

He Will Turn the Hearts

by Shane Idleman

Repentance is the key to turning hearts back to God, as it involves changing one's mind and behavior to align with God's will.

Duration: 43:52

Scripture: Luke 1:76

Topics: "True Repentance", "Gods Mercy"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance and turning back to God through genuine repentance. It highlights the difference between worldly sorrow and true repentance, stressing that repentance is the key to restoring relationships, finding peace, and experiencing God's mercy and love. The message underscores that repentance is the first command of the gospel and is essential for addressing all problems and challenges in life.

Transcript

Matthew 17 verse 9, now as they came down from the mountain, now I need to back up from four weeks ago, some of you won't remember, some of you will, the three disciples had a powerful encounter on top of the mountain, they call it the mountain of transfiguration, where Jesus was transformed before their eyes. So now they're coming down off of that mountain, and now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them saying, tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead. So they had a vision up on this mountain, and people often ask me, can God still work in dreams and visions, and I would need a lot more than five minutes to fully unpack that sermon, maybe we will someday, but I believe God can move in many different ways.

If you go online, you see a lot of different testimonies from Muslims coming to Christ through visions and dreams, and you can say thousands of them are liars, I don't think so because their lives have been radically changed. So they experience this powerful vision of God, but Jesus for some reason, if I had time I could go into this part, and that's really the hard, to be honest with you, that's one of the hardest jobs when I'm preparing a sermon, is what actually do I stay on for a while, and what do I move on from, because each sentence could bring about an hour sermon, do you realize that? If we want to talk about certain topics, but in saying that, Jesus is saying, I believe, tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead, and you'll see Jesus many times going through and saying, don't tell anybody, I just healed you of blindness, and we know what happened, they would tell people, and he told the demoniac,

don't tell anybody that I have lifted this burden from you, and they would go and they tell people are leprosy. But then it's interesting, when Jesus goes to the land of the Gadarenes, it's not really would be considered God's people, but when he goes there, and he heals this man of demonic influence, he told the man, go and tell your family the wonderful things that God has done for you.

So it's really not confusing, in my opinion, Jesus is not revealing himself yet, who he is, that's coming later, and he wants, hey, don't tell people yet who I am, but once I've been risen from the dead, you can go ahead and let them know what you've experienced. And then the disciples asked him saying, why then do the scribes say that Elisha must come first? Now, what I think is happening here is they truly believe they just experienced God, and God spoke from heaven, and they fell down on their face, they're thinking the kingdom of God is here, the kingdom of heaven is now, this is it, this is what we've been waiting for. And so they're saying, well, why then did the scribes say, if you go back to Malachi 400 years earlier, one of the last prophets, actually the last prophet in the Old Testament, Zephaniah, Haggai, Malachi, was the last prophet there in the Old Testament, and he actually prophesied that Elisha would come before the day of the Lord.

So the disciples are saying, well, why did the scribes say that Elisha's gonna come first, if we're experiencing the time of God's manifestation right now? So again, why then did the scribes say that Elisha must come first? And Jesus answered and said to them, indeed, Elijah is coming first, and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has already come. And they did not know him, but they did to him whatever they wished.

Likewise, the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands. Then the disciples understood that he spoke to them about John the Baptist. So this is interesting.

What they wrote about in Malachi 400 years ago, why don't we read that? Malachi 4, the end of, actually, this is the end of the Old Testament. Everything culminates at the end of Malachi chapter 1, 2, 3, and 4, I believe. There's another chapter 5, I'm hoping.

But I believe this is the end of Malachi chapter 4, verse 5 and 6. I will send to you the prophet Elisha before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers. Or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.

So we look, let's take a brief look at the life of Elisha and John the Baptist. And I got this from gotquestions.org, they put this together well. Number one, God predicted John's work as being like that of Elisha.

We see that in Luke 1, 17. John the Baptist dressed like Elisha. Elisha was an Old Testament prophet who would go and prophesy, actually tell kings, entire nations to repent and turn back to God.

And then we see now John the Baptist is the same spirit of Elisha. And like Elisha, John the Baptist preached in the wilderness. Also, number four, both men preached a message of repentance.

Number five, both men withstood kings and had high-profile enemies. John the Baptist actually lost his head because of it. If you remember, he challenged the king.

So here's what's happening in a nutshell, if we can fast forward. John the Baptist is coming in the spirit and the power of Elisha. But it's interesting, John the Baptist, when questioned, said that he's not Elisha to come.

He was baptizing the people. And the scribes and the Pharisees came to him and they said, so by what power, what authority are you doing this? You can't do this in the name of God. Are you Elisha who is to come? And John the Baptist said, no, I'm not.

And so you might say, well, that's a little contradictory, isn't it? Well, two things. They're thinking in reincarnation, that the actual Elisha is coming reincarnated. Other religions believe that, right? Reincarnated now is John the Baptist has been reincarnated as Elisha.

So he's saying, I'm not Elisha. But God is saying he will come to you in the spirit and the power of Elisha. The same type of ministry that Elisha had is going to come through John the Baptist.

He's going to turn the hearts of the fathers back to their sons. So the focus of John's ministry, he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. Isn't that interesting? John the Baptist is going to turn.

And Jesus said, there's never been a better, a more powerful man born of women than John the Baptist. So this guy's a central figure. So begs the question, how is he going to turn the hearts? How is John the Baptist going to turn the hearts of all these people? I think that's an important question for all of us today.

How is he going to turn the hearts back to the fathers, back to the children, the children back to the father? Well, let's read Luke 176, believe it or not. 76 verses in chapter one. There's, I think there's a few more, 70, probably 78 or 79.

And you child will be called the prophet of the highest. Now this is before John the Baptist is born, or he's just now being born. His father's mouth was closed because he doubted God.

And when his mother, they were asking his mother, what's his name going to be? She said, well, it's John. And they said, no, we can't name him John. So let's ask the father.

And the father wrote it down on a tablet. And as soon as he did that, his mouth was opened and he could speak. So this is what he's saying.

And you child, John the Baptist, little baby, will be called the prophet of the highest. For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare his way, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins. So how does John the Baptist, how is he going to prepare the way of the Lord? The same way he's going to repair, turn the hearts back to the children, back to their father and the father back to their children.

What's that one word we always talk about? Repentance, repentance. So the next time you hear people say, Shane always talks about repentance. Well, yeah, it's the first word in the gospel.

It's in throughout the whole gospel. It's throughout the whole Old Testament. This is actually, this is how you get hearts to turn back to God.

This is how you get hearts to turn back to families repaired. This is how you get marriages repaired. This is actually the secret of the Christian life.

Repentance, turning hearts back to God. And that's why I get so frustrated when many churches don't want to talk about this issue. They don't want to talk about repentance and sin.

And then we've got to avoid those things. Well, that's the very thing that's going to turn the heart back to where it needs to be. Because without that, you just have a lot of fluff.

You have a lot of counseling. You have a lot of therapy. And you have a lot of psychological babble and nothing changes.

But it's, he's saying here, you're going to turn the heart. And if you think I'm hard, why don't you read John the Baptist's sermons? They were very short. Turn, turn back to God, turn back to God.

And then the religious leaders came down to the river and he said, you brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come. If you truly have repented, then bear fruit worthy of repentance. Did they repent? No, they said, we are children of Abraham.

And John the Baptist basically said, God could care less. He can raise up children of Abraham from these very stones. But even now, even now, the ax is laid at the root of the tree and it's bringing it down for judgment.

So this word is so powerful. And this, I wish more people, I mean, you guys are good in the second service. And we understand how powerful this word is.

When you can get a person to repent, it means to change your mind, to change the way you think and get back on track with God. That's how real change takes place. So a portion of the problems that we're going through, if I can be quite honest, the majority of the problems that Christians are going through in the Christian community has to do with this word.

It really does. Because when you see, I mean, if we could, a perfect example, I thought of, how many of you have seen that movie Fireproof? When Kirk Cameron finally repents, kneels at his wife's bed, begins to cry and weep and repent, that's when the marriage turned. That's when he restored it.

Or when the prodigal finally hits his knees and repents and says, I'm not worthy, but I'll come home. That's why I love this word. It's not a discouraging word.

It's only discouraging to those who don't want to hear it. But it's a very good word because it actually bridges the gap back to God. So I would encourage you, if there's issues in your life, this isn't always the answer, but I would say primarily this is the number one answer.

Because repentance involves changing the way you think and changing the way you live and changing the way you act. You turn back to the right direction. Now, how will that not fix most problems? It will, that's the answer.

It will. So the one thing that's gonna turn, well, think about that. How many in our culture today in the church, how many problems are occurring in the home with kids and their parents? And parents with their kids.

We probably can't even measure it. It's that bad. But this is the type of thing that will get parents on track with their kids and kids on track with their parents, repentance.

I'm sorry. I was wrong. I don't want to live like that.

I don't want to treat you that way. How can I improve? How can we make this work? I will do whatever it takes. I will restore what was broken.

I will bring back what I caused to drive this family out the door. What can I do to help and nurture that? You don't think that would work? But why do most people not want to do that? Pride, it's what I talk about often, pride. So repentance is the enemy of pride.

How does a person prepare to meet the Lord? John the Baptist, his whole ministry. It's interesting. John the Baptist was a forerunner of Christ.

That means he came before Jesus to prepare the way. John the Baptist comes before Jesus. He's a little bit older, a couple months, probably six months older.

He comes before Jesus and prepares the way. Well, how do you prepare the way? Well, as many of you know, if you studied commentaries and different things, many times as a king was coming into a city, they would go out and they would clean the roads. They would level the roads.

They would remove stones. They would, their protection. The king is coming.

Let's get ready. So John the Baptist comes forward and it's a big misconception that people, that you don't think you have to get ready to meet your maker. Oh, I'll just, I'm good.

I'll talk to him when I die and you know. No, you have to prepare to meet your maker. One of the prophets said, prepare to meet your maker, oh Israel.

Be prepared because the judgment of God is coming. And we have to prepare. So John the Baptist comes before Jesus Christ and prepares the heart of the people.

How? Through repentance. He would, people come down to the Jordan River, repent and be baptized, repent and be baptized. That was his whole ministry.

He didn't knock on doors. He didn't clean neighborhoods. He didn't help homeless, the homeless people.

All things are great, but that's, his main ministry was repentance and calling the people back. And that's, I don't know if you've heard of this before, but there's something called the social gospel that was, I don't know when it became kind of famous, but it was always focused on the social needs of people. Feed the stomach.

Meet their needs. And that's the gospel. But that's not the gospel.

That's a byproduct of the gospel. The primary message of the gospel is to repent and prepare your heart to meet God. And then from the right understanding of the gospel, now I go over and make an influence.

But if you're more concerned about feeding the belly than saving the soul, then your priorities will be off. And that's what would happen with the social gospel. They'd be so, they would concentrate so much on feeding and clothing and different things that they would neglect the more important things.

At the exclusion, they would neglect that. And if you go to many ministries now that focus on those things and thank God for those things. If somebody wants to start a homeless ministry where we can bring our extra clothes, I'll be the first to sign up.

We need those things desperately. But that's not the gospel. And we can actually hurt the gospel by saying and not encouraging people to turn from their sin and turn back to God.

That's how you really help somebody. And then from that relationship, then you go and you minister in a different way. And really the main reason the social gospel caught a lot of heat and rightly so is because it just focused on the physical needs of the people instead of the spiritual needs of the people.

And there are many churches, even in this valley, I could name a half dozen that you've heard of before. They have wonderful, wonderful social ministries. But you will never ever hear a message like this from the pulpit.

Never. I think, I don't know if we made copies. It's been on the news, Charisma News.

I think Christian Post picked it up. But I wrote an article this week titled something like, I knew I should have wrote the title down. Why are many churches and pastors avoiding the S word? Three letter S word.

I know what some of you are already thinking. It's not that word. It's sin, not sex.

The sin word. I guess they avoid that word too sometimes. But the sin word, they're avoiding that word.

And I talk to people a lot. You know, well, this church has many great outreaches. Well, why do they avoid the S word? Why do they avoid what the whole point of ministry many times is to, now you can open the door through food and clothing and, you know, and bring people the gospel, of course.

But sometimes we'll let the, you wanna know why? Here's the honest truth. This is much easier. It's much easier to bring some food and clothes and see you later.

Whew, got out of that one. I remember two years ago, we got a call. There was a Muslim family actually in need of mattresses and food and different things.

And of course we checked it. I drove by their apartment on Gadsden. And I told the guy, okay, we'll go by.

We went and bought four mattresses. And I went in to help them bring these mattresses in this complex on Gadsden Avenue. And it was, there's just nothing.

The kids are sitting on the floor. The guy could barely speak English. He was so thankful.

They wanted me to sit and eat with them. And it was, there's nothing. And there's no furniture, just apartment, nothing.

And blankets on the ground, a pillow. And so this was genuine, very genuine. And that's much easier for me to say, here's our card, Wes, thanks, nice meeting you.

That was easy. Versus, let me tell you the difference between, you know, or let me tell you why. And sometimes it's not a great opportunity.

You don't put down the mattress and say, hey, by the way, let me, you know where you're on a broad road to destruction. You know that you are building relationships there. But those things are very, very easy.

It's very easy to drop off a whole bunch of clothes and get a high out of that. It's very easy to buy somebody food and get a high out of that. And those are good things.

But when they overshadow the real needs of the people, that's where we have to be careful. And you know, because God will prompt you to say something. And it's up to us whether we follow through with that prompting or not.

So that's where people are really gonna get help and turn their hearts back is through this word repentance. And it's interesting, whether it was an Old Testament word or a New Testament word, it always involved turning from sin and turning to God. I don't know if you've heard of John Rice before, but he was a very famous Baptist evangelist probably in the early 1900s.

I'm sorry, yeah, 1900s, 1915 to 19, probably 50, 60, 70. He said, there is no way you can please God, no way that you can have sweet communion with him and to get your prayers answered if you are in rebellion against the known will of God. And he's absolutely right.

There's no way we can please God or get many of our prayers answered if we're in open rebellion to God. So many times we go to people and they say, I prayed to God, I've done this, but they're not in right relationship with him. So our job often is to reconnect them with God.

How do you reconnect them through God? Through repentance and having them get reconnected with God. That's a life source that reconnects all of us to God, repenting and coming back and failing to turn the heart from sin results in rebellion with God. This is interesting.

This morning I was reading a commentary on, I don't remember what passage it was, but I had to write this down for you because it fits perfectly. The people sometimes wonder why their prayers are not answered. Oh, really? Has that ever happened to you? Just me again? Okay, good.

People sometimes wonder why their prayers are not answered, but if they don't fulfill the responsibility that God has already given them, then they should not be surprised when he does not give them further guidance. And that is so true. We pray, God, give me an answer.

We pray for God to give us an answer. And we know he's already given us a responsibility. He's already told us to do something.

And we say, yeah, I know about that, but I'm going to ignore that and let me pray about these. Oh, Lord, why are you answering these prayers and these prayers? And why, yeah, I know, I know. Who cares about that? Why don't you answer these prayers? And many times he says, go back first to what you know you're supposed to do.

And then once the heart, repentance, once we repent and say, okay, Lord, I know I need to do that. Let me do that. Then it's amazing how the floodgates can open and our prayers can be answered.

I've had this happen many times. I pray, Lord, what's happening? And I'm reminded sometimes, you know, you need to go and restore and fix this relationship. I'm like, oh, I'll get to that later.

I mean, it's not that big a deal, right? And then you're praying, Lord, what's going on? And you feel just dead and nothing's happening and actually things start to happen that you don't want to happen. And once you go back and repair and repent and turn and fix what you know you need to be fixed, that can reconnect the heart of God with you. There's an interesting scripture in the Old Testament where God says, is my ear? It's all a metaphor.

God doesn't have an ear. He doesn't have an arm. He's a spirit, and those who worship him worship him in spirit and in truth.

But the Bible says, God says, is not my ear heavy that I cannot hear or my hand short that I cannot save, but your sins have separated you from me so that I cannot hear. And there's, I've read a lot of different stories on this and so have you where, well, can God hear the prayers of people who aren't saved? And of course, he can hear the prayers and he'll answer a prayer that says, Lord, I need you, show me who you are. But he will, if there's sin, if there's iniquity that we know is wrong, God says, I hide my face.

I cannot hear your prayers. So either that's true or it's not. When God says, I can save, I can deliver, but your sins, your iniquities have separated me from you so that I can't even hear those prayers.

So you often wonder, and now I see a lot of gloomy faces, so let me bring in some hope as well too. Where does the hope come from? Repentance and Jesus, right? Repentance, getting reconnected, it's that easy. That's why I love this topic.

People go, oh man, Shane, you're right. Oh, I've been terrible. Oh goodness, what's going on? I knew this was the problem.

Repent, back on track, repent. Say, Lord, I'm sorry, let me get back on track. Let me do that again.

Let me return to my first love. Let me fix those things you want me to fix. I'm repenting and now the lines of community, there's nothing more sweeter than a prayer time after repentance.

That's when the tears come and the heart says, Lord, will you answer this and answer this? Now I'm in right fellowship with you again. I'm not fighting you and fighting you and fighting you week in and week out because you can go to church week in and week out and nothing happened. You can read the Bible and it's as boring as a newspaper.

You can just, nothing's happening because that sin is there, it's blocking. So once the sin is removed and the heart opens up, there's fellowship renewed. That's why I love this topic.

It's not every single week goes by for the last five years that people don't email us and say, your message brought me to repentance and my relationship with the Lord was restored because of repentance. It's powerful. And it's the one thing that is blocking many of you even tonight from receiving all that God wants to give you because there's something between you and repentance and God, it's called pride.

It's called self and the devil, the great deceiver will be planting thoughts even now. What do you think fiery darts are? When Paul says gird up the loins of your mind, we wrestle not against flesh and blood. The battle's right here.

The devil's not just gonna close the door and give you a flat tire. He's gonna plant thoughts in your mind. Boy, that guy up there's pretty loud.

I don't think he's, you know, he's not talking to me, he's talking to this person. If so and so was just here, if my spouse would hear this, well, yeah, yeah, I hear what you're saying. I hear what you're saying, but you don't know my situation.

I hear all the plants, he plants thoughts such as, yeah, he's right, but he doesn't know about you and your special circumstance and how you've allowed this to go on and what you went through. You've repented

many times. You don't need to hear that.

And that's how he works. That's what pride is. Basically, if you want my definition of pride and arrogance and looking what the Bible says, pride and arrogance basically is a form of stubbornness.

We're not gonna bend. We're not gonna cave in. We're gonna hold our ground darn it all anyway.

We're stubborn. Watch a little two-year-old get mad at something. She's just, I can't get that thing from her hand.

She is just so stubborn. No, mine, mine. And that's what pride is.

God says, just turn, give it over to me. He says, no, mine, mine. No, I'm not gonna do that.

And that's why I often ask the question, how long are you gonna continue in this direction? You won't win. You won't win against God. Life becomes more miserable, not more joyful.

Maybe it's just me, but anytime I'm fighting against God, I'm not fun to be around. You snap, I snap at my wife, I snap at my kids. I say, what's wrong with you? Wow, fighting against God.

Life is miserable for the believer. When there's something we know we need to do and we're not doing it, life is not pleasant. And so what bridges that gap? The whole point of the sermon, repentance.

From that article, I wanna read something, why churches and many pastors aren't talking about the S word. You know, I should probably clarify something too. I'm not, I hope you never feel this way and I wanna make sure this is crystal clear.

There are many great churches, even in this valley doing good things. There are many pastors I look up to who are doing much better jobs at pastoring than I do. And I'm not trying to say this is the only church that preaches the truth.

I don't ever wanna come across that way because there are a lot of good pastors and good churches doing good things, but the vast majority of the direction of the churches is absolutely alarming. When you get the guy with the biggest church on television, biggest church in the nation, he says he's not gonna talk about everything I'm talking about. He's not gonna talk about it.

And people say, oh yeah, it's good. I like that. Yeah, of course you like it, it's comfortable.

And it's not challenging. But here's a few things to keep in mind. The one word that changes everything is repentance.

I like what Richard Owen Roberts said many years ago. You can be certain, you can be certain that at the forefront of every significant recovery from backsliding, that the doctrine of repentance has been among the most precious truth that God has used and quickened. What he's saying there is absolutely right.

Throughout church history, throughout church history, when there's ever been a significant move to bring the church back from backsliding, you know what backsliding is? Trading in church for, I don't know, what's it, a weekend in Vegas with \$10,000? It's what goes on in Vegas days in Vegas. Backsliding. Backsliding, we're backsliding.

And any significant recovering from backsliding has always happened because repentance was preached. And we can put that into our own personal lives. At the forefront of every marriage that's ever been repaired, at the forefront of every person who finally came to Christ or stopped playing games or the prodigal son who came home or the daughter who was out in the streets, at the forefront of all of those has been repentance.

That's why I try to preach on this, try to get to it every Saturday to bring hearts back to Christ. Christ has to be in every sermon, but how do you get back to him? Through rebellion, through, I don't know about you, but I'm tired of church, normal church. I'm tired of my problems not ending and my prayers not being answered and my attitude not changing.

I'm tired of old school. We need to go back to the old truth of devoting our lives to God. Repentance is the first command of the gospel.

I don't know how many people realize that. Repentance, Jesus said go out and preach repentance. That's the first thing he told them.

Go out and preach repentance. Don't bring loaves of bread, don't bring fish, that'll be later. Go and preach repentance.

John the Baptist comes on the scene preaching repentance. Peter, his first sermon, was it a nice sermon? Go to Acts chapter three, I believe, and read two, three, four. Peter said, you guys put Christ on the cross.

Basically, you sons of hell, you sons of the devil, you put Christ on the cross, you stiff-necked people. What must we do to be saved? Repent. So this is so throughout the Bible.

I don't know how anybody misses it unless it's intentional. The only way I can think they miss it is they think that this is a good book, but not inspired by God. Because if you believe this is the inerrant word of God, without error, I'll talk about that next week a little bit for you, those who question that maybe.

This is God's word to us. That's a precious truth from Genesis to Revelation. Genesis, even Cain.

Cain and Abel, you know the story, right? God said, Cain, if you would not just do, if you wouldn't just do good, wouldn't I be with you? If you would just repent, but sin is crouching at the door. And then you get to Revelation, the whole Bible. If you call on the name of the Lord, you will be saved.

Now, anybody who thinks that calling on the name of the Lord is void of repentance, I've got some oceanfront property in Arizona to sell you. Because calling on the name of the Lord is repenting. Lord, I'm not Lord anymore.

I'm not God, I'm not the captain of my ship. I have been wrong. And that's why I laugh sometimes.

I talked with an atheist this week for three hours. And I had a headache because there's just no grounds for us coming from a little single cell organism and developing. And I asked him, I said, well, when that formed into a little baby, who helped the baby? Because babies can't make, he goes, well, the parents did.

I wanna know, where did the parents come from? Single cell organisms, DNA, they break up in protein. Okay, got it, did they form a toe? Did they form a leg? I mean, think this through. If you have little single cell proteins breaking up and helping them, how do they form a baby with eyes and a heart that's tiny, this size, and the heart grows and the liver grows and the lungs grow and everything just grows perfectly with

no care? Come on, you just checked your brains at the door.

That's all you did. You're out, I don't, blah, blah, blah, blah. I mean, you're out to lunch.

I didn't say it quite like that, but I did encourage him. I said, you are, this is the most, I laughed. I mean, this is the most ridiculous story I've ever heard in my life.

But they don't want there to be a God. And as you talk to them more, they don't like that God requires this, that God wants this, He demands this, what's wrong with this? It's all about pride and being the captain of our own ship. But some people might say, Shane, wait a minute, what about God's love? Well, thanks for asking that question.

Yes, thank God for John 3.16, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. But have you ever realized that love doesn't nullify repentance? In other words, love doesn't cover repentance, and love doesn't remove repentance. It actually encourages it, for the love of God leads us to repentance.

It's interesting how they work together. God's love leads me to repentance. And Jesus, of course, told the woman caught in the act of adultery, go and sin no more.

He exhorted the man in John 5.14 to go and sin no more, or a worse thing will come upon you. So folks, I would just encourage you, look at the word repentance. But also, is there any areas in your own life that require repentance? That's where we get the heart back to God.

God's mercy, and here's an interesting definition of mercy. And it's true, the biblical definition. Because we talk about repentance, God's love, God's mercy.

Compassion, this is mercy. It's compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone when it's within one's power to punish or harm them. So when it's in God's, it's in his power, he can do it to harm, to judge people, right? But in his mercy, he says, I know you deserve that because the wages of sin is death.

You deserve that, I deserve the wrath of God. Some people don't understand that, and it is a hard, it's a theological headache, but it's true. Somehow, well, I didn't choose it, well, I chose you, and we have this Adamic, theologians use this word, Adamic nature, the nature like Adam, that I have this nature that I hate God, and my heart is in rebellion towards God.

So in God's love and in his mercy, he said, I will provide a sacrifice, I will provide a solution. All you have to do is repent and believe and trust in me, and that sacrifice will cover your sins. So that's mercy.

So we don't, mercy and love don't cancel out repentance, they work together. Because of God's love, because of his mercy, I repent to embrace those things. Now let's pick back up at Luke one, verse 76.

And you child, remember talking about John the Baptist, and you child will be called the prophet of the highest, for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare his way, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins, right? Now verse 78, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the day spring from on high has visited us, that just means day spring is the day springing ahead like the dawn, God's love, his mercy is coming upon us. He's visiting us with it. To give light, to give light to those who sit in darkness in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Now this is a wonderful scripture for somebody who does not know the Lord. They don't know the Lord, they sit in darkness. There's no joy, there's no peace.

They love sin because sin loves company. They love their sin, but they're sitting in darkness. There's no light, there's no joy.

So God says right here, if you turn to my tender mercies, and how do you do that? Repent, if you repent of your sin and turn back to me, that peace will overshadow you and so will that joy. But it's interesting, I have seen more misery, and darkness, and despair in the lives of many Christians as well. Have you ever seen that or felt that? In the lives of Christians, they're in a darker prison than you ever knew in your life.

There's no peace, there's no joy, they're just going through the motions. Same answer. The same solution.

Repent, repent, repent, and get that life back on track. And my concern is this truth is so precious, it's talked about a lot here, that I think many people, it's in one ear and out the next. That here's the answer to your problems.

Christ, Jesus Christ, via a relationship through repentance is the answer to your problems. And many times I tell it to people who say, no, no, I have different kind of problems. No, all problems, all problems are stemming from our sinful nature and a fallen world.

So you look to the one who has the answer. So Shane, do you avoid problems? Oh, no. My relationship with Christ actually brings problems.

But you can go through those problems because Jesus said, I will be with you when the flood comes, when the rainwaters come, all these things, I will be with you. So that's my encouragement to many of you in this room. Stop fighting God, stop avoiding this word as if, well, I've heard it before.

It doesn't matter. If we've heard this word before, it doesn't matter. You can hear this word a thousand times.

It doesn't matter until it's engaged. I'm convinced that many people, many people in hell, if you're able to interview them, will say, I knew all about Jesus Christ. I knew he was the way, the truth, and the life.

I know he died on a cross for the sins of the world. I know all that. I knew that.

But what happened? It didn't know them. They didn't embrace that truth. So knowledge, knowledge apart from application will get you in trouble every time.

And I plead my heart with you. I know many Christians, they are in deep depression. Insurmountable darkness.

The joy is left. They're just going through the motions. And many times, not always, but many times, the reason is right here.

That they once again need to repent and get back on track for areas in their life that have crept in. You don't think bitterness can knock you off track? Or resentment? Or judgmentalism? I mean, there are some people I can get so upset at that it will just change my whole day. How could they? Oh, you know that, man, if I, boy, if I see them in a storm, I get peace of my mind.

Is that a good thing? So what cleanses that? Repentance. What fixes that? Repentance. What causes two spouses arguing and bickering, complaining to come back? Continuing in that? Or repenting? Now here's an interesting thing about repentance.

There's a huge difference between sorrow and repentance. A person can be sorry and cry and say, would you please come back? And then guess what? Next week, same thing. We just had somebody close to us who had to flee a state.

And we're spending some time with her because of physical abuse. And the husband's got her back twice now. And I warned her in January.

That's sorrow. That's a bunch of, you know what? If he was sincere, here's what it would look like. Crying, baby, come home.

I miss you. I'm so sorry. I'll change.

And they come home. What happened? That's not repentance. Repentance is whatever it takes.

I'll dive into church. I'll dive into counseling. I'll rebuild.

I'll get into anger management. Whatever I need to do, I need to draw close to God so I can treat you better. I'll quit my job that's taking us away.

I'll repair this. Whatever it takes. I'm repenting.

I'm weeping. I'm coming. And then you don't care.

You don't force them home. You don't force them home. You just be who you need to be.

And then God will draw them back in the right time. Anytime you have to force somebody home and make them feel bad about it and you have to force and draw, that's a wrong heart. That's not repentance.

And that's why many people aren't changing. They've got sorrow down. You've got sorrow down.

You can cry like a baby until you get what you want. And the Bible actually says that that's worldly sorrow that leads to hell and destruction. So be very careful.

Repentance is truly a breaking in the heart that I see how I've offended God. I see how I've offended others. Lord, I'm so sick over this sin that I'm repenting.

I need to make some changes. Not perfect changes. The thing I just described, will he never get angry again? Probably not.

But you can have huge changes where a person's actually changing because of repentance. So be crystal clear on that because I see so many people confused. Sorry for repentance.

Actually, tears running down the face can mean, people are going to know now, my wife left. My reputation's ruined. She goes to divorce.

There goes half of my income. See, that's not repentance. That's crying because your life is becoming difficult and you're facing the consequence.

Trust me, I've had many men cry and cry and cry. When I get to the bottom of it, it's because she's going after their pocketbook and divorce court. I say, you're never going to restore your marriage.

Why? Because you're more concerned about the money than you are your marriage. And that never works because it shows you, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth is going to speak. I mean, a true repentance would say, you know what? It's not about the money.

We don't even need attorneys. How can I fix what I did wrong? You're worth far more than money. How can I, whatever it takes, how can I, and you start to repent.

And then God uses that repentance to draw the other person back and it takes time. I mean, people know when we're genuine and we're not, right? And if people don't, God sure does. He knows to a T when repentance is genuine.

So I just encourage you, the worship team's going to come back up as we go into a few songs of worship. There's nothing wrong with getting our hearts right again. And saying, Lord, I've drifted off course in these areas.

I need to come back. Because the whole point of this message, He will turn the hearts of the people back to God. How? Via repentance.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/TbyXF_mHGtl.mp4

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