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**Truth Community Church**  
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Well, it's a glorious day for us to bring a final message on a brief series I've been preaching under the title "Is Christianity True?" And we've answered that question in the affirmative giving many reasons to understand why it could be no other way. History does not allow for any other answer than, yes, Christianity is true. The fulfillment in the New Testament of the Old Testament promises allows no other answer but, yes, Christianity is true and those matters were covered in our prior two messages.

This morning, under the title of this message "Christianity Today," we want to take those things and make them personal and help us to see the implications of them as we walk about in the 21st century. What we see is that what God promised in the Old Testament that a Messiah would come, he has now fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I invite you to turn to the book of Romans as we open, the first four verses of the book of Romans where we see that this magnificent statement, this magnificent systematic book that explains the reality of salvation from start to finish, it opens up on this theme of fulfillment that we have addressed in our past two messages. Romans 1:1 says, "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord." You see even in the opening of Paul's letter to the Romans that the preaching of the apostles rested on the person of Jesus Christ himself. There was not preeminently a message about moral reformation or anything like that, they spoke of the works of Christ, the words of Christ, the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and the question that comes to mind is whether such a person as Christ, such a one of such miraculous words and such authority in his teaching, could a person like that that they proclaim, could it have been one of their own invention?

Well, think about it this way, beloved, why would they conspire, the apostles, to spread a falsehood like that if they knew that it was not true? It brought them nothing that human nature desires; among their contemporaries they were rejected, they received no worldly advancement or material benefit from their preaching. You'll remember in the book of Acts Peter said, "We have no silver or gold but what I have I give to you; in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise and walk." They received no profit from what they did, no Jews from their own race praised them, on the day of Pentecost they mocked them as being

drunkards. And think further about as you work through their lives and we know from church tradition that 11 of the 12 apostles were martyred, they died proclaiming the name of Christ, the only one who wasn't martyred was John and he was exiled to a remote island. Beloved, if they made it up, if they made it up they died for what they knew to be a falsehood. People do not do that. Men do not do that. Sometimes people are deceived, believing what is false to be true and they act upon false information, but the allegation that Christianity is false must come to the conclusion that these apostles who preached Christ with such power, vigor and authority knew that it was a lie as they were doing it and maintained the lie even unto death. Men do not do that. It is contrary to human nature.

So what we see in biblical Christianity, what we see in the testimony of the followers of Christ, what we see in Christ himself is something that utterly transcends time and transcends humanity. This is a massive gospel that is presented to us and the people at the time recorded in Scripture recognized it. They said of Jesus, for example in John 7, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks; they recognized his transcendent authority as he spoke to them. And so we see, just to kind of sum things up here, we see that from history the truth of these things are undeniable, we see from the relationship of the Old Testament promise to the New Testament fulfillment that these things are undeniable, we see from the lives of the disciples that you cannot explain it by any other way than the fact that it is true, and yet, and yet for all that we have said, none of this is enough to make a person a Christian. That's a stunning and staggering thought. None of this is enough to make anyone a Christian. What we have said is not enough because you cannot become a Christian simply by believing historical facts about the Lord Jesus Christ. That's not enough. You do not become a Christian by being in church on Resurrection Sunday, or as some call it Easter Sunday. You can't go to church on Christmas and Easter and consider yourselves a Christian if that's all that it means to you. You do not become a Christian by moral effort and trying to do better when you realize that you have failed. Beloved, none of that is enough, none of that is the answer, none of that is the ultimate final message about the significance of the Lord Jesus Christ and his coming to earth, of his death and resurrection. Beloved, you become a Christian by believing in Jesus Christ himself, by believing in the person of Christ, of committing yourself to the person of Christ, not simply facts about him, not simply academic theories about him and certainly not based on feelings that you have in, you know, your own heart. You become a Christian by believing outside of yourselves in the person of Christ who is independent of your existence, the one who made you, the one who died for you, the one who rose again for you.

So you become a Christian by believing in Christ himself but, beloved, that's not as easy as some people try to make it seem, you know, and I would venture to say that a substantial plurality if not a majority of you, grew up as I did under a system of teaching that encouraged you to just pray a prayer, ask Jesus into your heart and everything is settled for all of eternity, and they reduce, they reduce believing in Christ to a moment in time where people put words in your mouth to pray and that that simple rote prayer somehow invokes the presence of Christ in your life and makes you a Christian. That is a

false view of Christianity and for many of you that's a shocking statement to hear. We need to work through this. Here's the challenge and here's the problem that we have. If these things are so conclusively true as I have laid them out before you, then how do you explain the fact that there are so many unbelieving people in the world? How do we explain the fact that Jesus said the way is narrow that leads to life and there are few who find it? If the facts are so conclusive, and they are, then why is it that so many people walk away and will die in their sins and face an eternal judgment before a holy God? Why is that if it is so conclusively obvious?

Well, that leads us to our first point this morning. We have to deal with, point 1, the reality of unbelief. The reality of unbelief and, beloved, this is like one of the most important sections of a sermon I've preached in months and we've been preaching on a lot of important things for a long period of time, but this is where the rubber meets the road, this is where men dead in sin collide with the gospel of Jesus Christ. For all of the historical information, the implications of that that we have brought out, beloved, understand this and I say this with an urgent desire for the well-being of your soul, I preach these things this morning with an earnest prayer to God that he would work in your heart in a way that I cannot do through human eloquence. You must understand this, that the history of Christianity as we have laid it out for you over these past two messages, as compelling as that information is, it can't do anything for your soul except possibly gain your attention temporarily all that it does is arrest a mental thought for a moment of time but it is not enough to convert your soul, it is not enough to bring a man from being dead in sin to being alive in Christ. Factual information does not have that power. Beloved, if historical evidence could make one a Christian, if evidence really did demand a verdict and could produce it, then everyone who lived around Jerusalem in the first century would have been immediately converted after the resurrection because they saw it all with their own eyes and many of them walked away dead in sin, more hostile to Christ than they had ever been. You see, on this day when we remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it's important for us to understand that even a resurrection, even the resurrection of Christ does not compel belief Christ is truly resurrected, but many people do not believe.

Look at the gospel of Luke 16. Luke 16, you'll remember the story of the rich man and Lazarus. A rich man had all of his luxuries on earth, Lazarus, a poor man who was longing to eat crumbs off the rich man's table. The rich man died, Lazarus died, and they went into the realm of the dead. And the rich man, it says in verse 23 of Luke 16, "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' And [the rich man] said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house for I have five brothers in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' But Abraham

said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'" And this rich man still carrying his rebellious spirit even under torment, still rebels against the teaching of the word of God and he said to him in verse 30, "No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!" But [Abraham] said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

If a man, a woman, a boy, a girl, does not submit to the word of God, does not receive the word of God with a teachable spirit, it's not going to do any good to them to send someone to them that they know is raised from the dead. It does no good and what does that tell us? What does that tell us about the human heart? For those of you that are here today and you know that you are not a Christian, what does it say to you about the reality of your heart, of your inner man, of the core of who you are, the disposition of your mind toward God and toward Christ? What does it say? It says that unbelief, unbelief and rebellion rule in the human heart with a power and a force that mere facts cannot dislodge. Let me say that again because that is the central thing that we need to come to grips with right now: unbelief and rebellion rule in the human heart with a power that historical facts alone cannot move or dislodge. If a resurrection won't convince somebody to turn from sin and turn to Christ, what else would? Obviously there is something more than just processing mental information that needs to happen. You see, beloved, the call of the gospel to repent from sin and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, the call of the gospel to turn from sin and self to serve the living God through his Son, here's the problem, that call is against all human desire and beyond all human ability. Men do not have the power to do that in and of themselves. Jesus himself told us about this problem in advance.

Look at the gospel of John 3. We'll read a little bit of an extended context to set the stage for what we need to see. You know, it's so important for us to understand these things biblically and not simply look at them horizontally in an external sort of way. You would think that it would be enough to explain to people the love of God for sinners, you would think it would be enough to explain to them that they are lost in sin and that they are in danger of eternal judgment. You would think outwardly apart from Scripture just rationally thinking, that to tell them that they could come to Christ and receive the forgiveness of their sins would be everything that was necessary for them to flee for eternal life and enter into the safety of the bosom of Christ. You would think so but if you've done any kind of evangelism or done any kind of preaching, you know that this message is usually like preaching to a granite headstone in a cemetery. It's like preaching to the dead, there's nothing in there that responds with life, with a willingness to hear. Why is that? Why is that? Listen, it's not for any failure of the presentation of the gospel or any failure of the word of God. The problem always resides in the heart of the one who hears and rejects it.

Consider the message of the gospel starting in John 3:16. Remember, we're dealing with the reality of unbelief. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." There's no unwillingness in God for anyone to be saved. There is no reluctance. There is

no resentment in God. There is a full and free offer of the gospel of Jesus Christ that goes out to everyone, that God will receive anyone who believes in Christ into his kingdom and into his family.

Verse 17, "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." If God is so willing, then why do people not get saved? Why do people not turn to Christ and flee from the judgment of God and the wrath that is sure to come?

Verse 19, Jesus told us in advance, he said, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world," and here's the whole problem, "and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for," or because, they don't come to Christ because they are afraid that their "deeds will be exposed." They, in other words, they love their sin more than they want the gospel and until that point is understood, basic understanding is impossible. The reality of unbelief is that men and women so love their sin, are so hostile in rebellion against God that they want nothing to do with a gospel that is in their eternal best interest. They would rather go to hell than to give up their sin. They would rather cling to their pride and their personal so-called lordship than to submit to the only one who can save their soul.

The Apostle Paul adds further perspective on this very point. You don't need to turn to these verses, I'll just read them, listen as I do. In 1 Corinthians 2:14 it says, "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." The gospel is foolishness to the unsaved man. Paul says this also in 1 Corinthians 1 that these things are foolishness to those who hear.

In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul adds a whole other dimension to it. It's not simply what's inside the heart of man but there is a supernatural challenge and obstacle in the invisible spiritual realm that also prevents men from coming to Christ. Paul said this in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 when he said, "even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world," speaking of Satan, "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." This is the reality of unbelief and this is why men do not immediately respond with joy and submission to the preaching of the gospel. In their hearts they love their sin more than they love obedience. In their hearts they love themselves more than they would ever love Christ. They are desperately dead in sin, desperately dominated by the devil, and desperately doomed to suffer the wrath of God and they are oblivious and ignorant of their plight, and furthermore cast away the one hope that is offered to them in love by a willing God. They slap away the nail-scarred hands of Jesus, as it were, and say, "Leave me alone. I will not have this man reign over me. I will not bow to you." You see, there is a problem deep in the human heart that historical facts cannot overcome. It's not a matter of a lack of information, indeed,

Romans 1 goes on to say that men know in their hearts just by what they see in nature around them that there is a God with eternal attributes to whom they are accountable and they reject even that.

And so, beloved, we step back from that, we realize that man is desperately lost, that he does not have ears to hear, he does not have eyes to see, he does not have a heart to believe, and so if that's the case, how is it that any of us ever were saved in the first place? How is it that when the apostles preached they preached with confidence when they knew and understood the heart of men was prone to, was leaning toward, was biased against everything that they said, why did those apostles not find their mission to be utterly impossible? And why is it that we're not just utterly wasting our time by preaching the gospel this morning? Or when you speak to family members, why is that not a waste of time? How is it that that rebellious human heart is to be overcome if not by information? If not by human eloquence? How is that to be overcome?

Well, that brings us to our second point for this morning and it is this, it is the need for supernatural power. It is the need for supernatural power. How was it that in the book of Acts we read about 3,000, 5,000 coming to Christ in the preaching of the gospel? How is it in light of all of this human rebellion that we've described biblically, how is it that the gospel spread geographically so quickly throughout the first century without the means of mass communication or mass transportation? How was it that it spread so quickly in those early decades after the resurrection of Christ? Beloved, this is what you must understand and if you are perhaps – and let me just pause here, go on a little bit of a tangent for the sake of what might be in the hearts of some of you here today because you run into this in ministry over time, people will say, "I've tried that and it didn't work. I tried to believe in Christ. I tried to read the Bible. I tried to pray and nothing happened. It didn't work." And sometimes people choose then to just walk away and say, "I give up," and they want nothing more to do with anything about the gospel that they've heard. What are we to say to that? Well, what we see is that Christianity progresses. A man can be saved only by supernatural power being brought to bear upon their heart and that is why Jesus Christ promised to be with the disciples in their ministry.

Let's go to another gospel, the end of Matthew 28. In Matthew 28:17 Jesus is appearing before the disciples after his resurrection and says in verse 17, "When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.'" Stop there. Jesus says, "I have all authority. Now I'm commanding you as My disciples to go out into all of the nations, go everywhere and do what I'm about to tell you to do. Make disciples, baptize them and teach them to observe everything that I commanded you." Now if Scripture is true at all, Jesus just commanded them to do what is humanly impossible. It is humanly impossible to make a disciple of Christ and yet he's commanding them to do it.

How can we unlock this conundrum? What can we say to the frustrated person who says, "I've tried this and it didn't work"? Keep reading, verse 20, Jesus said, "and lo, I am with

you always, even to the end of the age." That is a promise of supernatural power attending the preaching of the gospel, attending the work of evangelism. It is a promise of supernatural power where Christ says, "I will be with you to help accomplish what I am commanding you to do because I understand that you do not have the power to bring this result to pass on your own." It requires supernatural power to convert a single heart. It is a miracle of grace. It is not a human effort. That is why Jesus said you must be born from above, you must be born from God, you must be born again. It's something supernatural that must happen to the human heart. This is not a matter of mere intellectual attainment. And so Christ must be with the preaching of the gospel, Christ must be with the man in his seeking of him or it's all in vain.

In a like manner, turn to the book of Acts 2 as we continue to see this need for supernatural power. Acts 2. In fact, I'm going to take you just a moment earlier, 40 days of a moment earlier. In Acts 1:6 Jesus is getting ready to depart and to ascend back into heaven, and in verse 6, "So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive,'" what? Power, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Jesus says, "You have to wait. You need power in order to do what I am calling you to do. So before you go out, wait for the power to come." And the power came in Acts 2:1. In Acts 2:1 you will remember the disciples had been huddled together, Peter was speaking to them toward the end of chapter 1 and then in Acts 2:1, "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance."

As you read on in chapter 2, you see Peter starting to preach with power and he convicts the Jews of having crucified Christ. In verse 36, chapter 2, verse 36, he says, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified." Peter wasn't simply speaking to men about historical information, beloved, the Holy Spirit had come upon him and the Holy Spirit was empowering his preaching as he preached on that day of Pentecost. And so "when they heard this," verse 37, "they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" The Spirit who was working through Peter in his speaking had been at work in their hearts while they listened and so they were pierced to the heart and the Spirit got to the heart of the problem in a way that mere words could never have done, unaided human language could never have done. So "Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.' And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!'" Peter expressing the heart of every true

gospel preacher as he pleads to men who are dead in their sins and indifferent to the matters of God and the matters of their own sin and the matters of eternal judgment, and he pleads with them and exhorts them, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

Lending every element of human persuasion possible just as I say to you today, "Be saved from this perverse generation. Leave this world behind. Leave your ungodly thinking and your ungodly friends behind and come to Christ and be saved."

In Acts 2, because the Spirit was with Peter and because the Spirit was at work in the hearts of men, there was this result, verse 41, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." Three thousand men came to Christ in response to that one sermon. Now beloved, understand what was happening there, understand in the light of everything that we've been talking about, Peter addressed them with the historical information in that sermon, Peter spoke to them about Old Testament promise and New Testament fulfillment, Peter exhorted them to come to Christ, but the reason that those men were converted and the women converted is because the Spirit of God was at work in their hearts to enable them to do what they could not do in their own human power. The things that were impossible with men are suddenly possible under the power of God.

And for that frustrated young woman that might be hearing me today, "I've tried and this hasn't worked," let me plead with you and encourage you, go to Christ again and say, "Obviously I don't have the power to make this happen on my own. I am at Your mercy. If You don't help me, I will never be saved. I'm done with trying. I need to receive help from Your Spirit that is beyond my ability to produce but which is in Your power and Your love and grace to give. So look on me, Lord Jesus, and have mercy on me, the sinner." And cry out to him like that. And if it seems that nothing has happened in the moments and hours that ensue, you go back to him and say it again, and you pray again, and you just keep seeking Christ and keep begging him for mercy like the tax gatherer did in Luke 18, "Be merciful to me, the sinner! I am desperately dependent upon You! I can't do anything to save myself, send the Spirit with power to my heart and help me!"

You see, Jesus Christ was present with the disciples as they preached. Their confidence and power came from Christ himself, came from the Spirit that was with them. And for any man or woman, boy or girl, to be saved, there must be a gracious influence from the Holy Spirit upon their unbelieving heart. The Spirit of God must inwardly change them, must take out the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh; a heart that is dead and cold and hard must receive a heart that is soft and tender and beating and alive and only the Holy Spirit can do that. He must inwardly change the unbeliever and empower them to believe.

Jesus Christ is a live forevermore. He lives now to make himself known here on earth and he will meet everyone who acknowledges their sin, their rebellion, that comes to him in repentance and faith. I know that from personal experience. I know what it was like to go dead in sin, to go convicted of utter shameful guilt and to cry out with the help of the Holy Spirit, looking back in retrospect, "Jesus, save me! I'm lost! I can't help myself! There's nothing I can do!" And glory to his precious name, he met me in that moment. He

saved me in that moment. He changed me in that moment and it's not of anything that I did, it was all an act of his grace.

Jesus Christ did for me what he's done for every Christian since his resurrection, what he must do for sinners who cannot help themselves. He comes and he helps us and he helps us based on what he did during his earthly life. In the place of his people, Jesus Christ obeyed God's holy law, perfect conformity to the 10 Commandments and everything else that the law of God required. In the place of his people, Jesus Christ suffered the penalty of sin on the cross. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Christ forsaken, as it were, by the Father in the same way that sinners ought to have been forsaken by him. Christ having fulfilled the law, Christ having died, Christ having rose again, Christ having done everything that is necessary for the salvation of a sinner, now for those who turn to him from sin and turn to him, God graciously accepts on their behalf everything that Christ has done as though the repentant sinner had done it themselves. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Look at the book of Romans again, chapter 5. In other words, Christ did everything necessary for salvation, we trust not in ourselves but in what he has done, not on the basis of deeds that we have done in our lives but based on the deeds that Jesus did in his life 2,000 years ago.

Romans 5:6, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." That prayer for mercy that I was describing just a few moments ago, that's the prayer of someone who's helpless, who's given up all hope of anything that he can do. "God, I'm helpless here! If You don't help me, it's over!" That's the urgency that the Spirit of God produces in a heart crying out to be saved.

"While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." You look at those terms in that passage, who were we? Helpless, ungodly, enemies of God, nothing in us that can save ourselves, nothing in us that can prompt the faith that's necessary to appropriate and receive Christ. It has to be a gift that God gives to you, "For it is by grace we are saved through faith and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Even the faith that saves us, even the faith, better stated, the faith that lays hold of Christ must be given to us by God. He must empower our hearts. He must influence our hearts. He must renew us. He must help us because we can't do that on our own. If we could, historical information would convert us.

The result of all of it, when God saves a man, saves a woman, saves a boy and a girl, Romans 8:1, look at it with me, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who

are in Christ Jesus." All those verses in Romans telling us this: everything wrathful, vengeful, judgment that we deserved, it fell on Christ. He absorbed it all on our behalf. And for those that believe in Christ, that turn to him, God justifies them, credits the full merit of Jesus Christ to their account so that it is no longer possible for condemnation to come upon them. It's not even possible for a true Christian to ever be condemned by God because what God requires was fulfilled in Christ and when that is received by faith, then the full merit, the full work of Christ is attributed to that person in the mind of God in a way that makes condemnation no longer necessary, no longer possible. The judgment was already borne by Christ, already carried by Christ, and when one believes in Christ, everything good about Jesus is accounted to them, everything perfect about Jesus is counted to them so that there is no condemnation. And everything that belongs to Christ is freely offered to us in the gospel but it takes supernatural power.

Beloved, if you've been with us during the course of our series on the 10 Commandments you've seen how every individual commandment condemns every single one of us thoroughly and completely, and you just go through 1 through 10 and you just realize the multiplied condemnation that is upon all of our heads. The law of God condemns us. We can't save ourselves. There's nothing we can do to erase the penalty of our guilt. So under the conviction of the law, under the promise of the gospel, under the glory of the work and person and majesty of Christ, we see that in Christ is our hope and in him alone, and God offers it freely. He so loved the world that whoever believes in his only begotten Son will not perish but have eternal life.

That brings us to our third and final point here this morning: the invitation of Christ. The invitation of Christ. You walk through the history of the early church, you walk through the Old Testament promise of a coming Messiah, the New Testament fulfillment, you see the way that the apostles preached that the man Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of God, that that one who walked on the face of the earth was the one that God had been promising all along, you see how the human heart is unable to move in its own behalf in order to receive Christ. All of these things are true, there's nothing that you've heard from God's word in these past few messages, there's not a hint of falsehood anywhere in God's word. A lot of defects in the way it's preached maybe, but there's no defect in God's word. It's all true. It's all true and the force of that truth leads us to this concluding point, point number 3 of my message, it's the invitation of Christ. The invitation of Christ.

My friends, it's well established that biblical Christianity is no fiction. It's true. It is real history. It is accurate. It is the way things really are and it excludes every other religion from consideration. No one comes to the Father except through Christ. There is salvation in no one else. The truth of Christianity is mutually exclusive with every other world religion including Roman Catholicism. And so on the basis of that truth now, Jesus Christ through his word and by his Spirit comes truly and he comes freely to those who deserve only judgment and condemnation. He comes freely and he offers himself freely to those who will repent and believe in him. That's all of us. And all who truly trust in Christ find certainty in him, find truth in him, not fiction.

I want to show you a few passages from the gospel of John as we close. John 5 if you would turn there and look at these verses of Scripture with me. I ask you to open your Bible, there's one under the pew in front of you if you don't have one. I ask you to open a Bible and have these verses in front of you, or at least on your electronic device. John 5:24 and may God give power to his word as it comes to your heart now. John 5:24 Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." He gives that invitation and promise and here's the thing, beloved, every one of us has to answer. There is no option of ignoring it. We either say, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief," or you say anything else that is a rejection even if it's just, "I'll think about this later. I'll give that some thought." No! No! No! That's the same thing as saying, "No, I reject it." Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day in which you must come to Christ. To say, "I'll consider it later," is to say, "I reject it now." Christ gives that invitation and you must answer.

Look at John 6:37 and look at the gracious promise in all of this. How gracious toward rebel enemies is this conquering King? How gracious is this sovereign Lord to those who have rejected him? How free and unconditional the promise that he will receive you, even you, even today? In John 6:37 he says, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day." Do you want to know the will of God for your life? People say with their lips all the time they want to know what the will of God is for them but they have such a superficial construction of it of what school am I going to, what decision am I going to make, blah, blah, blah. This is the will of God for you. Forget all of that earthly stuff. You want the will of God? Here it is. Verse 40, "this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." The will of God for your life, the command of God, the command of the gospel is that you believe in Christ in the way in which we've been speaking here today.

John 7:17 Jesus said, "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." And finally in verse 37, I imagine someone a little confused, trying but can't quite get their hands around what's been said here this morning, "I want to understand but I can't. I'm missing something. I long for this but I don't know what to do next, what to say next. I'm at the end of my rope. I'm tired of sin. I'm tired of being subject to habits that I cannot control. I'm tired of being a contentious person with those that are closest to me but it seems like I can't help it." Fill in the blank of your own sin, whether it's your drunkenness or whatever it might be and look to the gracious promise of Christ, realize the promise that he makes to sinners just like you. Without qualification he says this in the middle of verse 37, "Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

My friend, you've heard the truth of Christ today. You've heard the gospel. You've seen it with your own eyes from God's own word and Jesus Christ offers himself to you today,

right now, in this moment, in this room, on this day. The question is will you respond to his loving gracious offer of himself, will you respond to him in repentance and faith alone?

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, truly we bring nothing to the Lord Jesus Christ except our need for Him. And Lord, I pray after the weakness of the proclamation of the gospel in this hour, I pray now that in this concluding moment Your Spirit would come with power and that through the weakness of the word preached, that the Spirit would make Himself known in the hearts of those who need Him, who need Christ today. Father, give deep assurance to every heart that because the Son of God lives forever as shown by His resurrection which we specially remember here on this day, help them, Father, help those that have tried and have thought before now that the gospel had failed them. Help that one, O God, that in their heart because the Son of God lives forever, that the same salvation that they preach could be theirs today by turning from sin and self and receiving Jesus Christ as Lord. Help them to that end, Father. Bless Your word to the hearts of those that have heard. Father, this is impossible by human measure but all things are possible with You. If You sent Christ for the salvation of sinners, wouldn't it be fitting after the preaching of the gospel for You, Lord, dear gracious Lord, wouldn't it be fitting at a time like this for You to move on hearts to bring them to Christ? Wouldn't it be fitting for You having brought so many people into this room to shower mercy greatly upon many, opening the eyes even of those who thought they were Christians and now realize they weren't and are suddenly stranded in this moment? Wouldn't it be fitting with Your grace, with Your patience, with Your goodness, with Your kindness, with that inexhaustible love of God to be kind even in this moment? I simply commit them into Your hands, Father, for You to do as You will. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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