

A Clear and Certain Explanation

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter 20. I hope you had a blessed Thanksgiving. I know me and my family did and my oldest daughter is on the road right now and so I checked her location right before I stepped up here. We're still doing good so I got that on my mind.

If you look at the life of Christ and the ministry of Christ it is somewhat mysterious at times and it sure is interesting. So much of the message especially after his resurrection commands us to tell others about his saving and his healing power.

However, earlier in his ministry he told folks to be quiet about what he did. In Matthew chapter 8 he heals a leper and he says see that you say nothing to anyone about this healing.

In Matthew chapter 9 he heals two blind men and Jesus sternly warned them see that no one knows about this. In Matthew chapter 16 he told his disciples tell no one that he was the Christ.

In Matthew chapter 17 at that mount of transfiguration when those three apostles noticed this amazing sight that they saw, this vision that they saw of Christ transfiguring on that mount.

[1 : 34] He said tell no one of this vision until the son of man has been risen from the dead. Strange at first but a simple explanation is that it was all a matter of timing.

Christ was in the midst of his ministry of training his disciples to establish the groundwork for the church before he should as Luke 9 verse 51 which I mentioned last week is a tremendous chapter here that of setting his face toward Jerusalem.

However, then he arrives in Jerusalem and he's different. What he's asked to be quiet about what he's asked to somewhat stay dormant at times so that he could further the ministry before the church leaders of all people would come after him.

Now he's very open about it. He's made his way to Jerusalem and he's different. He is open. He is boldly proclaiming. He is clear completely about his message and what he'd have for us to share. He makes his triumphal entry. He cleanses the temple by turning the tables in the marketplace. He stirs up the chief priest and the scribes by teaching daily to the massive crowds that they could do nothing about.

[2 : 59] And then they ask him. In Luke chapter 20 verse 2 they said tell us by what authority you do these things. Or who is it that gave you this authority?

And he follows that with a parable. One of his last parables, some scholars believe it was the last one chronologically that he shared.

And it's a parable that is clear. Some parables take interpretation. This one's quite clear. No one's asking questions about what this means.

At least not in this setting. He was certain. He was clear. Folks, I want to be certain. And I want to be clear this morning.

Luke chapter 20 beginning in verse 9. And he began to tell the people this parable. A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while.

[4 : 07] When the time came he sent a servant to the tenants so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and they sent him away empty handed. And he sent another servant.

But they also beat and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty handed. And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, what shall I do? I'll send my beloved son.

Perhaps they'll respect him. But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, this is the heir. Let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours.

And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He'll come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

Now in this story, the man is God. And the vineyard is Israel. And the tenants are the Israelites. [5 : 09] Particularly the church establishment there. The scribes and the Pharisees that are questioning him and who he's calling out. And the sent servants are the prophets.

The son of the owner in this story is Jesus. And when they throw him out of the vineyard in the story, he is saying, you will throw me out of Jerusalem.

And he was thrown out of Jerusalem. As a matter of fact, he carried a cross out of Jerusalem. And they killed him outside the city. Hebrews chapter 13 verse 12 says, so Jesus also suffered outside the gate.

That means outside the city. In order to sanctify the people through his own blood. And then lastly, this parable says that those who do not welcome the son, those who do not welcome Christ will be destroyed.

It is that simple. And after he told this, he didn't back off. He warned of the dangers of the religious leaders.

[6 : 15] They tried to question him with tough topics and tried to silence them. And instead he silences them. In verse 40, it says of that same chapter, it says they dare not ask him anything else.

They began to try to eliminate him. He speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem. That would happen 40 years, almost to the day in which he spoke it.

And he speaks of his return and when he's coming. He is now very open about all of that. So I want to be just as open this morning about what that means to us today.

Let's get this straight. Look at this last parable together. And then we'll look toward Christmas together. But let's get this down. One is this.

Everyone is not pleased to hear of Jesus. It was true in that day. It's true today. If you look at the history of the welcomes that the prophets of God, these servants that the owner of the vineyard keeps sending in, that's what that represents.

[7 : 32] Look at the prophets. They were not received very warmly. At times they were ignored. Amos was told to hush. Jonah was a part of our, he was the most reluctant evangelist you'll ever find.

He was a part of a revival that he didn't want to happen. But the sad thing was two generations later, Nahum lets us know that Nineveh was just as bad as it was before that spiritual awakening had happened.

They went right back to the way in which they lived before. At times prophets were attacked. Elijah was threatened and chased by Jezebel.

Micaiah was slapped and imprisoned for telling the truth. When others wouldn't tell the truth in 1 Kings 22, Zechariah was stoned to death between the temple and the altar.

Yet God continued graciously to bring his messengers to the tenants. Now remember, he brought him to the tenants, not the owners.

[8 : 38] They didn't own the vineyard. They were just maintaining the vineyard. And of course the one that stands out the most was Jesus speaks, and he speaks directly to them, was John the Baptist.

Who when John the Baptist came speaking, they were reluctant to hear what he had to say, resisted that. And of course, because he spoke so boldly against the sin in Herod's life, and because he was so influenced by evil people, John the Baptist died for standing up for his faith. He spoke all this to the tenants. Not the owner of the vineyard. God's the owner, just the tenants. And I want you to understand that whatever you have and whatever you are, we are tenants. We are maintaining what God has given us. We're not in charge. We have a responsibility to that that's invested in us. But this vineyard is not ours. This vineyard is his.

We're to make the most of this life that he has given us because we're sinners. And our only hope is to do that, what God has given us to do in our lives.

[9 : 57] To make the most of the life that God has given us. And he is gracious, and he is patient, but I want you to understand, he is not indifferent. He's very involved and cares a lot.

Don't ever get confused that the patience of God is the thought that he's not deeply involved with our response to him. Because he is. And notice that when they did not welcome the first ones, the owner graciously did not remove the tenants.

He kept giving them new opportunities. Now it's interesting that he comes back to these sharecroppers sharecroppers to get the profits from what they had raised.

And as the harvest comes in, you would send people in in stages. When the first part of it came in, you'd send somebody to collect it, a messenger to collect it.

And when the second part came in, you'd send them again. Well, the owner noticed that on the first time, when they didn't respond to him, he didn't give up on them. He sent another.

[11:05] He sent another. And the response was the same. I want you to know that everyone is not pleased to hear of Jesus.

Second thing is this. Everyone does not welcome Jesus. Obviously here, the landowner then sends his son. And the tenants threw him out and killed him.

And Jesus is obviously, prophetically speaking, of the mistreatment and his impending death. And notice in this story, before they kill him, they see him coming and they say in the story that Jesus told, if we kill him, it could all be ours.

You want to know why people don't come to Christ? Because they don't want to come to his way. And in his way, they want it their way.

We want it for ours. They believe that coming to Christ has given up too much. They're afraid that they'll miss out on what could be theirs.

[12:15] And in reality, they walk away from the greatest opportunity that they could ever have, not realizing the ramifications. I want you to understand something, Christian. God is sending us out.

It's not time to be silent anymore. It's not time to be quiet anymore. Christ, his great commission, sends us out to share the love of the Lord Jesus Christ with folks.

His last words before the ascension is to make disciples. As you go, that don't mean, hey, I'm all for going somewhere, doing a great work.

I'll lead one of these trips this summer. We'll have a great time serving the Lord together. But before we get to the summer, or before we get to a foreign land, or before we get to another state, we'll walk out of here today, and somebody will need to know the truths of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They'll need to know the love of Christ. And God will plant them in our path. And if we pray for God to open our eyes and see that and have an opportunity to share that, he will.

[13:30] He's faithful to do that. He's sending us out. His last words were to make disciples as you go, to lead them to publicly confess their faith through baptism.

Don't stop until the word is throughout the world. He's sending us out. He's not sending out the guy beside you on the pew. He's not sending out just the preacher.

It's not just for the staff. No. He's sending us out. Now, does that mean they're going to be happy to see us? No, but I want you to understand something.

They are not rejecting us. Years ago, people used to come to your doors selling stuff a lot more than they do now. Praise God. They don't do it much anymore, but they used to.

And I remember one time this sweet little girl came to my door, knocked on her, rang our doorbell. I opened the door. She had Krispy Kreme donuts, a dozen of them there. She said, were you willing to buy my donuts to help whatever cause she made up?

[14:35] But I said, honey, if you only knew what one of them donuts would do to me, it would change my life. I can't do that. I gave her some money.

I didn't buy her donuts and let her go. I wasn't turning down her. I was turning down them donuts because I knew if I bought them donuts and I was home alone, nobody ever know I bought donuts. I didn't want her donuts. And when telemarketers call me, yeah, I might be rejecting them. I don't know about that, but let me tell you something.

When you go in the Lord's name and you share Christ with somebody, they're not rejecting you, they're rejecting God. When you give the gospel, you present them with an opportunity that they have to do something with.

And if they reject it, it's not you. I want you to get this because I think this holds people back from sharing their faith openly. Success in sharing your faith with somebody, sharing your faith in Christ with somebody is not salvation.

[15:44] Success is when you share and when you trust the Lord of the harvest to do with that seed that you've sown, whatever he chooses to do and work in their life.

Our responsibility is to share. Their responsibility is to respond in obedience. We don't speak to people about Christ for our fruition.

God has sent us and he may already be working in the hearts and the lives of those that he's sending us to. We have no idea how God has worked and moved in others' lives.

I had a guy walk in the other day. We had a door open because there's renovation going on. And a secretary was out.

And so this fellow walked straight in, walked straight in the office, walked straight in my office, which is fine. Walked in my office. And he told me, he said, I need to pray. He said, I'm Catholic, but I need to pray.

[16:48] And he told me the burden that he had. And I shared that with you if you got reminded. And I knew because I had seen people in the building that I knew that there would be other people in the building.

I think some of our ladies might have been up here. And I knew that, I knew what he probably wanted, but I knew it may not be safe for others because I didn't know him.

And so I told him, I said, well, can I pray with you? He said, yeah, I'd appreciate that. So we prayed over his need and his burden. When we got done praying, I'm thinking, why does a Catholic walk into a Baptist church, walk straight in this office for somebody to pray for him?

I don't even think he knows why he's here. And I told him that. I said, I don't think you're here because of the reason you think you're here.

He's looked at me. I said, has there ever been a time in your life when you've asked the Lord Jesus personally to come into your heart and life, to save you and to change you, to forgive you of your sins?

[18:09] Has that ever happened to you? He said, yeah. I said, tell me about it. So he told me about it. I said, would you stake eternity on that?

Excuse me? I said, if you were to die today and God were to ask you, why should I let you into my heaven? What do you think you'd say?

He said, well, I don't know what I could say. I failed him so often. I said, well, I want you to know what you can say.

And so in a kind of discombobulated way because of the way the conversation was going, I shared with him what Romans says. I started with Romans 10, 9, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.

Now explain what that meant. I explained that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord, verse 13, shall be saved and how the wages of his sin would cause death, separation forever, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[19:26] God demonstrated his own love for us while we were yet sinners Christ died for us and I went through all of that and shared all that with him and then I said, has anything like that ever happened to you?

He said, I think so. I said, if you were to die today, again, if you were to die today and stand before God and he would ask you why should I let you in his hand, what do you think he'd say?

He said, because I committed my life to Christ. I said, that's what I needed to hear. Have you ever made that public? He said, no.

I said, you've never told anybody? He said, no. I said, well, it's time for you to do that and I explained how scripture said from Paul's example in Romans 10, 9, when he speaks of openly confessing Jesus as Lord, that's not a quiet thing.

that's not something that you do in the pastor's study. That's something that you do in the open to boldly proclaim your faith in Christ. Paul is drawing a comparison to standing up to the Roman Empire and saying, curious Christos, Christ is Lord, not Caesar is Lord, Christ is Lord.

[20:43] That's what he's doing there. It's very bold in what he said and I said, have you ever been baptized? He said, I've been baptized as a child. I said, well, that was a baptism into a church. If you've never been baptized as a believer since you gave your heart and life to the Lord, since your beach experience, if you've never given your heart, if you've never been baptized, you've got your baptism out of order.

You've never been baptized as a believer and that is a first step of obedience when you give your heart and life to the Lord and I promise you, listen to me, I'm not just talking to him, I'm talking to you.

If you've never done that as a believer, it'll be a hindrance to you and your world. I promise you, the devil will cause a lot of snares in your path because the first step of obedience, I mean, if I was in a race, it'd be a joke anyway but if I were to stumble out of the gate, it'd be mighty hard to even finish that race and if you stumble straight out of the gate by never making that public, how that's such a

detriment to your faith.

And so I challenged him and I said, I know this ain't your church background but I want you to know you're welcome here and if you come and publicly acknowledge that, we'll baptize you, allow you to be a member of this church.

I said, what do you think about that? He said, God drew me here for a reason today. I don't have an issue with that and I said, amen, brother and I said, we'll be praying for your need and I've shared that with you.

[22 : 19] I didn't intend to share all that but I'm telling you, I texted that old boy yesterday and I'm praying for him now that God will do a work in his life and his salvation will be secure and he'll know that beyond a shadow of a doubt and that he'll publicly profess that and live for the Lord Jesus.

but that's not my responsibility. My responsibility was to share.

My responsibility was to be sensitive to the spirit of God to pick up on the fact that I'm in the midst of a conversation that I didn't intend to be in. Why am I in the middle of it and I can't do a whole lot for this fellow's needs right now so why am I doing it and God said, hey, you're on to something.

And it don't have to happen in a pastor study. It can happen in a restaurant. It can happen in a grocery store. It can happen in your neighborhood. Our responsibility is to not try to figure out who needs the gospel but to assume all need the gospel.

Share it and allow them to respond and it's God's responsibility to save. But I want you to know fresh out the gate everyone does not welcome Jesus.

[23 : 46] They do not. Third thing is this. Anyone who does not accept Jesus is ruined. They're ruined.

I'd love to be able to tell you about God who looks past all your sins and wrongs and mistakes and will save you from the doom that a sinful humanity must face. but I can't tell you that because there's a mistake that too many make that God does not that people make about God's forgiveness. When you refuse to accept Christ into your life you refuse to acknowledge the weight of all of your sin and you refuse the greatest gift that could ever be given to you.

And when you refuse the Lord Jesus and do not respond to him in obedience you will face an eternal hell. That ain't nice to say right here before Christmas.

We're supposed to be coming off of Thanksgiving and being cheery and nice. But I want to be certain and I want to be clear this morning Christ didn't hold back.

[24 : 59] it's just as true today as it was when he said it. I want you to listen to how Christ describes it in verses 17 and 18 of that same passage.

He says this but he looked I love this he looked directly at them he wanted them to get it and said what then is this that is written the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces and when it falls on anyone it will crush him.

Now that's a quote from Isaiah 5 followed by a reference to Daniel chapter 2 and those listening would be a lot more familiar with those two passages than most of us are because they knew those very well.

They would be familiar with both of them. The cornerstone is the first stone that was laid and when that cornerstone was laid everything else came off the edge the angles as well as the rest of the foundation came off of that cornerstone.

You had to get that right. I was in a building program one time and they built the trenches for the foundation and I went and looked at it it was a rectangular building I went and looked at it I said something's wrong I said where's this door and they showed me they had dug the foundations in a wrong way was that 90 degrees it was wrong I said you gotta turn this building before you build it you gotta turn the building they hadn't got the foundation right the whole thing would have been off my friend you gotta get the cornerstone right that's what he's talking about you gotta get that angle correct to start with Christ is the cornerstone in which we build our life on he's the cornerstone that the church is built on and the word also can be translated capstone which is the last one that goes in place this word is so appropriate here scripture tells us that

[27 : 30] Solomon's temple had 80,000 stonemasons working on it and that the stones were pre-cut at a quarry and delivered to the site first kings tells us that there was not a sound of an iron tool to be made on the holy place at all they did not want to hear them working so quietly they constructed that temple get this for seven years they worked like that and there's a rabbinical story that goes back to the building of the temple that one day a large odd shaped stone arrived and they

thought it was a botched stone so they laid that stone aside and they continued to build and as the building progressed that stone got in the way and so they moved that stone and as they continued to build that odd shaped stone was still in the way and so people were stumbling over it and so they moved that stone again and set it over by itself and let it sit there and toward the end of the work the scaffolding was set up and they were waiting for the capstone to be placed in the main arch of the temple they began to look and to look for that piece and noticed that the quarry had not brought the piece that they needed for that so they told them they asked the quarry the quarry said we sent it a long time ago they looked harder and they hid and hid in the overgrowth of the brush and the trees because they had been building for seven years they found the stone that had been rejected so long ago and it perfectly fit in that keystone capstone arched way and held up the weight of the building because it perfectly fit just like the capstone is the last and climactic piece that holds it all together so the

Lord is the cornerstone our sure foundation is to build our lives on nothing else but Christ and he's also the capstone that is the finale that is the final piece of the puzzle the keystone which all else relies on Jesus Christ is the cornerstone the starting place he's the capstone the end scripture calls him the alpha and the omega that means the A and the Z he's the author of our faith he's the finisher of our faith he's what we're made of the rest of the new testament assures us that he's also the foundation of the church that is to be based upon the church is built upon Christ it comes and it goes with Christ if he's not the head and before it I don't want to be a part of it and the potential of this church or any church is not limited by our inability but instead is enabled by his limitless ability if you were to ask me where First

Baptist Church started I could tell you how a group of Baptists had a burden for a church in this town and how after looking at several plots of land they accepted the lot that was offered to him by J.M.

Stewart I could tell you how 29 people left their churches to become charter members of this church and how on May 16th 1891 the Pickens Baptist Church was formed with an initial offering of \$7.42 and when I read that I thought Lord let us have a better offering on Sunday than that please \$7.42 you know what they did with it they sent it to missions I'll get to that next week however if you ask me where the church started I'll point you to Jesus the stone the builders rejected the leader of the church churches the leaders of the church rejected even killed him is in fact who this church is built upon he's the foundation he's the pinnacle he's where we begin he's where we end and Colossians tells us he's the one that holds every other part of us together if you ask me what to build your life on

I'll tell you Jesus and if you have to do and you need to respond to it because you have to do something with Jesus Jesus said you either build your life on him or you stumble over him or you get crushed because of your response you either build your life upon him or he'll mess you up for all of eternity by rejecting him Jesus is what we build our lives on and he said that some fall on this stone and get broken and others are crushed by it and I will tell you that day the Pharisees didn't get what he was saying they didn't like it it made them mad and they left mad what I'm telling you today can upset you on my prayer by the Holy

[33 : 23] Spirit of God that it will convict you to make sure that we do everything that we need to do to be right where God wants us to be we can can and should build our lives on him today but I want you to be clear because Christ is clear and Christ is certain accept it or not believe it or not just like he looked at them in the eye I look at you in the eye today with certainty to tell you your hope is found in the Lord Jesus he has planted opportunities in your life for you to respond including this one today as he sends workers to you let him see his harvest respond in obedience don't be obstinate don't be possessive understand that everything you have and everything you are was given to you by

God and because we are a fallen humanity and because each one of us has sinned individually we are separated from God for all eternity unless we repent and turn our lives over to Christ Jesus he's where we start thank God he's where I'll finish and he ought to be everything in between Christ said excuse me Paul said for me to live is Christ and to die is gain friend today if you don't know him give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ with every head bowed and every eye closed I want to ask you this morning if there's ever been a time in your life when you've accepted the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior if there hadn't I want you to know you can come today we'd be happy to guide you in what that means allow God to work and move in your life as only he can maybe

maybe you're here this morning and you know that that has happened to you but in reality you've never acknowledged that publicly never told anybody about that
Jesus by his example and by his command has told us to make that public through baptism and I encourage you to simply be obedient to God today respond to him if you've never publicly acknowledged a personal faith that you have already committed to we'd love to guide you in the process of making that publicly known as the Bible proclaims for us to do maybe you're visiting with us today and God's leading you to be a part of this church I just ask you to do what God tells you to do we'd happily guide you in that process or maybe you just need to get your heart right maybe you just need to share with somebody that God has put in your path it's been my prayer that the Holy Spirit may point out to you this morning somebody that he's put right before you that you haven't bothered to share with or it may be somebody unbeknownst to you like I experienced last week just walk in from nowhere and begin a conversation that can lead to a gospel conversation
I don't know how God is speaking to you this morning but I know you'll never be satisfied until you follow him and I know he has a way based on the story that Jesus shares to bring workers in our path to give us opportunities to respond in obedience it's been my prayer this week this morning and even this moment that you'll do just that Lord Jesus I love you and I thank you for being obedient right now to trust you Father in Jesus name Amen stand