

To the Church in Sardis

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Good to see you all today. Thank you, Jeff and Bora. What a powerful thing it is that you do.

! I don't know if you guys know, there's a lot of things happening in the world, right? You switch the news on and you'll see lots of crazy things. And the gospel is needed in so many of these places. And it's actually work like that, that actually is the most inspiring. If you think about what this world needs, the good news of Jesus Christ.

And Jesus says he'll be with us to the ends of the earth, right? I think it was told to me the other day that 2033, something like that, 2033, the Bible will be translated into every language, every known language on this planet.

People will have access to the good news. Before, it wasn't the case. But 2033, we're not that far away. At that moment, who knows? I mean, I'm holding this hope that the Lord isn't going to be too long as we watch so much pain and so much suffering around.

[1:14] So it's down to the work of people like Bora and Jeff. So just deeply inspired by you, especially inspired just by the discipling that happened, not just through the textbook, but through life, life on life.

And how you, Bora, just got disciplined through that is incredible. So thank you. Thank you for being here. We welcome you here. I'm glad to be back. I was in London last week and it was a, it was a very interesting experience for me.

So I was there for a young life conference where the global leaders of young life all gathered together. Everyone else, most of the people that were in London for the first time ever. Whereas I kind of drew the straw straw and I was just back where I grew up.

And they took us around town and to show us all the sites and two of the young life staff that were assigned to our group were two Americans that had only just landed in England.

And it was the weirdest thing. They were like, actually, we don't know what we're doing. But you know, the guy said something very interesting as he was taking us around only two months in England. And I was like, ah, look at all these buildings. There's St. Paul's, there's the Westminster Abbey.

[2:19] These are all places where Gabs grew up as well. Maybe not in Westminster Abbey, but. And you know what? He said something really interesting. And he said, he said, yeah, it's hard doing ministry here in England.

I was like, oh, why is that? He's like, it's a, it's a post-Christian society. I was like, wow, it's a post-Christian society. You look around at all these church buildings in England, if you've seen them, they're just enormous and beautiful.

All these cathedrals. Christina and I, we lived near one called Litchfield Cathedral, one of Christina's favorites. But it's a post-Christian society. We went to university in Leeds, and when we got to Leeds, there was this, I was walking towards campus.

Has anyone been to Leeds out of interest? A few people. Yes, two. At the university campus, which I didn't go that often. There's this building, there's this church.

I was looking for a church as an 18-year-old. And I was walking past this church. I was like, oh, this looks like a good one. I wonder what the name of this church is. And I saw, I walked closer. The name of the church was like big letters, four letters, Halo.

[3:30] I was like, I've never heard of a church called Halo before. I guess it stuck to theme. I found out afterwards that it's not a church anymore. It's a, it's a nightclub. Because there's no one in the church anymore.

So, so a club owner decided just to buy the whole place and then use it as a nightclub. And I was like, man, post-Christian society. Doesn't that break your heart?

They're in this place where you have all these big, nice, shiny church buildings. You have all these things that are remnants of Christianity. But it's a post-Christian society. The faith is dead.

And this really leads me on to today's letter. Thank you, Gabriel, last week for going through the church of Philadelphia. We're going to rewind a little bit and go through the church of Sardis. And that's exactly it.

Sardis doesn't really have that many good things said about it. But the one line, the one punchline that really tells you, man, this church really struggled. And I'll tell you more about it as we go. It says, you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

[4:33] You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. That's basically the summary of the church of Sardis. And that's terrifying. That should terrify you. It terrifies me.

As we go about doing our way, doing church, we've got to figure out, are we still alive? Or are we actually a corpse? Are we just literally just barely warm bodies sat in a room? So we're going to go through the word of God today and just go through the letters to Sardis.

So I'll read it today. Can I invite you to stand for the word of the Lord? A little bit of echo here, isn't it? Hey, so we stand for the word of the Lord because we truly believe the precious words that these are.

That we shouldn't take these for granted. That we shouldn't get used to just hearing these words in one ear and out the other. This is the word of the living God. And we believe that it has something to say to us today. And that's why we stand just out of reverence.

That these are the words of Jesus Christ. The Alpha and Omega. The beginning and the end. The first and the last. And he says this to the church in Sardis. Revelation chapter 3.

[5:36] And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

Wake up and strengthen what remains and is about to die. For I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember then what you received and heard. Keep it and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief. And you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you still have a few names in Sardis. People who have not sold their garments and they will walk with me in white.

Yet for they are worthy. The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments. And I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my father and before his angels.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. This is the word of the Lord. Please take a seat. So we're a little short on time today, so I won't recap all of them.

[6:38] But I'll go through that next week because next week is our finale. Next week is the final letter. So we'll do the recap then. Today we're going to talk about the church of Sardis. This church of Sardis was really interesting. It's a wealthy town.

And as I talk to you and tell you a little bit about this church, I want you to have a think. Is this anything like us? Is this anything like us? So this was a former royal town, a wealthy town. And actually out of the seven churches, this was the biggest one.

This was the biggest church. This was the wealthiest church. So you can imagine as the messenger is reading these letters and is getting to Sardis, Sardis is like, Ho, ho, we are ready.

We are doing church well. We are growing at the seams. We went from one service to two services to three services to four satellite campuses. We are doing well. So we are ready.

Now, we're sure there's little things that we're not doing well. So we're going to have a little bit of feedback about what we need to improve, but we're going to be good. And yet when Jesus comes out with this, there is nothing good at all.

[7:39] He says you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. But let's start a little bit. It's interesting here. You remember the old ones that we won't recap all of them today. We had Jezebels. We had Balaam.

We had persecution. We had prison. We have the synagogue of Satan. We had all these things that the Christians were up against. In Sardis, there is nothing. There is no pressure. There is no persecution. There is just complacency.

They've gone to the point where they've been able to grow so big as a church. They have so many resources. And Jesus comes to them and speaks truth to them. But it's not really the truth that they were expecting or wanting to hear.

And so he says this. Well, first of all, he introduces himself. That's how everyone should introduce themselves when you're talking to someone. And that's how Jesus does. He references Revelation 1 as he's doing this. Remember, the whole book of Revelation is there is only one revelation. It is not plural. It is not revelations. Turn to the person next to you and say, there is only one revelation. Okay, so there is no revelations. There is only one revelation.

[8:42] And what's the revelation, Darren? Who's the revelation? What's Jesus revealing? Himself. That's it.

I love it. Yeah, Darren. Those of you who are sniggering at him, beware. Be ready. There is only one revelation.

It's the revelation of Jesus Christ. And he says this. So the angel of the church in Sardis write the words of he who has the seven spirits of God and holds the seven stars. What he's saying here, seven just means complete.

The seven spirits of God means the complete Holy Spirit. This is the one who has the fullness of God in spirit, holding the whole Holy Spirit and the seven angels, which basically, by extension, is the seven churches.

And so this person comes and speaks this to you. And he says, I know your works. You have a reputation of being alive. Do you know what that means? They do a killer of a Christmas service.

[9:38] They do a great evangelistic sermon for Easter. They do a great outreach program. They go and reach three prisons with three prison teams. They have all these things that are going on.

They have a great deacons board, just like we have a great deacons board. They have a great elders board. They have great preaching. They have great worship. They have great community. I know your works. You have a reputation of being alive.

That place is live, man. That place is live. It's full of fire. You have a reputation of that. But your reality is quite the opposite.

Your reality is that you are dead. Here's what theologians call ecclesiastical sleepwalking.

Ecclesiastical sleepwalking means the church is basically in autopilot.

It's doing all the things. It's running all the programs, but it is asleep. I'm just going to stop there for a second because we could get there.

[10:35] We could be there right now. How do I know that? Because I think I could be there right now. And I've told you this before. I can go about my way, living my day, being a pastor, and completely sleepwalking through my faith.

Have you done that before? Well, who's done that before? Put your hand up if you've slept all through your faith. Okay, there are about 70% of people here who are lying. If you did not put your hand up, you are lying.

We are all prone to this. Sleepwalking through the faith where you just wake up that day. You're like, oh, man. I know I should, but I can't. I'm tired.

I'm busy. You know what? I'm busy doing all the Christian-y stuff. I'm going to a Bible study. I'm serving in this. I'm doing that. Going to this charity event.

I'm doing all these things. And yet my faith is stale. My faith is completely dry. I am not getting anything. I am spiritually asleep. Worse, I look dead. That's the danger that this church has here.

[11:36] You see, the thing is, the Christian life, when lived properly, what invites pressure? And actually, it's the pressure that keeps you awake. Because when you don't have the pressure, it's often that's when you say, oh, it's just getting so easy just to live life, just to be a Christian like this.

And that's when you start falling asleep. And he says, but you are dead. And he says, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. He's saying, you have all these programs. You have all these events.

You have all these task forces. You have all these committees. But I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. What does that mean? Now, Paul says, when Jesus starts something, he finishes it.

He will bring it to completion when it is his will. So when it isn't his will, then it won't be complete. So he says, I'm looking at all the stuff that you're doing. Now, there's two possibilities here. They're great at starting things.

Maybe we're great at starting things. Maybe this is a great start. But eventually, we fizzle out because we lose that first love. Because we lose the pressure that comes, actually, with proper Christian living.

[12:36] We end up just assimilating into society. And then we end up fizzling out. Doesn't that happen to every church? Isn't that what happened to the Church of England? So that when someone has come into this country, they say it is a post-Christian country.

Christianity that has formed most of the values of the commonwealth, of the society there, now we're living in a post-Christian society. Because we had all these programs.

We have all these buildings. We have all these schemes. And yet, we're fizzling out. Maybe they started things and they just weren't good at finishing. Or maybe the things that they were doing weren't even from God at all. Because if it was God's will for these things to happen, if it was God's will for these programs to happen, then he would bring them to completion.

That's Philippians 1.6. That he who started it will bring it to completion. Maybe they just weren't spending enough time discerning what God wanted them to actually do. They were just caught up in the doing.

Do you do that? Sometimes you end up doing so many things and someone asks you, hey, why did you start doing that? You're like, I don't know. It just kind of one thing led to another.

[13:41] And now, boom. Now it's just a big church. And now it's this. Now it's that. But you don't even remember why you did it in the first place. This is what happened to the church in Sardis. You can completely ignore God whilst doing church.

Do you agree with that? You can completely ignore God whilst doing church. We as a church. Hey, I'm tempted to do this nearly every week where we just stop the service where I don't preach. And I'm just like, guys, if we are gathering here for him, let's just gather for him.

Let's just seek his voice. Let's just seek his heart. And let's not do the motions of this because, man, this is so good. But this is so dangerous. Because you can come in here and you can do the whole thing.

And we can make you feel like a Christian. But that's not really what Christian living is. That's the thing that scares me the most. Do we as a church stop and say, actually, the things that we're doing, are they actually what God wants to do?

And is he bringing it to completion? A couple of weeks ago, we got invited by a friend to go on a junk boat. Because it's that kind of time of year, right? And some of the people, actually, I don't know if Ruben did it.

[14:54] We did wake, who's done wake surfing and wakeboarding before? I know Kelly has because I've seen it on her IG. Okay, wake surfing, wake surfing. I tried it. I'm terrible at it. I couldn't even get anywhere. But if you do it, what do you need?

You need basically a boat and you need a rope, right? Those are the things that you need. And then, if you hold on and you have the right balance, you can go quite far. And you can have a lot of fun. Those of you who live near Aberdeen, who are near Deepwater Bay all the time.

Now, what happens when you let go of the rope? You fall off. But for a few seconds, you actually feel as though you're floating, right? For a few seconds after you've let go of the rope, you're like, oh, actually, I can do this on my own.

It's only afterwards you realize that you've let go and you're not connected to the boat anymore.

And then you sink. I think that's the same with church. I think this is what happened to Sardis. That they were riding the waves and they were doing all these great things.

But at some point, they decided, oh, actually, I don't need the boat. I don't need the thing that drives us. I'm just going to let go. And for a second there, it's floating. But after five seconds, ten seconds max, you eventually sink.

[15:57] It's like when you see a human body. Well, we don't often see a human body. In the movies, when you see a human body dead and killed, maybe the heart stopped or the brain stopped. But for a while, there's still impulses where the body actually is still moving.

But the body is dead. But there are still synapses that are sending messages down where it's causing it to move. Your heart stops pumping. You still have some blood remaining from before. But actually, you're dead. That's my fear for church. That we get to the point where we're actually dead because we've lost all the heart. And yet there's still some remnant of movement happening.

There's still some program that's happening, but it's a completely empty shell. This is what's happening with the church in Sardis. How do we get there? It says this. He says, wake up. He says, wake up. Wake up. Now, some of you nearly maybe just needed that just for a second there. Wake up. Wake up and strengthen what remains. So he's saying that there are some good things there.

[16:55] Those structures, those deacons meetings, those programs, those outreaches, all these things, the worship, the teaching, all these things. They're good things. But they're about to die.

But you need to strengthen what remains. Tim Keller talks about this. How do you be an organism but also be an organization? How do you be alive and filled with life but still get organized?

We started it. Well, we started last year with seven of us, and now it's turned into this. And the whole thing is, how do we just stay organic? And how do we stay alive until we realize, man, we need to organize ourselves. Have some people come out, set up the chairs.

How do we need a hospitality team? We need a welcome team. Please, if you are thinking about how you can give back to this community, it's really easy. Just start straight with the welcome team. Start straight with the hospitality. Get in just to welcome people. Romans 15, 7, when you know that you are welcomed in by Christ, you can't help but welcome other people in. Be part of the group that welcomes people in.

[17:58] When people ask you what church you go to, I hope you don't say, I attend the gathering. That doesn't actually make sense. You say, I go and gather with a group of people.

You don't attend the gathering. You are the gathering. Okay? You don't attend the gathering. You are the gathering. What does that mean? That means when the bin is overflowing, you go and do it. You help doing it. I was literally just talking to Bonnie just before the service, and she bought a whole bunch of cleaning materials. And I was like, oh, who's going to be cleaning, using the cleaning stuff? Oh, she says, oh, Christina and I.

That's it. Actually, if you are under any doubt as to whether this place is cared for by a whole team of a cleaning company outside, I can assure you it is not.

It is Bonnie, and it is my pregnant wife. Okay? So, next time you see the bin that is getting full, you go and just take it out. It's your go. That means you drew the short straw at that moment because it was short.

[18:58] Don't do what I try and do sometimes when I'm out in the streets and I try and slip my rubbish into it. It's like a game, isn't it? How can I slip my rubbish in without pushing someone else's out, and then I'll feel a little bit guilty, and then I'll have to run away really fast.

If the bin is full, take it out for us. It's actually just across the road. Like, you don't attend the gathering. By being here, you are part of the gathering. Does that make sense to you? Because only then do you understand and realize what it means to be part of a community, part of a church. Only then do you stop yourself from sleepwalking. It's interesting here. This town would have known about what it meant to sleepwalk. So, this was a royal town, wealthy, also very complacent.

Twice, twice. First in 500 BC, and then second again in 200 BC. First, it was by Cyrus the Great. It was invaded and it was captured. Not because it was overpowered.

Because it was on the top of this hill with all these strong walls. It was captured because there was a guard who was falling asleep and left the back door open. Twice. Twice. And so, enemies would creep in through the back in the middle of the night and capture the town.

[20:07] This town knew what it meant to be complacent. This town knew what it meant to let the back door open and be invaded and be captured. Because it was sleepwalking. Wake up.

Strengthen what remains and is about to die. For I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. And then it says, remember then. What you have received and heard.

Keep it and repent. He said, you remember why we gathered in the first place. The problem is, at this point, it was probably two generations down. The church was two generations down. It had grown so big.

And what was it doing? It was living off past fame. It was living off past fame. Who comes from a Christian family? Put your hand up if you come from a Christian family. If just your parents are Christian and you grew up in the church.

Keep your hand up if your grandparents were at church. Okay. There's a few of us there. Well, this is what it's like for you guys. Your grandparents started a church in Sardis and it grew big.

[21:07] Now, two generations later, you're still sat there. But your faith isn't your own. Your fire comes from your grandparents who have long gone now. You're living off past fame. You're like, oh, who's the son?

Oh, you're the son? Oh, you're the son of a son? Oh, you're the son of a son? Oh, you're the son of a son. And it becomes, your faith is tied to your parents' faith.

Your belief is tied to your grandparents' but it's not your own. That's the kind of church Sardis was. It had all the exterior because of all the years and all the resources.

But inside the people were second generation, third generation. And they had forgotten the reason why they gathered. Why are we doing that mission gathering statement every week? Well, I hope that one day we can all memorize that.

And we're not trying to be legalistic about this. We're just trying to remind ourselves why we gather. Because so often we're like, oh, man, it's church day. It's Sunday. We've got to go to church. But when you remember why you're here, when you remember that you're not here to attend church, you're not here to go and join the gathering for a service.

[22:14] You are the gathering the moment you arrive. And that's why we have those mission statements. That's why we have to remember. Because what happens to the human mind is we forget. We constantly forget. Look at the Israelites just in the wilderness.

And you're looking at them and you're like, how can you be so stupid? God parted the Red Sea for you. And now you're worried about this. God had food drop down from heaven for you.

And now you're worried about this. There is a pillar of fire and cloud in the desert. And just because Moses is gone, now you're going to create yourself a little gold cow to worship. Can you see how silly it looks?

But then can you see how silly we are sometimes? How's your faith doing? Oh, I'm doing well. I'm going to church. I'm going to small group. I do alpha. I do this. But there is no sign of an alive Jesus in your life at all.

That's the scary thing. I think out of all the letters, this one hits me the most. This one terrifies me the most because it is a church, a big church, a well-resourced church that has grown complacent.

[23:21] That probably sums up the majority of churches in Hong Kong for me. We're so, like, Cambodia. Cambodia and all these other places in the world where the faith is growing.

Iran. I think Iran is the fastest growing church right now, as well as China. Places where they're completely persecuted, where they have all this pressure. That's where the Spirit of God is moving. That's where the church is growing.

That's where people are genuinely not just believing, but they are convicted by what they believe. But here, you go to church because at two years old, your parents are trying to get you into the right school.

So you've got to go to St. John's because if you don't go to St. John's Cathedral, you won't go to St. Paul's. Right? And you're living off that guy's fame to try and get into this school. And then it's all the exterior on the outside, but there is no genuine faith on the inside.

We need to look at what is happening in somewhere like England, a post-Christian society, and go, how can I not become numb to all this? How can I not become post-Christian myself?

[24:30] That I have on the outside what looks like a Christian life, but on the inside it completely falls apart. What does that look like for us? He says, if you will not wake up, I will come at you like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come.

This isn't the second coming. This is just Jesus coming to give you a wake-up call. This is Jesus saying, now, if you're sleepwalking right now, consider this, your wake-up call. If you are wondering, oh, should I go?

Should I take that step of faith and go and live a life missionally? I hope that slide earlier was your sign. Go. And if you're sleepwalking, oh, man, I don't know.

My faith is just, this is your wake-up call. Because Jesus will come like a thief, and he will come at an hour that you won't know. Are you ready?

It's saying, are we ready for whatever is to come? And sometimes it's in a place like this where we are the least ready. Whereas in all these other places in the world where there is so much warfare, so much pain, they seem to be more ready than us.

[25:41] Would we heed the words of Sardis here? And actually, what is it that you believe?

There's a quote that says this, Any belief shorn of the confidence to live it publicly is not a belief at

all, but a posture.

And postures are easily overwhelmed. You see, do you know why the reason why they didn't have any pressure? Have you thought about that? Why did this big church have no pressure? Because it was so ready to compromise.

It was so ready to say, hey, guys, don't worry. We're a church. We believe that Jesus guy, but we are just the same as you. Romans, don't worry. We're not going to cause any trouble at all.

Seriously, we are just, you know what? What we believe doesn't really, it doesn't matter. You know, we won't talk about it. Oh, you don't want us to talk about Jesus? That's fine. It's okay. It's okay. Because we'll stay quiet.

If that keeps us out of trouble, that's fine. Whatever is the path of least resistance, we will abide by so we can live lives of peace. That's what this church is.

[26:40] That's what the church of Sardis is. I hope that's not what this church is. The founder of Salvation Army, the story goes, why did he start this charity, Salvation Army, is because one time he was attending a lecture given by a very passionate atheist, someone who wasn't a Christian at all.

In fact, was very against Christianity. And the atheist lecturer said this. He said, if I believed what you Christians say you believe, I would not shut up about it. If I believed what you Christians say you believe, I would not shut up about it.

That's why I don't believe, because you guys have shut up about it, which means I don't know if you actually believe what you believe. Does that make sense? Because if you believe Jesus, if you believe Jesus is who he says he is, that he really did come down to the earth, if he really did die for us so that we can be free, and that we are now filled with his spirit, we don't have to have any fear. That would change the way we live completely. If I believed what you say you believe, I would not shut up about it. Why have we shut up about it? I had this problem growing up.

When I first took my first job, which was as a teacher, a secondary school teacher, I made it my goal to just be like, hey guys, I am just the same as you. Look, I'm going to try and squeeze in on Monday conversation that I went to church, just so I can kind of like, oh, I went to church.

[28:04] And then, oh, no, no, no, it's okay. I'm not weird. I'm not weird. I'm okay. You're safe with me. I'm just the same as you. I'm not the same. Because I have the spirit of Christ living in me that should change the way I live.

So when my boss treats me in a bad way, I can treat him in the most loving way. That, something changes every time it comes through me. When I'm not sure where my kids are going to go to school or how well they're going to do in school, I'm not worried because Jesus is in control of not only my life, but my kids' lives.

So I have no worry about where we're going to go, what we're going to do, because Christ, the one who's in control, is living in me and governing my life, and he is sovereign. It changes the way you live.

Does it not? Does your life look any different? If I was to take Jesus and Christian lifestyle out of your life, would it look any different?

Other than on Sunday morning, you get to sleep in a little bit longer before you go for lunch with your grandma. Would it look any different? Because if it doesn't look any different, then you are dead inside.

[29:12] Then you are asleep. That's what Jesus is saying here. Don't shoot the messenger. This is what Jesus is saying. But then he says, yet you still have a few names in Sardis.

A few names. Now the other ones, they were almost the majority. Remember, to the other churches, like there are some of you there who are following the teaching of this. There are some of you there who are following. This is like, you only have a few of you left.

This is the minority. This is what I've been talking about. But we only need 10%. 10% of a room can move the room. 10% of the room can move the room.

10% of a culture, of a society, can move the society, can move the culture. Will we be that 10%?

Will you be that 10% here? I don't know. 10%. People sat on the floor.

How you live your lives, how you worship, how you love God, will impact everyone else. Let's just say for now, as an example, everyone else here is a little bit 50-50. They're not sure how real their faith is.

[30:15] They're not sure whether God is real enough. They've shut up about their faith. But if you guys don't shut up about the faith, you move the whole room. Think to your workplace now.

Think to your workplace. What would it look like if you had 10% of people in your workplace who lived radically for the Lord? If you think about it like that, you don't actually need that many people. Look at your team for 20. You're going to need another person. I'll tell you what it looks like then. Let's say Erica in the hospital is like, okay, I want to live out my faith in the proper way.

As though Jesus was actually real, that he really did die for me, that he's alive and that he's right next to me in this hospital. But man, it's hard to live in this society, in this department on my own. I just need to find one person.

I just need to find one person. I need to talk to that person and say, hey, I know you love Jesus.

Can we support each other? Can we pray for each other? So when we go out into our department, can we go out and do our job, saving lives?

[31:13] We will do it together and we'll know why we're doing it. You just need that one or two. It's not that hard to find that one or two people. That's why we're here. That's why we gather.

I don't know why you gather. And of course, if you're first time, welcome. I'm usually quite friendly. That's why we're gathering because we're like, oh, you know what? We just need a few people who share the same heart.

Actually, it doesn't really matter what the other people do. It doesn't really matter what else they do. We're going to be the minority, yet there are still a few names in Sardis, and this is funny, who have not sold their garments, who have not dirtied their clothes, who have not pooped their pants.

There's only a few. It's only a minority, but don't you get it? That's all we need. That's all we need.

Here's my goal for us. Here's my goal for me.

Next time you meet someone who doesn't know anything about the faith, make it the charge that, actually, I'm going to show this person that I'm different, not because of my own will, but because of the Christ who lives inside me.

[32:18] It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, and I want to show them a different way. I want to show them the Jesus way and not the world way. I want to show a different way for me to even post onto Instagram, that people, when they look at my account, they're like, oh, this person's different, this person's built different, they have a different value system to what is on Instagram right now.

Can we be different? I think we must be different. What does a live church look like? I've said what a dead church looks like.

What does a church that's alive look like? Have a think now. Close your eyes for a second. What is a live church? What characteristics should it have?

I'm going to ask someone. What do we got, Kelly? What's a church that's alive look like?

Genuinely loving. So you're differentiating that from being fake kind of love. Like, oh, I love you, but I don't actually know you. Yeah.

[33:36] Genuinely loving. But the kind of love that the more you get to know someone, the more you love them. That's the fear that we have, right? That's why we don't open ourselves to other people because we're afraid that when they get to know the real us, they will love us less.

When in a church, in the church that is following the way of Jesus, it's quite the contrary. When you get to know someone more, even with all their pain, you love them more. Absolutely. Anything else? What else is there?

Excited. There's joy in the house of the Lord because there is pain. There is pain. There is war.

There are people who are dying. There are children who are dying. And we grieve.

You look at the wars that are happening now and you just grieve. And you're like, man, that isn't supposed to be. We never become numb to it. When you look, when you look and you hear the words Israel and Gaza and Hamas, may we never just be like, oh, yeah, that's the part of the world that keeps, no.

Those are real people. Those are real people living real lives with real fears. But yet we have hope somehow. That's different.

[34:46] Because we do not grieve as those who have no hope, right? Because we know that he is coming back again. That he is not slow. That he is coming back again. So we must be filled with life and joy.

Final one. One more. And then I'll wrap up. Brave. Brave. Heroes. What else do I have to lose if everything I have is from Christ?

I have nothing to lose. Jesus says, blessed are you who are when others revile against you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you. What are we the most afraid of? We're the most afraid of getting cancelled.

That's what we're afraid of in this society. Oh, that my friends won't hang out with me. That my friends won't look at me in the same way. That my friends won't invite me out to the party. That's all it is. There are heroes who died for the faith because theirs wasn't just a posture.

It wasn't just a lifestyle. It was a deep conviction that they were willing to live in every arena that they were placed in. That they couldn't shut up about Jesus. that they would be brave and at risk of looking different and looking weird.

[35:54] This person always talks about Jesus. Man, if someone would say that about me, that every meeting I have with them that they would just be filled with, man, that guy can't shut up about Jesus. That guy can't shut up about living a life.

Do we have that kind of courage? What's the thing that Jesus says the most in Scripture? What's the thing that God says the most every time the clouds open? He says, do not be afraid.

Every time. That's the most commonly thing said because he knows that fear is the main thing. So how do you battle fear? You love genuinely. You know how much you are loved and then you have no fear and then you can be brave.

Jesus says, to the one who conquers, they will be clothed in white garments. They will be pure. They will be holy. They will be set apart. I will confess his name before my father and before his angels.

If we would confess his name on this earth, he will confess us when we reach heaven's gates.

That's the promise. Would you remain brave? Would you strive to be different?

[37:04] Would you seek to be alive? Let me tell you quickly and I'll finish here. The traits of a church. What is alive in the Bible? What is alive when this book talks about life? What is it saying? It's saying no sin.

Romans 8. It's saying for to set the mind on the flesh is death but to set the mind on the spirit is life. Are we hungry for the Holy Spirit to move? And this isn't a charismatic thing.

This is a genuine person. This is part of the Trinity. This is part of the Godhead. Knowing that the Holy Spirit is alive and well and that he walks among us right now.

That he is living within us and saying, Holy Spirit, you guide me. You show me what to do. As I'm stood next to the coffee machine on a Monday morning and I'm tired, show me what to do.

Show me how to talk to my colleague. I was just talking to Nathan earlier. He's taking a step out and doing alpha and meeting people and talking to people who don't know the faith.

[38:01] He's asking the Holy Spirit to say, tell me what to say to this person. And it's developing a different kind of compassion for these people. Even for that jerk in the office, when that person just is completely rude and offensive, you're like, man, Holy Spirit, show me what it is.

Show me what the fear is inside this person and show me how to love this person because I don't have fear. I've got nothing to lose. Jesus is alive and he's coming back again so I'll take whatever hits you've got.

You can demote me for all I care because I know Jesus is in control of my life and he will never blot my name out of his book of life. That's the promise there. That he will confess me so you don't have to be kind and nice to me.

I'll do whatever it takes to show you love. That's the Jesus way. That's the different way. That's the way you stay alive actually. So finally, if you want to stay alive, if you're just sat there going, you know what, I don't know whether I'm asleep or not.

I think that's a decent place to be in because if you're actually asleep you won't even know that you're asleep. So the fact that you're like, okay, how do I become alive? Jesus says, abide in my word.

[39:08] This word here is living and active. Living and active. It has something to say about every single challenge and scenario that you are facing.

Something to say. Abide in this word and then you will have life. And also pray in the spirit. If you don't know how to pray, find someone to pray with you. Say, hey, I don't know how to pray.

Actually, I feel as though I only just learned how to pray maybe even two years ago because I sat with people who know how to pray. And then as I'm sitting praying with them and I'm like, whoa, you can talk to him like that.

You can be so filled with his presence and his love like that. Teach me how to pray. That's what the disciples ask Jesus. Find someone to pray with you and find someone to read this word of you. Those are the two things that will give you life. Amen? My prayer is that we would be awake. My prayer is that we would be awake and alert and aware of everything that the Holy Spirit that God wants to do in this world here.

[40:11] This world looks like it's falling apart. And in many senses, it really is. 2 Corinthians, Paul talks about that. This world is wasting away. On the outside, it is completely wasting away.

But on the inside, we should be being renewed day by day. It is this profound tension where there is grief and sadness at seeing everything that is outside and also the things that we face. But then there is a profound sense of joy and life and hope knowing that he is right here.

Philippians 4 said this, Rejoice. Again, I will say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. Why? Because the Lord is at hand. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything. But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God so that he will grant all your wishes. That is not scripture. Let your requests be made known to God not so that he will do whatever you ask him to do, but that he will grant you a peace that surpasses understanding, that will guard your heart and your mind.

There are things that are happening in this world that do not make sense. Zero sense. If you look at the warfare that is happening, if you're looking at the poverty that's happening, none of this makes sense.

[41:29] And so we go to God and we say, God, what is it that you want us to do? And can we do it with that peace that surpasses understanding, with that peace that doesn't make sense?

Can I charge you all with this? Can you go back into your workplace? Can you go back into your arena and show people that you have a peace that does not make sense? The goal is for someone to be able to say to you, a colleague, a family friend, to say to you, a family member to say to you, man, why are you reacting like that?

That doesn't make sense. If you can get them to say that, I think we're on the right track. That's what we're supposed to be, a gathering that does not make sense.

Can I pray for us? Jesus, we seek to be a gathering that does not make sense, that does not conform to the patterns of this world, but that we would be renewed, that we would live in a way that is different, that is counter-cultural.

Because what you did for us did not make sense. While we were still sinners, the worst of them, you gave your life for us. Lord, we repent of living off past fame.

[42:58] We repent of being asleep in our walk. Would you keep us awake together? Lord, we know that this may not be a short journey. Just like driving on a long road trip, we need people around us to keep us awake as we drive, as we go.

Would you bind us together in your love? Holy Spirit, we just yearn for more of you. We yearn for more of your presence and your word to be true in our lives, your word that is living and active. we give this time to you now. We hand this gathering of people to you.

Would you use us in whatever way you want as we declare your will be done, your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. I know I ran out of time here but can we just worship with our silence for a second?

Thank you.

[44:26] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. God, we silence ourselves before you.

We be still and know that you are God. We humble ourselves under your mighty hand. We cast our anxieties onto you, for we know that you care for us. Amen.

So that we be silent before you, because you are God in heaven and here we are on earth. Your thoughts and ways are higher than ours. May we not be silent in the world.

May we be vessels of love, truth, grace. We are carriers of the good news.

[46:03] We accept and we obey this commission to go and make disciples of all nations. To teach them all that you have taught us.

To bring them into a family of believers. To baptize them in your name. Teach us not to be silent in the world.

To be your voice. To be your light. Thank you, Lord, for this time.

Thank you that we've been able to gather this morning. It's in your name we pray. Amen.