

Speak About Jesus

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[0 : 00] turn to the New Testament, to the book of 1 Peter, chapter 3. 1 Peter, chapter 3 and verse 8.

If you are wondering how you get to be up on the stage for newcomers, for new members, coming into new membership, then please do come and join for the newcomers class tonight.

You don't need to sign up, just pitch up 5 o'clock tonight and we'll explain the whole process to you there. But let's turn to the word of the Lord now, verse 8 of chapter 3.

The apostle Peter writes and he says, Finally, all of you be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.

On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called, so that you may inherit a blessing. For whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.

[1 : 19] They must turn from evil and do good. They must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

Who's going to harm you if you're eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats. Do not be frightened.

But in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

For it is better, for if, for it is better if it is God's will to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins. The righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God.

He was put to death in the body, but made alive in the spirit. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Let's ask for God's help as we study this morning.

[2 : 26] Gracious God, we would ask for your mercy upon us as we open your word that you might show us your truth.

It's an incredible privilege that we have that when we open the pages of scripture, we get to hear the word of the living creator God. Speak to us this morning, Lord, by your spirit.

And change and transform us by what we hear. That we might know your son, Jesus, and be transformed by our vision of him. Help us for Christ's sake.

Amen. So we're going to get back to our series in the book of Acts next week. But this week, I thought I wanted to spend a little bit of time speaking about something that we probably need to speak about at least once a year, if not more than that each year.

But something that's precipitated by events that happened maybe a month ago. And that is, a month ago, many of you will know, we sent out Bongo and Sim and their church planting team to go and start a church by the University of Cape Town.

[3 : 31] They've been running now for a month. By all accounts, people are turning up. Visitors are coming. So we're very, very grateful to God for the work that he's doing there as they go out to plant. Now, one of the biggest ways that we as a church have endeavored to make Christ's love known, this good news about the gospel of Jesus Christ, one of the biggest ways we've endeavored to make that known around our city and even further afield is through the planting of churches.

So we directly planted two churches from this congregation and we've assisted in the planting of several others, not even just in Cape Town, but in Johannesburg and Durban as well. And that's a really important way that we do evangelism.

It's a really important way we get the gospel out. But it's not the only way we get the gospel out. We also, as a local congregation, those of us who are kind of left behind, need to be thinking constantly about how are we getting the gospel out to people around us here in our community.

And so I want to turn our attention to that, to making Christ's love known through the Union Chapel to these communities around us. Because there's a space that's opened up. Maybe you've noticed there's a little bit more space in your pew than there was a month ago before Bongo and his team left.

And what we want to do is we want to humbly ask God to fill up those spaces and even more than that, to increase us to the point that we have all sorts of complications, like we have to think about second services and all sorts of things like that.

[4 : 54] And so what I want to do is I want to speak about evangelism this morning. What that word basically means is sharing the gospel, sharing your faith. And what I want to do is I want to motivate and encourage you to speak about Jesus.

As a Christian, to speak about Jesus. Evangelism, I think, is a little bit like tax returns. So we realize that it's important. We think it has to be done.

But we either put it off right until the very, very, very last moment possible. Or we hope that somebody else will pay somebody else to do it for us. Right now, we actually have a little bit of a problem in contemporary church when it comes to the issue of sharing our faith.

So in 2019, there was a study conducted by the Barna Research Group in the U.S. And they found, and this is, I'm quoting from their study, they found almost half, 47%, of practicing Christian millennials.

So if you're Gen X or older, you're fine. But the millennials, you guys are in trouble. But almost half, 47%, of practicing millennials, Christian millennials, told the research group that it is wrong to share one's personal beliefs with someone of a different faith.

[6 : 09] in hope that they will one day share the same faith. Practicing Christians, it's wrong to share your faith in the hope that by sharing your faith, that person will come to faith.

That's a big problem. They don't want to share their faith. They don't even think it's right to share their faith. Now, I think let's be honest about ourselves and our own feelings around the subject of evangelism.

In Western Christianity, at least, there are very few people who are very enthusiastic about sharing their faith with friends and colleagues, family members. John Dixon, who's an Australian Christian writer and apologist, he says this.

He says, there are all sorts of reasons modern Christians feel coy about mentioning their faith to others. Fear of being labeled fanatical or fundamentalist. A craving to fit in with friends and colleagues.

Personal shyness. A mild insecurity about the credibility of Christianity. A fear of saying something theologically incorrect or socially inept. An overly negative impression of how unbelievers perceive Christianity and so on.

[7 : 12] In some ways, I think that the subject of the doctrine of evangelism is kind of like an anxiety inducing doctrine for a lot of people. The prospect of the sermon maybe is a bit anxiety inducing for you.

Because maybe depending on what church tradition you grew up in, maybe you have memories of sermon after sermon after sermon where the minister basically ended his sermon saying, go out and share your faith. And every single time he said that, and you hadn't done that in the week before, you just sat there feeling super guilty because you knew it was coming.

And so I want to try and liberate you from that sense of guilt and anxiety. Not by removing the obligation that the Bible places on us. It's there. Can't take that away. But rather by looking carefully at what the Bible actually does say about speaking about Jesus.

And then considering three reasons why we don't speak about Jesus. So that's where we're going this morning. What does the Bible say about speaking about Jesus? And then three reasons why we don't speak about Jesus.

Here's what scripture says about speaking about Jesus. There are two places in the New Testament where ordinary Christians, okay, so not special evangelists or pastor teachers, ordinary Christians.

[8 : 30] Two places where ordinary Christians are told that they should speak about their faith or give a verbal accounting of their faith to unbelievers. So the first one's in the book of Colossians. Colossians chapter 4 verse 2 to 6. The apostle Paul writes and he says, devote yourselves to prayer.

Being watchful and thankful and pray for us too that God may open a door for our message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should.

So Paul, talking to this church in Colossae, tells the church, guys, pray for your trained preachers and evangelists like me, he says.

Pray for opportunities for us to preach the gospel. To tell people about the good news of Jesus. Then verse 5, he turns to the congregation themselves.

To ordinary Christians and he says, be wise in the way you act towards outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace. Season with salt so that you may know how to answer everyone.

[9 : 36] So he says, look, you might not be a trained evangelist like me. You might not have been to seminary or be a pastor. But you should be able to have a conversation with someone that is full of grace and answers their questions about the faith.

See, in that passage really there are two different forms of evangelism, if you like, being spoken about. The direct evangelism of the evangelist or the pastor or the teacher, preacher, and in the responsive evangelism of the ordinary Christian.

Dick Lucas, a very well-known British preacher from London, says this. He says, we may describe this difference by saying that while the apostle looks for many opportunities for direct evangelism and teaching, the typical Christian in Colossae is to look for many opportunities for responsive evangelism.

If this distinction is a correct one, it immediately commends itself by its sanity and realism. So you, ordinary Christian, should be engaged in responsive evangelism.

That is, making the most of opportunities to speak naturally about your faith in conversation with those who don't believe in Jesus.

[10 : 59] Now, the second passage in the New Testament is the one we read in 1 Peter, 1 Peter 3, but then particularly verse 15. So look at verse 15. Peter says, in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect. Again, it's responsive speech.

You see that? Responsive conversation around the gospel hope. Peter's, in his book up to this point, he spent two chapters encouraging this, what he calls this exiled Christian community in the first century to live in a distinctive way amongst the pagans, those who don't believe in God.

He says, I want you to live in a distinctive way. In fact, he says, I want you to live in a cross-shaped way, a cruciform way. That is, willingly take on sacrifice. Be long-suffering, even in harsh circumstances.

I want you to live this cross-shaped way. And he assumes that if they do that, in front of the watching world, they're going to get asked questions. And so they best be ready to talk at that point.

[12 : 09] Give an answer. Now friends, as you think about those two passages, in Colossians and in 1 Peter, I want you to notice what's not there. There's nothing there about setting up a tent in an open field and getting a loud hailer and standing on a soapbox and wearing a t-shirt that says, turn or burn.

There's nothing about kind of cold calling or going door to door or handing out little tracts. Those are the sort of the common images that we associate with evangelism. And they're merits to some of those in certain contexts, but they're not in the New Testament.

What is in the New Testament is thoughtful, responsive, gentle, gracious, natural conversations about faith with unbelievers.

Not just with your Christian friends. With unbelievers. Now I think just that by itself. That should at least start to temper our anxiety when we approach the subject of promoting our faith with words.

With our lips. And so from that point then, let me try and tackle three reasons why we don't speak about Jesus in our conversations with unbelievers. I want to specifically focus on this passage in 1 Peter 3 as we think about these three reasons.

[13 : 23] So number one, we don't speak about Jesus because we don't know what to say. Peter says be ready or be prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have.

Be prepared. Now how do you prepare to give an answer? How do you prepare to give an answer in an exam? Well you study the content that you're being tested on, right?

That's how you prepare to give the answer in the exam. When Peter says be prepared, that presupposes that there is some sort of definite body of content that he is expecting Christians to relay to unbelievers.

Something they should know. That they can talk about. So I think he's calling on us to be able to say something more than, look the reason I'm a Christian is because I feel God's presence. Now I don't want to, I'm not knocking the idea of sensing God's presence or feeling close to God as a kind of, that intimacy is a powerful assurance.

But I think Peter's wanting more than that when someone asks you, well why are you a Christian? When someone comes and says, well why do you go to church? Like why aren't you out on the mountain or the beach this morning like everybody else is?

[14 : 33] Why are you going to church? Peter's saying, well you've got to have something worth saying in response to that question. You can't have nothing to say. Because that is by definition to be unprepared.

But then I also want to caution you on the other end of the spectrum. So I don't think Peter or Paul in Colossians is saying that every single time someone opens like a, a tiny little gap in a conversation, you try and drive the entire gospel bus through, your entire biblical theology through that little gap.

So like someone says, why, why, why, why, it's such a nice day today. Why are you going to church? Why don't you come to the beach with us? And you say, well, it was a garden. And in that garden were two people.

They were very, very bad. And you don't even get out of Genesis 3 after half an hour. I'll be honest and say I'm a little bit worried of those sort of canned gospel presentations.

I'm not going to mention the particular ones because I think the people who produced them mean really well. To a degree that they're sort of helpful, those ones that you can learn. They're helpful for you as an individual to learn a simple outline of the gospel.

[15 : 44] But please don't try and squash all of your entire gospel outline to answer a simple spiritual question that comes from somebody.

If the person asks you to outline the gospel, then by all means outline the gospel and say, how much time have you got beforehand? But if a person says, look, I'm really just struggling with the idea of God existing, then pulling out your chart with all your little diagrams is probably not that helpful.

You'll come off for sounding false, not natural. And both Peter and Paul expect this conversation to be a natural outworking of your faith.

Not a little presentation with stick figures and props that you memorize somewhere along the line. So those, I think, if you like, are the two dangers. A canned presentation squashed into the conversation, or a conversation that's devoid of real substance and content.

Which means this, I think. It means that you as the individual believer, you need to understand the gospel. You've actually got to understand it.

[16 : 54] You've got to have some basic understanding of theology. Who is Jesus? What did his death achieve? What is the significance of the resurrection? What does it mean that he's reigning on high right now?

Some basic doctrine. What does it mean that God is holy? What does it mean that God exists in three persons? God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean that humanity is sinful? Maybe even alongside that basic theology and knowledge of the gospel, you need to understand or have a couple of tentative answers to some common objections that come to the Christian faith.

The same questions come up over and over and over and over again. How can a good God exist when there's so much suffering and evil in this world? What about people who never hear about Jesus? That guy who lives on the top of a mountain in Tibet in the 13th century.

What about him? What about people from other religions? How do we know that the Bible is really trustworthy? These questions get circulated around and around and around in different forms.

[17 : 54] It's at least worth your while to begin to formulate some sort of coherent answers to them. Or at least know where the resources are that you can go and find stuff for people to ask questions.

If not just for engaging in conversation competently, then for your own sake, for your own heart, as you think about these things. And the Bible does have answers to these questions.

The Bible has answers. There is theological reflection. There are people who have written on these subjects. They have nauseam. Friends, listen. There is no shortcut.

Really, really no shortcut to growing in your theological and Bible knowledge. There is just no way around it. That's why we have things like Sunday seminars. So that you would come and deepen your faith. That's why we study things like the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

We have confessional standards to teach those doctrinal commitments that we believe. That's why we say the creeds together. So that you learn those things. So you know them. So they are second nature to you.

[18 : 52] There is no shortcut to that sort of stuff. If not knowing what to say is an obstacle to you having conversations about your faith, then can I suggest that you give yourself to learning more about your own faith.

Invest time. Invest energy into the study of scripture and theology. Christianity is not a religion where you check your brain at the door when you come in. You need to bring your brain along on this spiritual journey.

You need to exercise that particular muscle. In fact you might need that now in this particular culture more than ever. So the cultural credibility rating of Christianity is plummeting in lots of places today.

You've got bogus pastors and prophets and apostles fleecing their congregations in prosperity gospel movements in our own city. You've got sexual abuse scandals in major denominations.

You've got high profile pastors having to be fired from ministry because of secret adulterous relationships that come to light. All of this stuff gets in the media. And remember the media doesn't report on good news in the church.

[20 : 03] They only report on the bad stuff. So they don't report on marriages getting put back together or addictions being healed or prodigals coming home and getting their lives on track. Or orphans being adopted into loving families.

They certainly, certainly don't report on the very inconvenient truth that if Christians disappeared off the face of the planet tomorrow, the global NGO and humanitarian sector would collapse overnight.

The media doesn't report on those things. It's never going to report on those things. The media reports on the bad news. And because the media reports on the bad news, Christianity often, to the average observer, comes along as looking rather bad.

Not so good. And so if you can't then give some sort of coherent defense of the faith, if you can't give an apologetic for your belief at some level, why are people ever going to bother to take Jesus seriously?

They've already got so many other obstacles to overcome. Now, I used to listen a lot to the late radio host, Eusebius MacKaiser. He used to be on Cape Talk and on 702.

[21 : 08] And he was quite an outspoken atheist. Didn't believe in Christianity. But he liked to occasionally interrupt his more politically oriented programming with odd questions about faith.

And so he'd often on the radio show have times where he'd say, well, convince me. Phone in and convince me. And one of the saddest things was to listen to some of those segments. To hear Christian after Christian phoning in and hearing that they don't really even understand their own basic faith.

They don't understand their faith. There are answers to so many of these things. We've got to do better. We've got to learn. We need to educate ourselves. We need to grow in the faith, in the substance of our faith.

So that's the first reason we don't speak about Jesus. We don't know what to say. Second reason is we don't value people. We don't speak about our faith to other people because we often don't value people enough.

Now, I actually think a lot of people would say the exact opposite of that. They would say the reason I don't speak about my faith is because I value and respect other people too much to impose my view upon them.

[22 : 14] I think that's mistaken. And let me explain to you why. Up front, I think we must say that valuing people is massively important to God.

To Peter. In this text. Look at verse 15 again. Let's read it within the context of the preceding verse. So verse 14. This gives you a bit of background into these first century Christians who were often facing different forms of persecution and suffering.

as a result of their Christian faith. And Peter says this from verse 14. He says, But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats.

Do not be frightened. But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

So many people missed that last part. Do this with gentleness and respect. In fact, the original there, in the original language, it actually says do this with gentleness and fear.

[23 : 18] Phobos. That's where we get the word phobia from. Phobos. And in that context, the word really means reverence. Affording great reverence and value to someone.

But now, here's what I want you to see. I want you to see a little play on words that Peter is making use of here. So, I'm going to read verse 14 and verse 15 again. The same passages that I just read. But this time, I'm going to include that root word, phobos, every single time it occurs.

Okay? So, listen to this. The same verses, but with the word phobos in. Even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not phobos their threats.

Do not be phobos. But in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

But do this with gentleness and phobos. See what Peter's doing there? He's contrasting two types of phobos.

[24 : 20] Two types of fear. The first type of fear is what is traditionally known as the fear of man. Fear of what others will think of you or say of you because of your Christian conviction.

Because of your Christian speech and your Christian behavior. That's the first type of the fear. And he says, don't give in to that fear. Don't give in to that particular phobos. Don't give in to that fear. The second type of fear is a fear in the sense of deep reverence.

In the same way that we might speak of the fear of the Lord. Peter says, I want you to demonstrate a deep reverence for people as you speak to them about your faith.

That's the sort of fear that I want you to have for people. You see the difference between those two. When people tell me that they don't share their faith.

They don't speak about their faith because they value and respect other people too much to impose their view on them. I, maybe I'm cynical, but I think that's code for I'm fearful of how they might respond to me.

[25 : 26] I got phobos there and it's not the second type of phobos. Phobos. It's the first type of phobos. In which case, you don't really value the other person.

You value yourself. You value coming out of that encounter looking good. That's what you value. Being in a good relationship with the individual.

You're acting out of concern to preserve your own value, not their value. That concern to not upset the apple cart is likely much more about self-preservation than it is about valuing the other person.

Not speaking about your faith is often just a manifestation of your own selfishness. One person who understood this really well, strangely, is famous magician and atheist Penn Jillette.

He once on a YouTube video after a show where he was, where a Christian person came up to him and tried to share the gospel with him. Afterwards, he recounted this experience on his YouTube channel and he said this.

[26 : 35] He said, I've always said that I don't respect people who don't proselytize, that is, make converts. I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and you think it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward, how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize?

How much do you have to hate somebody to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? I mean, if I believe beyond the shadow of a doubt that a truck was coming at you and you didn't believe that the truck was bearing down on you, there is a certain point where I tackle you.

And this is much more important than that. You see, he gets to the heart of the issue. The reason for not speaking is so often self-preservation.

Keeping yourself from the presumed social awkwardness. You're not concerned about the other person. You're not valuing them above yourself for not speaking.

Selfishness is our enemy here. And it is inhibiting our ability to speak about Jesus. Let's not hide under the guise of being respectful.

[27 : 48] The passage already says we need to show respect and speak. So those two things are not mutually exclusive. You can speak about Jesus and be respectful, according to Peter.

You're not going to share your faith with words if you don't truly learn to value people over yourself, your own personal comfort.

Now, how do you get to that point? How do you kind of de-center yourself and value others above you? Well, that brings us to the third reason people don't speak about Jesus, and that is, number three, we don't have Christ as Lord.

See, Peter solves our problem as he calls on us to speak about our faith. Because if you go back to verse 15, let's read it again. Notice how it starts this time. Peter says, But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect. In your hearts revere Christ as Lord.

[28 : 54] That is, set apart Christ as Lord. So he directly, there in that moment, he challenges our selfishness. That's what he's going after. He's going on our sense of self-preservation and our selfishness.

He's taking it on. See, I think he knows. He knows you're never going to share your faith if, in your heart of hearts, you are Lord of your own life. And so he says, what you've got to do is you've got to set Christ apart as Lord of your life.

That's what's going to break down your selfishness. Now there is a background, a very rich historical background to this particular statement that Peter makes. And it's the background of the oppressive Roman Empire of the time.

These Christians lived under the reign of Nero, who was the first emperor, the first Roman emperor, to institute wide-scale persecution against Christians as a grouping.

According to some accounts, this even included using Christians as human torches, putting them on a piece of wood and setting them on fire. And so for Peter's readers, suffering and persecution, as you can kind of see from the earlier verses that we read, this was a very, very real experience for them.

[30 : 05] Like sharing your faith doesn't just get a little bit socially awkward here. It gets you on a piece of wood, set a light. And so they're tempted then to default to the claim that Nero is Lord.

They're tempted to live their lives under the lordship of Nero as an act of self-preservation, to save their skin. And so Peter is reminding them. He's saying Nero is not Lord.

Nero is not Lord. Jesus is Lord. The man who hoisted up Christians on pylons of wood and then burnt them alive, he is not Lord. Rather, the man who allowed himself to be hoisted up and nailed to a pylon of wood, giving up his own life.

He is Lord. Friends, right now, I think we, not in quite the most obvious and extreme ways, but we live under oppressive powers.

There are all sorts of lords out there that we constantly give our allegiance to as an act of self-preservation. The lord of social acceptance. The lord of public acclaim.

[31 : 12] The lord of supposed intellectual credibility. The lord of perceived sophistication. The lord of progressive ideology. There are so many different lords out there. And we think that if we, if we just bow the knee to them and keep our Christian convictions on the low down, well then we'll be fine.

Then we won't get burnt on the pylon of public opinion. Now we could do that. And we'd save our own skin. Maybe. We wouldn't get burnt on the cross of public opinion.

But then friends, listen. We wouldn't get hoisted up. But our friends, our family members, our colleagues, they'd never hear about the one who did get hoisted up.

They'd never hear about the one who fell, fell of public opinion and so was nailed to a cross. They would never hear that the reason that he's there, the reason that he's hanging there, the reason that he's bleeding there, the reason that he is dying there is because he loves us.

Because he values us to the point of shedding his own blood for us. In fact, that is exactly the point that Peter makes to these suffering first century Christians who are tempted to live under the lordship of Nero because of their suffering.

[32 : 30] Verse 18 he says, Christ, you sufferers, you need to know this. Christ also suffered once for sins. The righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God.

The righteous for the unrighteous. So you want to know how to truly decenter yourself and value others more than you? Look at the righteous one who suffers for the good of the unrighteous.

He has no reason to do that. He has no reason to kind of momentarily decenter himself through crucifixion and afford deep value, loving value to the unrighteous, you and me.

But he does do it. Out of love, he does do it. And so I ask you a very simple question. What kind of lord do you want to live under?

An unforgiving lord like the lord of public opinion? The horribly fickle lord of social acclaim? What about the righteous lord who gives his life for the unrighteous?

[33 : 44] See with all those other lords out there, you can go from being righteous to being unrighteous in an instant. Post the wrong thing on social media.

Make the wrong comment in the wrong company. Support the wrong cause. Do any of those sorts of things and you're out. You lose. You're out. Getting and keeping social righteousness is brutal in today's world of left and right polarization.

No matter what subject you're out. There isn't a subject that isn't touched by that today. You want to live under an oppressive lord like that?

Or do you want the righteous lord who gives his life for the unrighteous? The sinners. Those on the outside. The socially excluded. Set apart Christ as lord.

And when you do that, in your heart of hearts, you'll find that the conversations start to flow. Your lips start moving.

[34 : 50] You find you begin speaking to others about your faith. Well, because your social righteousness is no longer dependent upon how others perceive you. Now you have a righteousness that comes from heaven.

Secured for you through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the gospel. The center of the Christian faith. Because of what Jesus accomplished on your behalf, God the Father comes and he says to you, You're included.

You're in. You have my acceptance. You have my love. And no one can ever cancel you from that relationship. No one can ever strip it away.

That's your hope. That's the gospel hope that Peter's talking about. And with that hope at the center of your life, you will provoke questions.

Why do you live like this? People will see you and they'll say, Why do you do this? Why do you live like this? Why do you behave this way? Why do you think this way about things? Where does your hope come from? And that's when you speak about Jesus.

[36 : 01] You give him this answer. My hope comes from the righteous one who gave his life for me, the unrighteous one. Or as the hymn goes, My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

Friends, if we could be a congregation, that sets apart Christ as Lord in the deepest recesses of our heart. Not because we're good enough or smart enough to be able to do that, but purely by his loving grace.

If we could be a congregation that does that, then I guarantee you, speaking about Jesus is going to flow out. And these gaps in between you and these pews are going to fill up. Because we live in a world of people desperately, desperately needing hope.

And by God's grace, we've been recipients of that hope. We need to speak about it. Let's pray. Our gracious God and our King, we want to thank you for the cross this morning.

We want to thank you for the hope that we have there, for the inclusion and the acceptance that comes through trusting in Jesus Christ, Lord. We are not worthy. We are the unrighteous. We need the righteous one to die for us.

[37 : 20] And so we thank you so much for this great mercy. Father, I pray for anyone who sits here this morning and who does not know that saving love of Jesus. I pray that you will help them to see that they are unrighteous.

They are a sinner in need of saving. And then save them, Lord. Let them trust in Jesus and find this hope that Peter speaks about. Father, as a congregation, may we set apart Christ as Lord.

Lord, in our hearts and our lives. And may that empower and enable us to speak about Jesus and all the different circles we find ourselves in. That we might see many people come to know about his love and be brought into his family.

Make us an evangelistic congregation, Lord, we pray. We ask this for Christ's sake and his glory. Amen. Amen.