

Repentance and Clear Vision

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance and a clear vision of God's kingdom, highlighting the difference between the old covenant gospel and the new covenant gospel.

Duration: 58:32

Scripture: Matthew 3:1, Matthew 4:17, Matthew 22:37, Mark 8:22-26, 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 2 Timothy 4:3-5, James 4:4

Topics: "Repentance", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance, drawing parallels between the message of John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus and the need for individuals today to repent to truly receive Christ. It highlights the danger of idolatry, the necessity of turning away from earthly desires to serve God, and the significance of genuine repentance for a clear spiritual vision and a life dedicated to God's kingdom.

Transcript

As I have observed Christianity and the message that is being preached in most of Christendom in the last 50 years or so, there's one element that's missing in a lot of preaching, and that's the message of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. He was sent by God to prepare the way for Israel to receive Christ.

And when they rejected him, it ended up in their rejecting Christ as well. But that's, you know, when people ask John the Baptist what his message was, he says, my message is only prepare the way of the Lord. I don't want to be anybody.

I'm just a voice, he says, a voice saying, prepare the way of the Lord, bring down the mountains and raise up the valleys, make the crooked paths straight and the rough places smooth. That was his message. In other words, all these are pictures of repentance.

His message was repent. Let's turn to Matthew chapter three, verse one. John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And that was the message that was to prepare a nation to receive Christ. And when they rejected that message, it's not surprising they rejected Christ. So when we ask an individual there, it was a nation to receive Christ.

Today, we ask an individual to receive Christ. He has to listen to the message of John the Baptist first. That's the way, that's how the way of the Lord is prepared.

What is that? Repent for the kingdom of heaven has now come. It's not at hand, but it has come. And when John the Baptist was taken into custody and put into prison by Herod, we read in Matthew chapter four, the next chapter, when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, he withdrew into Galilee.

And then from that time, verse 17, Jesus began to preach the same message, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He was echoing the call of John the Baptist. That is the preparation for receiving Christ.

And when Israel rejected that message, they rejected the Messiah. And when a Christian does not listen to that message, whether he knows it or not, he has not really received Christ. And I believe with all my heart that a lot of Christians who think they are born again are not born again at all, because they never repented.

The way was not prepared. They said the magic words, Lord Jesus come into my heart and imagine that Christ has come. But there's no change in their life.

Sometimes their life is worse than that of unbelievers. And if you look at the lives of many who call themselves believers today, it's far worse than the lives of many unbelievers and non-Christians. I'll tell you honestly, I've got a lot more respect for some Hindus and atheists than I have for some who claim to be born again Christians.

The way they behave and the way they gossip and backbite and fight with people, I'd say I have more respect for atheists and Hindus that I know who are far better than them. And when you hear of pastors who fall into adultery and homosexuality, I know Hindus and atheists who have never fallen into adultery, who are faithful to their wives. Well, by their fruit, you shall know them.

Jesus said that. So I see these guys who call themselves born again Christians, they're not born again at all. Far from it.

The devil has fooled them into thinking that they are born again, but they're not. There's a terrible verse in 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 11, which says God allows them to believe a lie about themselves. Imagine that.

God allows some people to believe a lie about themselves. And I've met numerous people like that who imagine they're born again when they're not, who imagine that they are baptized in the Holy Spirit when they're not. You wonder why? I say God has allowed them to believe a lie.

And if God allows a person to believe a lie, we can do nothing about it. And why does God allow people to believe a lie? Because they don't really love the truth about themselves. If you love the truth about yourself, you would repent.

So repentance is the message which is missing. And we have to see what John the Baptist and Jesus preached. It was not just repent.

We need to understand this. Repent means turn around. You often heard me say that 180 degree turn is repentance.

Like in the military, they say about turn. About turn means you're facing one direction and the command makes you turn completely the other direction and your back is to the direction you were facing. That is

repentance.

And many Christians, they know they have to give up something. So they repent 20 degrees, 30 degrees, 90 degrees perhaps. And they think they've done a lot when they've come to 90 degrees.

But when you're in 90 degree turn from this side, you go to your eye here and your eye there, you haven't turned around. Repentance is 180 degree turn. And if you find my brother, sister, that your so-called Christian life is not satisfying, consider the possibility that way back at the beginning, your repentance was not thorough.

You did a shallow job of repentance. And that's why you're having problems today. You know, it's like when people are building, say a 10 story building and they try to save money on the foundation.

You say, well, we don't want to dig so deep. After all, it's only a foundation. It doesn't matter.

Nobody's going to see it. And they put a shallow foundation, maybe one or two feet for a 10 story structure. Structure is going to go up a hundred feet into the air and they put a shallow one or two foot foundation.

Nobody sees it. But you find a little later, there's a crack on the fifth floor. The wall is cracking.

The floor is sinking. The door won't close. You know where the problem is? The problem is not on the fifth floor.

The problem is in the foundation. They were careless in the foundation. That's why they're having a problem later on.

And 10 years after you accepted Christ, you have a problem, a sin that you can't overcome. You know, the problem is not there. The problem is that right at the beginning, you never repented.

You never understood what it means to repent, to turn around. And that's why from the beginning in our church for 35 years, 37 now, we have preached repentance. And I know a number of people who have come to me and said, Brother Zach, I thought I was saved until I came here.

Now only I discover what it means really to be saved. Otherwise I was in some church and they told me that I was born again and they baptized me, but I wasn't really saved. I mean, I gave up drinking and smoking.

There's a lot more to repentance than giving up drinking and smoking. It says here, repent for the kingdom of heaven is near. That means a new kingdom is coming.

That's what he was telling Israel. You see, Israel had spent 1500 years from the time of Moses till the time of John the Baptist. Occupied with the things of earth.

Their blessings were earthly. Their curses were earthly. If they disobeyed God, they didn't go to hell.

They just didn't get rain. Their crops would wither. Their enemies would overcome them.

You read that throughout the Old Testament. There's no reference to heaven or hell in the Old Testament. Did you know that? God never threatens Israel with, I'll send you to hell or I'll take you to heaven.

Those things don't even occur. You read Deuteronomy 28. I'll give you a lot of money if you obey me.

I'll give you healthy children. You won't have any miscarriages. Your cattle will abound in plenty.

Your barns will overflow and your crops will yield 30 fold, a hundred fold, and you'll become very rich if you obey me. But if you don't obey me, then Deuteronomy 28 doesn't say, I'll send you to hell. You'll become blind.

You'll become sick. You'll get mad. And every curse was earthly.

Every blessing was earthly. That's how they lived 1500 years. Their mind was set on the things of earth and they wanted to obey God because they wanted earthly prosperity and physical health.

That is a gospel. It is an old covenant gospel. Jesus came with a new covenant gospel.

And it's very interesting how the devil has led Christian preachers all the way back to that old covenant gospel again, teaching people today that if God blesses you, you'll be rich or God blesses you, you'll be healthy. Now we know that cannot be true because all religions teach that. It's not only Jesus.

You go to the Muslim countries and our Muslim friends will say, Allah is the true God because see how he's given us all the oil and all the countries come to us begging for oil because Allah has blessed us. From every country they come here, they have to please us in the Arab lands. All their political policies are determined on whether it'll please the Arabs because Allah is the true God.

And look at the sheikhs of Saudi Arabia and other countries. They are extremely wealthy because Allah has blessed us with prosperity. You go to the Hindus, the Hindu businessmen in India, the wealthiest, some of the wealthiest people in the world are Indian businessmen.

They worship the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi. They say Lakshmi is the true God. She has made us wealthy.

And then you go to listen to the Christian preachers. They say Jesus is the true God. He's made us wealthy.

So you have a competition now between Allah and Lakshmi and Jesus to make people wealthy. And if that is the mark of blessing, I have to say that Allah and Lakshmi win. Can you tell me a Christian, a wholehearted disciple of Jesus who is among the wealthiest people in the world? No.

They're all Muslims and Hindus. There you can see the stupidity and the folly of preaching that wealth is the mark of God's blessing. What about health? You think the healthiest people in the world are Christians? No.

Far from it. If you look at the Guinness Book of Records and the people who live longest, they're in Afghanistan and Japan and all these Soviet states. They're worshipping all other gods.

They're not Christians. Health and wealth are not the mark of God's blessing today. And because most Christians have not understood the simple truth, they haven't, they're so intelligent, some of them, but they don't seem to think, is my God able to give me something other gods cannot give? And yet I believe there are people sitting here who think that because you got an increase in salary or you got a better job, God has blessed you.

I hope so. I remember one brother telling me, brother, God has blessed my children. I said, you mean they've become more like Jesus? He says, no, they've got jobs in the Persian Gulf.

Oh, I see. Well, you're back in the old covenant. I thought you meant they had become more like Jesus.

That's the mark of God's blessing. How do you tell me honestly? Now be absolutely honest. How do you say God has blessed your children? You'll see you're probably guilty of the same thing because deep down in your heart, whether you like it or not, let me tell you the truth.

You have not repented from the kingdom of earth and understood that the kingdom of heaven has come. And that is why your experience of the Holy Spirit is also so shallow. Do you think you have the same baptism in the Holy Spirit that Peter, James, and John got on the day of Pentecost? You who love money and you'll get angry and lose your temper and maybe you speak in tongues, but you do a lot of other sins.

You lust after women and you watch internet pornography and you speak in tongues and you say you're baptized in the Holy Spirit. You're gloomy most of the time in bad moods. And once in a while you speak in tongues.

Is that the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Far from it. It's a counterfeit. Is that the baptism of the Holy Spirit Jesus had and the apostles had? You know what is the preparation for the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire? The same John the Baptist said, turn around and face the kingdom of heaven and he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.

That's Matthew 3 verse 11 further down. What is the preparation for that baptism? Again, turn around from facing the things of earth and be occupied with the kingdom of heaven. Have you turned around my brother? If you have not, I'm not surprised that you got a counterfeit baptism in the Holy Spirit, not the genuine one.

And the devil keeps you happy with that counterfeit and you miss the bus. Imagine standing up before the Lord in the final day and discovering that all your life you were deceived. I'll tell you something, you'll never be deceived if you repent completely.

That is impossible. If you turn around completely, your vision will become clear. Why were the Pharisees blind even though they studied the scriptures every day? You can study the scriptures every day.

You can know the root meanings of Hebrew and Greek and so many other things and be absolutely blind to spiritual truth because it is through repentance that we get a clear vision. I want you to turn to Mark's gospel in chapter 8. Mark's gospel chapter 8. I want to tell you a little bit about a town called Bethsaida. It's mentioned in verse 22.

And they came to Bethsaida and they brought a blind man to Jesus. Mark 8 verse 22. And they implored him to touch him.

Now, sometimes Jesus did some very unusual things with blind people. Sometimes he spat on the ground and put it on their eyes and told them to wash. Sometimes he just healed them.

So you believe me, I'll heal you. But there was significance to what he did. Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit in a way that none of us know because he was so sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

I mean, as I've studied the life of Jesus, I said, Lord, I want to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit like you were. Jesus would be walking down the road and the Holy Spirit would say, stop and look in the tree. There's somebody there.

That's how he met Zacchaeus. Imagine being sensitive to the Holy Spirit like that, that we walk through this earth and God leads us to needy people because he wants to reach them. How much we miss by not being sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus is sensitive to the Holy Spirit. And what did he do? He took the blind man by the hand. I believe the Spirit led Jesus to say that.

Take him outside the village. Don't heal him here. Take him outside.

And he took him outside and then spat on his eyes, laid his hands on him and said, do you see anything? He said, no, I see men and I see them like trees walking around. Human beings, he couldn't make a difference between human beings and trees. And you can be pretty sure a person is blind when he can't see the difference between a human being and a tree.

A tree is not a living soul, a human being. When a man thinks that money is more important than lost souls, he's like that. He can't see the difference between living for the kingdom of God and living to make money.

Lord, I can't see the difference. It seems to me the same. I go to church on Sunday and I live to make money the rest of the week.

You're blind, brother. You're like this person who thinks men and trees are the same. You need another touch from God.

You got one, I know. That's why you're in church today. You need another one to restore your vision fully.

And he said, okay, I'll pray for you again. Now, if Jesus were like some of today's Pentecostal preachers, they'd have said, no, don't say that. Confess that you're healed.

Even when you can't see a thing, say you're healed. Even when you're sick, say you're healthy. But Jesus never told anybody to tell a lie.

How could he say he was seeing when he was not seeing? This incident is written there for the 21st century, 20th century, 21st century, to warn people, don't say you're healed when you're not healed. Be honest. If you can't see, say, I can't see, but somebody prayed for you.

Nevermind. He did pray for me, but I'm still not healed. Imagine Jesus prayed for me and I'm still not healed.

I like the boldness of this guy. I believe we need honest people like that. There's far too much of a lying among Christians today, and they call it faith.

Faith does not make us tell a lie. Jesus did not challenge him saying, hey, you must trust God. I prayed for you.

Now, just believe that you're healed. It'll come. It'll come.

Sight will come. Just hang on. Just praise God.

This type of deception that goes on in so-called healing today, so completely contrary to the spirit of Christ. So this man was honest. He said, I see them like trees.

I'm not healed properly. Jesus said, fine, I lay hands on you again. Isn't that amazing? It's the only time in the Gospels where Jesus had to touch a person twice to heal him.

He could have healed him the first time, but I believe that was to teach a lesson to us today that when you're not healed, don't say you're healed. And so he touched him again and he said, now I can see everything clearly. Now, you know, that's when the Lord has really touched you and you say, Lord, now I see the difference between God's blessing with earthly money, which Allah and Lakshmi can give, and God's blessing that makes me like Jesus Christ, which only Jesus can do.

Now I can see it. But till now I was blind. I thought money was the mark of God's blessing.

I thought a better house was the mark of God's blessing or a better car was the mark of God's blessing. And Lord, I didn't even realize that I needed a second touch from you. Are some of you blind? Not fully blind.

God touched you once. You need a second touch. The kingdom of heaven becomes more real to you than the kingdom of earth.

If you got one eye in the kingdom of heaven, another eye on the kingdom of earth, you certainly need a second touch. If you think God's blessing is shown by prosperity, then you have to say that Jesus was not blessed and Paul was not blessed and Peter was not blessed, but you are blessed. Are you crazy? How could you be so blind all these years to think that your money is a proof of God's blessing? No.

You're intelligent. You worked hard. You got a degree and your parents were rich enough to send you to some good college or you got an opening in some country where you could make money.

That's what made you money, not because of God's blessing. And there are umpteen Hindus and Muslims and atheists also who made just as much money as you and more without the blessing of Jesus. How is that? Have your eyes been opened? Have you seen or do you need a second touch to see that it's only God's, God blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places, in Christ, Ephesians 1.3. That is the mark of new covenant blessing.

Otherwise, I mean, if you're an Israelite following Moses, then I agree. If you're an Israelite following Moses, go ahead and read Deuteronomy 28 and follow it, but don't ever step into the New Testament. That's not for you.

Don't call upon the name of Jesus. Call upon Jehovah and let Moses be your leader. We got to be honest.

If you follow Jesus, there's no promise of earthly prosperity, but there is a promise that God will provide all our needs. Seek the kingdom of God first and His righteousness. All your earthly needs will be provided and God will give us enough help to serve Him.

But I want you to see here, once he saw, Jesus said to him, this is an amazing thing. He never said this to anybody else whom he healed. Listen to this.

Don't even enter that village again, verse 26. He sent him to his home saying, don't enter that village again, that village of Bethsaida, where you came out from. I could not heal you there.

You notice they came to Bethsaida and they asked him to touch him and Jesus took the blind man, verse 23, right outside the village. He said, I can't heal you here. Take you outside.

He healed him outside Bethsaida. He said, don't ever go back there. That's really something.

The Lord is so much against a particular village called Bethsaida. Some good people came out of Bethsaida, by the way. You know that? You turn to John's gospel, chapter one.

You read there, verse 44, John 1, 44, Philip, who became a disciple of Jesus, was from Bethsaida, which is also the city of Andrew and Peter. Boy, three of Jesus' apostles came from Bethsaida. Must be a pretty good place.

But Jesus said to this man, don't ever go back to that village. And now I'll tell you why. It's the glory of God to hide a matter in scripture and the glory of kings to search it out.

That's what it says in Proverbs. Turn to Matthew chapter 11 and verse 21, and you'll see the answer. Matthew 11, verse 21.

That's fine that Andrew and Philip and Peter came from Bethsaida, but that did not make Bethsaida one of the favorite cities or villages for Jesus. Verse 20, first of all, Matthew 11, 20. Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles were done.

Listen to this. Because they did not repent. There you find that word again.

They did not repent. And which were the towns that did not repent? Chorazin and Bethsaida. That was the reason why he told that blind man, don't ever go to that city where people, don't ever go to that church where they don't preach repentance.

You come out of that church, great, don't ever go back to that church. Why, Lord? They're normal people living there, good people, that's fine, but they don't preach repentance. That's the message for us today.

They did not repent. Woe unto you, Bethsaida, for if the miracles that had occurred in, had these miracles that occurred in Tyre and Sidon, which occurred in Eubetsida, they would have repented long ago. So here was a village of people who didn't repent.

There were many other good things there. There were rich people, good crops, good barns, good houses. Only one thing missing, repentance.

And you know, we can sit in a church where there are good people around and good messages, good music, especially. There are a lot of churches like that, fantastic music that can rival the musicians of the world. The only thing missing is the message of repentance.

And the Lord says, don't go back there, otherwise you'll become blind all over again. He took him out of that place and then healed him. We need to see these little, the spiritual message in these little actions of Jesus.

So we see that if you want to have clear vision, you need repentance. You see the connection now? You've got to get out of Bethsaida to have a clear vision. And if you're touched and you know, your occupation with the things of earth can be so deep that even one touch from the Lord does not deliver you.

That's pretty deep. If one touch from the Lord, Jesus doesn't deliver you and you need a second touch, well then go to the Lord for a second touch and say, Lord, my mind is still occupied with earthly things. I haven't repented.

I've repented 90 degrees, sometimes on the earth, sometimes in heaven. My eyes are here, my eyes are there, and I don't see things clearly. Be honest, be honest like this man was.

Don't pretend that, yeah, I can see, I can see now and you can see a little bit. He could probably see the road, but he was not happy with seeing the road. He wanted clear vision.

I believe many of us are unfortunately happy without clarity of vision. We see dimly, yeah, I think I'm going to heaven. Most of the time you're depressed and gloomy, complaining, rumbling, backbiting.

You think your vision is clear, my brother, sister, it is not. Why not come to Jesus and say, Lord, I can't see clearly. My mind is still occupied with so many earthly things.

The love of money grips my heart. People don't know it. I'm pretty good otherwise.

I don't watch pornography. I don't cheat anybody, but boy, the things of earth have a tremendous hold on me. There was a time when I had more time to study the scriptures, but now I don't have time to read the Bible because, oh Lord, there's so many interesting TV programs and my friends are always telling me of some latest movie that has come out, which is really good.

You got to see it. And most of these movies take three hours, Lord, where can I have time to read the Bible? But boy, I, Lord, I'll never miss a Sunday. I'll be there every Sunday at church.

You think you got clear vision. You got to be fooling yourself, my brother. You got a little bit of vision, I know, but it's like this man who couldn't differentiate between men and trees because he was living in a town or a church where repentance was missing.

He'd grown up for years, occupied with miracles. There were a lot of miracles in Bethsaida, but no repentance. Are you happy with a church where there's miracles, but no repentance? I say, Lord, deliver me from that place.

You think there were no miracles in Bethsaida? Jesus said there were so many miracles there. We read that. What was missing? Repentance.

Many people would say, oh brother, there are miracles there. Go back to Bethsaida. Jesus said, no, in spite of all the miracles, don't go back because more important than miracles is repentance.

Am I giving you my own ideas or have you read Mark chapter eight? Why did he say never go back there again? But Lord, they have miracles there. Nevermind, they don't have repentance. Don't go back there.

Otherwise you'll become blind all over again. If you want clarity of vision, if you want to see Jesus clearly, brother, sister, you need to understand what repentance is. You need to understand what it is to turn around completely.

Let me turn you to a verse in 1 Thessalonians, which defines what repentance really is. 1 Thessalonians in chapter one, repentance is defined here in verse nine. He says, we've heard of your faith toward God and no need to say anything because people report about you.

What kind of a reception we had with you? And here is a definition of repentance. Turning to God from idols to serve a living and true God. It's a pretty good definition of repentance.

Turning to God from the idols of earth. Idols are not always made with brass and wood. You know what an idol is? An idol is anything or any person that takes the place that God should have in your heart.

It is called in the old Testament, idolatry is called spiritual adultery. Why is it that idolatry, you know, whenever the Lord speaks about Israel going after false gods, you read the old Testament prophets. He always compared it to a woman who was an adulteress, leaving her true husband, which was Jehovah and going after Baal and that was adultery.

I mean, it's like a wife. I think some of you who, anybody here who's a wife, you're married to your husband, you live with him, but in your heart you have an interest in some other man, maybe your old boyfriend and you haven't gone with him yet, but you've got a little interest in him. That's adultery.

I'm sure you believe that. Tell me which husband here would like to have a wife whose heart is sometimes thinking in appreciation of another man. Do you think that husband is too demanding to saying you must not think of other men, but only of me? You wouldn't say that.

I say that's normal marriage. That's the way God intended it. What do you think Jesus Christ as our husband expects of us? To love him and then also to love these other things that take his place in our heart.

That is an idol. We can look down on the non-Christians, say, oh, we don't worship all those idols of stone and wood. Those idols are not so dangerous because you see them.

It's obvious idolatry. It's the hidden idolatry, which is far more dangerous. Just like, you know, if you have a bruise in your hand, a serious injury, that's not as bad as a hidden cancer because you don't know what the hidden cancer is doing to you.

This one, at least, it's obvious in front of your eyes all the time. You'll do something about it to fix it. But the hidden cancer, the hidden idols are much worse.

So repentance is turning from the idols of earth to God. Let me ask you, what is the greatest sin you can commit? Have you ever thought of that? What is the greatest sin I can commit? Is it murder? Is it adultery? Okay. You know, when I tell you the answer, you'll remember it immediately.

The greatest sin you can commit must be disobedience to the greatest commandment, right? And the greatest commandment is not thou shall not commit murder, thou shall not commit adultery. Once people asked Jesus in Matthew 22 and verse 36, teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the law? For them, the greatest commandment was keeping the Sabbath. So they wondered what Jesus would say.

And Jesus replied in verse 37, Matthew 22, 37, the greatest commandment in the entire law of God is you must love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. Soul means your emotions and your will and your mind. With everything, I must love God.

So the greatest sin must be where I don't love God with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my mind. That's the greatest sin, obviously. Why don't I love God with all my heart and all my soul and all my mind? Because I have a little interest in something on this earth that also I love.

It may be your job. It may be your wife. It may be your boyfriend or girlfriend or your profession or your whatever.

That is the greatest sin. You may never commit murder. You are the greatest sinner of all.

And you'd look down on those adulterous people and those people who commit those terrible sins and you don't realize that the greatest sinner of all is you because you don't love God with all your heart, soul and mind. Have you seen this? So when we talk about repentance, I'm not talking about repenting of getting drunk or smoking cigarettes. I'm talking about something a million times worse than that.

Repent of not loving God with all your heart, of having idols that take the place of Jesus who died for your sins in your heart. That is the greatest sin. We need to see that and turn around and say, Lord, I'm sorry I haven't given the place I should give you.

You know, when I see young people nowadays who are great eagerness to get married, very young, they're hardly cross their teenage years, they want to get married. Soon as they've got a degree, they got a job, yeah, get married. What about spending six years studying the Bible before you get married? Oh, no, no time for that.

I found the girl, I found the boy, I want to get married. I want to have sex. Studying the Bible and all, we have time, we'll do it.

I'll tell you, you'll never do it after you get married. Where are the young men and women who will say, I'm not saying you got to wait till you're 30, 32. I got married when I was 28 and a half, but I spent six years before that studying scripture.

And because of that, God could give me a ministry. And I see a lot of young people who are in such a hurry to get married, who will never be given a ministry by God, because there was an idol in their life. Marriage was their idol.

Some girl, some boy was their idol. You thought you were a Christian, sorry, you're an idolater. I'll tell you the truth.

But I believe God has got a remnant out of a hundred young people like that who are worldly idolaters, who are seeking their own, their own ease, their own convenience. God will find one and he will make him a prophet. God will do his work.

Judas Iscariot may fail Jesus Christ, so what? God will find a Paul to replace Judas Iscariot. God's work will continue even if you become worldly. The only thing is the privilege you would have had to have a wonderful way of expressing your love for Jesus, for what he did for you, you would have lost it because you ran after some idol.

I'm not saying that you gave up Christianity. You never missed a meeting. You're very regular in church, but you're an idolater.

Something other than God was more important for you. You think marriage is not an idol? It's one of the biggest idols that young people are facing today around the world. And I see these young people who get married young, they grow up and they are useless to God except to warm the chairs on Sunday morning.

You know what I mean? You sit in that chair two hours, the chair becomes a little warm. That's about all you did. Is that, are you a chair warmer on Sunday mornings or a disciple of Jesus Christ? When you think of all that Jesus paid to die on the cross, don't you think he had desires like you? But he gave them up.

He had passions when he was 22, 23, 24, 25. Why did he give them up for you, for me? He gave them up in order that he might die. And we sing so glibly about that.

He died for me in all these moving songs that we sing on Sunday morning that makes the tears come down and we feel so emotional. And then on Monday onwards, we are back to our idolatry. You haven't repented.

That's why your vision is so dim. And because you're mingling with other people whose vision is also dim, you think you're okay. There's a saying, a one-eyed man is king among the blind.

So you're like that one-eyed person. You think you're pretty spiritual because you're in the midst of other blind people. You want to be a one-eyed person? I don't want to be.

I want to have two eyes. I want to see clearly and not only for myself. If God gives me children, I want every one of my children to see clearly the things of heaven.

Do you have that passion? Dear brother, sister, are you taking your Christian life seriously? Have you decided to have nothing to do with Bethsaida and everything that Bethsaida represents? That could represent churches. It could represent the type of music that prevents you from being a serious Christian. It could be the type of messages you listen to, the type of books you read.

Bethsaida is a big thing. God tells you, get out of there and don't ever go back there again. You think you can be a wholehearted disciple of Jesus and listen to rock music? Oh brother, you need another touch from Jesus.

There's no doubt about that. No doubt at all. Imagine that you think that and now they have this thing called Christian rock.

Wow. Somebody asked me about that. What do you think about Christian rock? I said, it's like asking me, what do you think about Christian adultery? Christian adultery, Christian murder, Christian rock, Christian demon possession.

Is there such a thing? This is the deception of today's Christian. They've been, you know, Paul told Timothy that time will come. It's a very serious word.

Timothy preached because the time reproveth. I'm doing exactly what I'm told in 2 Timothy 4. If you read these words, you'll understand why I preach the way I preach. I do not seek the honor of men.

I do not receive money from men because I want to preach the truth. Because the word of God says, 2 Timothy 4.1, and I take it to myself. This is the Lord speaking to me, Zach Poonen.

I solemnly charge you in the presence of and of Christ Jesus, who's going to come soon to judge the living and the dead and by his soon appearing and his kingdom, which is not an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly kingdom. What should you do, Zach Poonen? Preach the word. Be ready when you feel like preaching and you don't feel like preaching.

Be always ready. Don't say you're too tired. Don't say it's inconvenient.

Don't say it's too tiring for me. When you're in season and out of season, what should I do? Reprove. Rebuke.

Exhort. And if people don't listen, then with great patience and instruction, why do you need to do that? Because the time will come, and I believe it has already come, in the 21st century, when they will not listen to sound doctrine. And sound is a Greek word called *hygieia*, from which you get the word hygiene.

So I would translate it as hygienic doctrine. Doctrine that can keep the germs and the bacteria away, that can keep you healthy. I wish we would be as careful about spiritual hygiene as we are about physical hygiene.

How we wash our hands and teach our children to brush their teeth. What's the need to brush their teeth? Is there any need to brush their teeth? They'll lose their teeth if they don't brush it because of bacteria. We're so careful about hygiene every day.

Brush your teeth every day, morning, night. Brush your teeth. What about spiritual hygiene? What about making sure that sin is not lurking there? Do you go to bed at night? You never go to bed at night without brushing your teeth.

But you go to bed at night without settling a quarrel with your husband or wife. That's a million times worse than not brushing your teeth, you know. It doesn't matter if you didn't brush your teeth.

You lose a couple of teeth, that won't harm you. But if you don't settle matters with your husband and wife and go to bed, the devil's got you the whole night. Why do you have those terrifying dreams? Those filthy dreams? That's bacteria working inside your subconscious.

Hygienic doctrine. Doctrine of spiritual health. The time will come when they will not endure it.

And say, oh this hard preacher. That's what they said to the old prophets. You read Isaiah and Ezekiel, they would say, oh don't prophesy all these hard things to us.

Look at these nice false prophets. They come and tell us some smooth things and nice things. They say everything's all right.

God loves you, brother. Don't worry. Everything's okay.

I know you worship a few idols, but that's okay. God's a loving God. Doesn't matter.

That's the old lie that the devil told Eve. God's a loving God. He's not going to worry just because you ate a fruit.

God is a loving God. The time will come when they will not endure hygienic doctrine, but I like this expression. The Holy Spirit says they want to have their ears tickled.

They will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires. Ears tickled. I've seen sometimes people clean their ears with a little piece of paper and they get a little excitement when they clean up their ear with that.

It's a little tickling feeling. They like it. You can see the enjoyment they have while they're cleaning their ears.

This is what I mean by ears being tickled. It's something like that spiritually where preachers will tickle people's ears and make them have a good time Sunday morning, make them happy, pay your offering. That's all we are concerned about.

Once you pay your offering, you're okay. Go home. Come back, friends.

You'll have your ears tickled next Sunday again. And if the preacher is a good tickler of the ears, he'll get a lot of money. Sure.

He may have a big congregation too. Send them all to hell. They like to have their ears tickled and they will accumulate.

It's not just going to be one or two. They accumulate for themselves. Teachers who are not going to tell them about the kingdom of heaven, but teachers who will be in accordance with their own dirty lusts, their own desires.

You know that every human being loves money. If you think you don't love money, my brother, you are deceived. You think it's only rich people who love money? Have you ever seen a beggar in Bangalore who doesn't love money? If you don't believe me, try and give one of those beggars 50 paisa and see what look he gives you.

50 paisa, that's 30 years ago, sir. Not today. They love money.

I remember a brother who used to be in our church. He's left us now. He came to me and I said, I'm pretty frank with people because I love them.

If I'm a doctor and I see a sickness, I don't want to pretend that he doesn't have a cancer. So I told him, brother, your problem is you love money. He said, oh no, I finished with that long ago.

I said, well, I'm still struggling with it. You must be better than me, I suppose. You can be deceived into thinking I'm free from something.

When can you say you're free from the love of money? I'll tell you. When you can say my attitude to money and material things is exactly the same as the attitude of Jesus Christ to material things. When you get there, you can say you're free.

I haven't got there. I'm working my way towards the top of that mountain. I mean, I've come a long way from where I was, but oh boy, to have the attitude of Jesus.

When can you say that your eyes are pure? When you can say you look at every woman the way Jesus looked at women, then you can say your eyes are pure and don't give up fighting until you reach that point. The thing is we are happy with getting 10% in class when we should be getting 100%. We're happy with 10% because all the other students are getting six and three and four percent.

Don't compare yourself with others is the easiest way to backslide. They accumulate themselves for teachers in accordance with their own desires, people who will tickle their ears and make them happy and not lead them to godliness. They go to doctors who don't cure them, just say nice things to them and collect their money.

It's like that joke I heard of one man who said, well, my doctor is so kind. When he saw that I didn't have money to pay for the surgery of cancer, he just touched up the scan and gave it to me and said you're okay. Just touch up the scan and remove that sign of cancer and here you are.

Are you happy with such doctors? Are you happy with such preachers who just touch up the word of God and tickle your ears? And they have turned away their ears from the truth and they turn aside to myths. One of the biggest myths is that you're born again when you have not repented. One of the biggest myths is that you can love the world and love God also.

The Bible says you're an enemy of God if you're a friend of this world, James 4 verse 4. But the myth is, oh, you're okay. You can love God and love this world also. It's a myth, but they believe it.

But be sober in all things. I've taken this word very seriously. Endure hardship.

I tell you this, if you want to serve God, don't look for an easy life. Endure hardship. And I decided years ago I'm going to endure hardship because I'm a servant of the Lord.

When am I going to retire? When I go to heaven. I'm going to have a long eternal retirement from preaching, not before that. Endure hardship.

Do the work of an evangelist that is preaching the full gospel, the full gospel that you don't only get out of Egypt, but you get into Canaan as well. That's the gospel. That you don't only get free from the guilt of sin and the tyranny of Satan, but you overcome the lusts in your flesh, the giants in Canaan, and occupy that land for God.

Fulfill your ministry. And I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, that I believe God wants all of us to have a ministry, even if you don't stand in the pulpit and preach like me. Whether you know it or not, you have a ministry.

You mothers, do you know that you have a ministry to the children in your home? You can either make them disciples of Jesus Christ or enable them to grow up and live for the world. It's you as a mother who spends more time with them than anybody else that determines which direction your children are going to go. If my children are following the Lord today, all of them, it's because my wife decided to make it a priority to be a mother and a disciple maker of them.

I was traveling so much. You mothers, you have a tremendous responsibility to make disciples of every one of your children. Fulfill your ministry.

We've all got a ministry. As I told you, you young sisters, you have a great ministry of being an example to the little girls growing up here, to be an example, the way you conduct yourself, the way you dress, the way you speak. And you older people, that you don't despise others saying, oh, I saw him running around in an underwear.

What's that? What type of conversation is that? Is it becoming of a Christian? Fulfill your ministry. Be a godly example to others. Dear brothers and sisters, he who has ears to hear, let him hear.

I want you to bow your heads for a moment in prayer as we bow before God. The church is my home where never is heard a discouraging word. Never.

The skies are always clear in the church. There's always a word from heaven that says, my son, my daughter, come up higher. Come up higher.

That is the invitation that comes to you today. Respond to it. It's not meant to discourage you or condemn you, but to invite you to a much higher life than you've experienced so far.

Let me touch you again and clear your vision so that you can see clearly. And once your vision is clear, don't get blind again by going to your old bedsiders, to the old associations and the old friends and the old habits. Never go back.

Heavenly Father, you know what is the bedsider in each of us that we need to never go back to. Help us to keep our vision clear till you come again. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/cwrpz6Cv70E.mp4>

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