



Luke 10:13–16

13 ‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.

16 ‘Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.’

Reflection

Today’s passage comes from Luke 10:13–16 following on from the dim note struck by the last verse from yesterday. Let me read it again as a lead-in to our passage today,

12 I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. 13 ‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago,

sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. 16 'Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.'

The stark reality of the kingdom of God is that you are either in or you're out. There is no middle ground. And words fall short to describe the gravity of the situation that every single human being finds themselves in outside the grace of Jesus Christ. Romans 1:16 to 3:20 perhaps best catalogues our predicament, ending in these chilling words,

9 What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. 10 As it is written:

‘There is no one righteous, not even one;

11 there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.

12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good, not even one.’

13 ‘Their throats are open graves; their tongues practise deceit.’

‘The poison of vipers is on their lips.’

14 ‘Their mouths are full of cursing

and bitterness.’

15 ‘Their feet are swift to shed blood;

16 ruin and misery mark their ways,

17 and the way of peace they do not know.’

18 ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes.’

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Jesus, with his economy of words, says something similar in Matthew 7, addressing his followers in this way,

‘you who are evil’.

We're evil. Every single one of us. Because of our sin, every single mouth is silenced before God. We will all be held accountable by him for our sin. Which means outside of Jesus Christ we don't have a leg to stand on. This means that how we respond to Jesus is the most crucial decision we will every make. On the day of accountability, the day of judgment, even the residents of Sodom, the most quintessentially evil city in the Old Testament, will fare better than those who have rejected the good news of Jesus, who continues in today's passage,

13 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago,

sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

Not long ago Jesus performed his greatest public miracle just outside these Jewish towns. He fed the five thousand, giving thanks to his Father and breaking two dried fish and five small loaves, the pack lunch of a little boy, and from it feeding five thousand men and their families, likely upwards of 20,000 people – 20,000 witnesses who sat under his teaching for an entire day and then witnessed an extraordinary miracle that marked his identity as the Messiah and son of God.

13 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago,

sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

Tyre and Sidon are two notoriously wicked Old Testament Gentile cities. Even in the present day first century, these two towns were bitter enemies of the Jewish people. They lived in luxury off the food produced in Galilee while the producers lived at subsistence levels. The Old Testament prophet Zechariah spoke of their riches too saying that these heathen cities 'heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the dirt off the streets' (Zech 9:3). And so you can imagine the weight of Jesus' words. 'If I had preached there and miraculously fed twenty thousand of their people they would have torn their cloths, replaced them with scratchy hessian sacks, fallen to the ground and covered their faces with ashes to outwardly resemble their

shame and repentant hearts. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida for not doing the same.'

15 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.

'And you, Capernaum, the city in which I have spent the most time, the region out of which I have based my Galilean ministry? Will you be lifted to the heavens because of the time I spent amongst you? No, you will go down to hell because you have rejected me.' Jesus then concludes his commissioning of the seventy-two missionaries with these words,

16 'Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects

me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.'

'You have the words of eternal life. You are my ambassadors to these seventy-two towns and those who follow you to the ends of the earth. Everything hinges on your message.' Because,

16 'Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.'

Romans 3 ends with what many people hold to be the greatest paragraph ever written. Desperate humanity utterly helpless before God in the wickedness and depravity of our sin is offered a precious lifeline.

21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished 26 – he did

it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Our sin represents an impossible chasm between us and relationship with God. Because God is perfect holy and good he cannot abide our presence and must punish our sin. We are utterly unable to bridge this chasm or make amends for what we have done. This means that we will be cast out from God's presence for all eternity. Because he is the source of all good, this means we'll dwell in torment and darkness in a place absent of all good, otherwise known as hell. Our fate will be terrible, eternal and utterly fair. Woe to us. But God so loved the world that even though we shake our fists at him he sent his one

and only Son, as an atoning sacrifice for our sin. He died in our place to set things right. The wrath of God fell on him and not on us, his righteousness exchanged for our sin so that we might be counted clean in the sight of God. Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Through nothing we have done or ever could have done God has graciously extended us a lifeline. He so loved us even in our sin that he sent Jesus, our lifeline whom we receive by faith. This is the message of the Gospel; the message of Jesus and the urgent mission of every one of his true followers, because,

16 'Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.'

Think & Pray

Consider the weight of Jesus' words to us this morning. Then pray again today for the spread of the Gospel in our world. And especially that those you love would not reject God's open handed offer of eternal relationship with him.