planning to scare people, but he was declaring that God is righteous, God is just, God is holy, sin has consequences, and there must be repentance.

And they had shaken in their shoes as they listened to John the Baptist. But Herod was unable for a long time to do anything about it because his conscience said to him, John is right, even though he's telling you that it's wrong to live with that woman that you have in the palace. John is right, so don't touch him.

And Herod allowed him to go on for a long time. But you see the point is this now. We've moved on in the history of Jesus.

Whatever decision they made when they were baptized by John, all those decisions were inadequate. They may have accepted some aspects of the teaching of Jesus, and they may have been baptized by him, calling upon the name of the Lord for his grace in some sense or another. But they've gone back, and the Pharisees are back now worse than they ever were.

Here they are. You know, in the beginning of chapter 12, not only are they quibbling about the Sabbath, because the disciples of Jesus had eaten years of corn on the Sabbath day. When they come to a synagogue, and there's a man who is a demoniac, both deaf and dumb in the synagogue, they quarrel with our Lord Jesus because he brings him healing on the Sabbath day.

And Jesus challenges them, if you have an ox that falls into the gutter, don't you? Don't you go after it on the Sabbath day? Or a sheep or whatever? Of course they do, but they didn't want to lose anything from their stock. Nevertheless, they would hound somebody who did anything on the Sabbath day. It was all hypocritical.

Jesus actually, in verse 15 of chapter 12 of Matthew, went away from them all and hid from them, and talked to some others, a little group that came to him, and proved to them that he was indeed the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah in chapter 42. But that was a private matter, he would not allow them to talk publicly about it. And then they went on, still now at this late having got so near to the kingdom, having felt the power of the world to come in the teaching of the Baptist, and in the influence of Jesus, they go back.

And when they see him casting out demons so decisively, they say, he's doing all this in league with a prince of demons, and demanding a sign as if they'd not had one sign before. So you see, here in chapter 11, Jesus says this, to whom then can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others, we played the flute to you, and you did not dance. We sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he has a demon. The son of man came eating and drinking, and they say here is a glutton, and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners, but wisdom is proved right by her action. Where are we at then? This is where we are at.

These men had made some kind of a spiritual decision, influenced by John and Jesus, or by either or of them. But their end, even at that stage, was worse than their beginning. They were getting from bad to worse.

They are already planning to murder the Savior. Now we think of the death of Jesus as coming all together towards the end. It's not so.

They are even planning here and now, halfway through. Now what has our Lord got to say? I believe that our text today is an answer to that. Here he is not talking of demon possession in the strict sense, but he's giving a kind of... I don't know whether the word parable is too strong.

He's speaking metaphorically. He's speaking pictorially, and presenting in a pictorial form precisely what has gone wrong with these people. And in so doing, he is warning those that will yet hear his voice.

And I believe that he is warning us here this morning of the deficiencies in many of our decisions, albeit we say it's a decision for Christ. Now let's look at two or three things here in particular. What is our Lord condemning? What did he have to condemn in that generation? And what does he go on to say, even so also it will be with this wicked generation? What's he talking about? What kind of deficiencies? I want to mention three or four, and I shall be brief.

First of all, the decision that these people had gone through was negative in a fundamental sense. Whereas the decision that our Lord Jesus Christ requires of sinners is basically fundamentally positive. Or can I put it differently? Fundamentally, the result of hearing John the Baptist and hearing Jesus made these people titivate their lives a little bit, and get rid of some of the bad things that their consciences had been telling them about.

And they decided to have a spring cleaning, and they got rid of things out of their lives, an evil spirit of whatever kind, a spirit of gossip, a spirit of criticism. I don't know, this is only a guess. A spirit of gossip, a spirit of what? Well, you go through the list.

I'm not going to take time to try it. But some kind of evil spirit they got rid of. If you had sat for a day under the ministry of John the Baptist, my friend, I guarantee you, you wouldn't have slept too happily that night, unless you did something.

And the tragedy with us today is this. You can sit under our ministry and sleep, and do nothing. But with John the Baptist, men and women had to do something, for heaven and hell were realities.

God was a reality. And what they did was this. They got rid of some of the evil spirits.

They decided to give the spirit of notice to quit. You know, it's amazing what we can do in the power of the flesh. Now, I used to think, I must confess to you, a fault and a great failing.

I used to think that no one but regenerate Christians could really do that kind of thing. You know, discipline your life that you get rid of bad habits, and you really appear as a new creature. I used to think that.

I used to think that until I met one certain communist, two certain people belonging to Jehovah's Witnesses. And I found that they were the most disciplined people that I had at that point met. And they could change their lives and titivate their mode of living.

Judging from the outside, you would say, these people are blameless. Oh no, don't you come down to doctrine now. I'm not talking about doctrine for the moment.

But what is visible, their mode of behavior, whatever they wanted to do, they seemed to have the power to do it. And these folks that Jesus is addressing here, are talking about here, that they drew upon resources, perhaps the evil one himself was helping them to get rid of the demons, even though he's dividing his own house in the business. But you see, good as that may be, as far as it goes, it is totally inadequate.

Now, for my part, if a man comes to me, I don't care whether he's a Jehovah's Witness, or whether he's a communist, or whether he's a Nazi, whatever he is, if he says that he's going to get rid of bad language and get rid of bad this, bad that, evil this, evil that, I say, God bless you, friend. Anybody who does anything to better the climate of the society in which we live, I think is doing us all a favor. But if you think that that is what the kingdom of God is, if you think that that is what the Lord Jesus Christ requires, my friend, you're very much mistaken.

And I say to you, quite bluntly, you have yet to read the New Testament with your eyes open. Because the fundamental thing about the Christian faith is not the rejection of things, that will come, but in a particular context, it is the acceptance of Jesus himself into the heart, into the throne, into the mind, into the emotions, to rule and reign over the will and the conscience. It's the Christ within.

It's to receive him, not to be without the other. It's the acceptance of Jesus Christ. And I've no doubt this morning, if we were honest with one another and had the opportunity of confessing it, there would be many here who've tried to get rid of this evil spirit and that out of their lives, but maybe you have yet to receive Jesus into your heart.

I tell you what Jesus said here, your end will be worse than your beginning. Arithmetically, Christianity is not a matter of getting rid of things, though that will come as a segment, as a part, as a consequence. But the big thing, the cardinal thing, the central event in Christian experiences, the incoming into our hearts, into our lives, into our innermost sanctuary of our souls, of the Lord Jesus Christ by his spirit.

Is he dwelling in you today? Secondly, the kind of experience described by our Lord as inadequate was superficial. When what he demands is altogether radical. Reading again from our text, when this evil spirit went out of the house, he went into arid places.

Now, of course, evil spirits don't walk, and so our Lord must be speaking pictorially and in that way here, rather than being literal. And there are many things here that literally do not apply. So he's giving us a picture, but he imagines the evil spirit going and walking around dry places and they don't like, evil spirits don't like dry places apparently.

And the evil spirit said to himself, oh my, I can't live here, too stuffy or whatever. And he says, I've got to go back to the place I left. And in order to make sure of it, he takes with him seven others of his kind to make sure that he gets re-entry and he'll be a sitting tenant forevermore.

Nobody else will get rid of him. He and his seven friends will sit there and squat there and have control of the whole thing. No more of this, he says.

I'm not going to walk these places anymore. I'll go back to the house whence I came. But what he found was this.

He found the house unoccupied, empty, sorry, unoccupied, swept and put in order, says the NIV. And the King James says, garnished. Now the kind of experience which Jesus found inadequate is described then as the result of a process of sweeping and decorating.

He clearly had in mind some kind of superficial cleanup or reformation which had resulted after the eviction of the past tenant. Now you can see it, can't you? Some of you are landlords and you have houses or apartments and you've got rid of some tenant or other and then you go in and you say, what's the place like? Oh my, we've got to do something here. We've got to brush out the dirt.

We've got to get rid of this and get rid of that and we've got to do some washing perhaps. But we've got to get rid of it all and then we've got to do some painting and decorating. It's a simple illustration.

But this is on the spiritual level. The evil spirit has gone out. He'd left his influence behind even when he'd gone and says, Jesus, when he came back again, he found it changed altogether.

The fundamental change of course was that it was unoccupied, but now as well as that, he found it clean, brushed, groomed, swept and garnished, which covers a lot of things, painted, decorated, put in order. Now again, my friends, this is good as far as it goes spiritually. And morally, when people get rid of an evil spirit, it's good to wipe up the mess after them.

And to start to titivate the inside of the heart in some way or other as best you can. Your emotions, your thoughts of other people, your imaginations. But listen, if you believe that the swept and the decorated heart is clean, you must think again.

If you do think that, let me remind you that it only appears clean at best. And the very appearance of it is temporary. You see, no amount of brushing and sweeping can make the sinful heart of man clean.

Oh, the Bible thunders that at us. Jesus thunders this at us. Nothing that man can do with his broom or his paintbrush can make the human heart clean.

Even in the home, brushing and grooming is only a temporary business. If you have stone floors or whatever, well, you get rid of the superficial, loose dirt and you brush whatever is there into a pan. But even that's a temporary thing.

And in so doing, there will be clouds of dust that will probably rise again and you'll see them coming down on your furniture when the sun comes up, won't you? But if you are wise, sooner or later, you'll get a mop out or you may get a scrubbing brush and you'll begin to wash the floor and scrub it if needs be and put some disinfectant on it. You see, my friend, the broom only gets rid of the loose dirt. So it is in the human heart.

But there is dirt that is not loose. There is dirt that clings. There is dirt that clings to the imagination.

And oh my God, how to get rid of it. There are men and women that bring it to church and bring it to the minister's vestry and bring it for this, that and other kind of counseling. Dirt, dirt, dirt in the imagination, in the mind, in the way of thinking, in our emotions.

We've become polluted. We've become filthy. We can only go to bed with a sink of iniquity in our souls and we can only get up to say.

And if you think a broom is going to get rid of that, my friend, you've never come within a mile of Jesus Christ. You know, I feel this is terribly needed today. This reminder, the command of the Bible is from the Old Testament to the new, wash you, make you clean.

And blessed be the name of God. Oh, surely this is the good news par excellence. God has provided in his mercy a fountain for sin and uncleanness.

A fountain has been opened by God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, friend, to clean your imagination, to purge your mind, to take the thing that clings from your will so that you can be free to act, to make your passions, desires once again that are clean. I found myself dancing the end of the week as I

was reading again, those great words of Isaiah, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be a snow, though they be red like crimson and they stand out. That's the crimson one.

You come into the church and you're wearing crimson. Everybody will see you. And if you're not careful, somebody will turn around and they'll, ah, some people have sins like that.

They stand out, they walk down the street, you know what they are. You don't need to guess. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Once, as a young Christian, I remember being terribly tempted. I don't think I've ever told anybody about it. I was on a crossroads in the town of Haverford West, down in West Wales.

I was on my own and I was terribly tempted to wonder and sin. I came around a corner and there were a group of Salvation Army people there. Just as I came around the corner, the band struck up.

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? And it seemed as if God from heaven had come down onto my path and stood astride and said, no, no, you don't go that way. There is power in the blood of Christ to turn you back and change you and cleanse you. I want to say that, my friend, with all the power and persuasiveness at my disposal this morning.

The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanseth from all sin. And if you are among those who have become terribly tempted by the things you watch on the television screen, or the things you read, or by your own imaginative processes working things up, hypothetically as it were, my friend, there is cleansing. There is a cathartic process that has originated in the courts of heaven, the product of God the Father by the Son, and it is made over to you by the Spirit.

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunge beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stain. This is radical, you see. This goes down to the bottom.

It's the radix. It goes to the root of a thing. Can I just go one step further, and then I'll be through.

The kind of experience which Jesus here found inadequate was a matter of decoration rather than of transformation. You see, the evil spirit's gone out, and then the landlord has decided to do a little bit of cleaning up, and things have been titivated. Things are different.

Things have been polished a little. But you know, our Lord used a word here. I'm not sure what it was in his Aramaic, but it has been translated into the Greek that underwrites our New Testament.

By the word, the verb kosmeo, that's a Greek word, kosmeo. Can any of you guess what English word comes from that? Put your hands up. I never ask you to.

Yes, some of you do. Okay. What is it? Ah, so, it's clear.

Cosmetics. You see, I'm treading on thin ice, and I have to be very careful when you talk about cosmetics. Cosmetics.

When the evil spirit has gone out, what was done was a cosmetic affair. What do cosmetics do? They don't change anything. Only the appearance.

Ladies, don't be cross with me, will you, but you see, if you put on a lot, you don't really change anything. You're exactly the same underneath. Exactly the same.

Cosmetics do not change. Only the appearance. And that's what happened here.

The house had been given a course in cosmetics, but the house was exactly the same. There had been no radical change of the heart. Now, Jesus is not satisfied with that.

That's why he told men like Nicodemus, you must be born again. And that is why Paul could tell the people of his day, God is not satisfied with anything less than a new creation. And he goes on to say this, if any man is in Christ, really in Christ, really a Christian, there is a new creation.

And he adds, everything has become new. And everything new is of God. Not just different from the past, but everything new is of God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.

My friend, my question to you this morning, the thing that burdened me as I came to this text and the text gripped me, the thing that burdened me was this. I felt I need to look at my own experience of the grace of God again and ask myself, I'm getting older now and so are you. Has he an argument with what I call my experience of him? Does it pass the test? Does yours? Now don't stop thinking about that when you leave this morning.

It is too, absolutely too crucial. You speak of your personal experience, you speak of your Christian experience. My friend, I don't want to doubt you.

That's not the point. But what I want to do is for myself, I want to be sure that what I have responded, the way I have responded to my Savior is acceptable before him, is real. It's nothing short of real.

And that those of my fellow men and women, and especially to those to whom I've had the privilege of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, that the experience is nothing short of real. And when he sees it, he will acknowledge it as the real thing, the work of the Spirit. I conclude with this then.

The place to stop is this. It's where we're told what the fundamental issue is, upon which everything else depends, namely the acceptance into our hearts of the Lord Jesus Christ. I wonder whether there is someone here this morning who's gone through an awful lot of religion, but he's never come to this.

You may be a visitor, you may be an old Knox member. And though you may have sat at communion, and though you may have heard a thousand sermons, the fact of the matter is this. The house of your heart is unoccupied by Jesus Christ.

I'm going to read you a hymn. I'm going to suggest that as I read it rather slowly, you might like to follow it. It's not a familiar one, it's a simple one.

It was written at the end of the 19th century. And here it is. He gently knocks, has knocked before, has waited long, is waiting still.

You treat no other friend so ill. Oh, lovely attitude. He stands with melting hearts and laden hands.

Oh, matchless kindness. And he shows this matchless kindness to his foes. Admit him.

For the human heart ne'er entertains so kind a guest. No mortal tongue their joys can tell with whom he condescends to dwell. Yet no, nor of the terms complain.

When Jesus comes, he comes to reign. To reign and with no partial sway, thoughts must be slain that disobey. And the last verse is a prayer.

Sovereign of souls, thou prince of peace. Oh, may thy gentle reign increase. Throw wide the door, each willing mind, and be his empire all mankind.

Let us pray. Our God and our heavenly Father, we thank you for this, the Lord's day. And for added reason to believe now that we did not have as we gathered that our Lord Jesus is alive from the dead and among his people still, addressing us from the written word and addressing the very circumstances of our human life with grace and power and authority.

Come, oh Lord, and grant grace to each of us to make such response to your word at this time that is neat and proper and adequate. Save us from halfway measures that can only result in the end being worse than the beginning. Oh God, save us from hypocrisy and lead us in the way of everlasting life through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

Amen.

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