

The Preacher on the Mount

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[0 : 00] On 20th January 2009, Barack Obama stood before Chief Justice John Roberts, his right hand raised, repeating word for word whatever the Chief Justice said.

He was taking his oath of office to become the President of the United States. But there was a problem. The Chief Justice made a mistake, saying, I will execute the office of the President of the United States faithfully, whereas the oath actually says, I will faithfully execute the office of the President of the United States.

The word faithfully had been put in the wrong place. As a result, Obama said the words in the wrong order as well. Now, you might not think it's such a big deal since the meaning doesn't really change, but some officials got worried that although Obama said the words, he didn't do so as constitutionally mandated, and so he did not actually become President.

So just in case, the very next day they got Chief Roberts and Obama together again in the White House map room, and this time, Chief Justice Roberts recited, and Obama repeated the oath without any mistakes.

Now, I suppose the lawyers listening today might find the questions of legality somewhat interesting. But what fascinates me about this little episode is not so much the legal technicalities, but what they show about the power of words.

[1 : 47] What a great mystery, isn't it, that simple, unassuming words can have such power to effect change? Said rightly, under the right conditions, words such as the oath of office can transform someone from not being the President of the United States to becoming the most powerful man in the world.

Words have transformative power. But of course, it's not just what words are being said. Very often, words draw their transformative power from who is speaking them.

If it was my son and daughter saying the oath of office while playing make-believe, that wouldn't mean that he or she just became the President of the United States.

But the very fact that it was the Chief Justice of the United States and the presidential candidate who had won the election meant that when those words were uttered, they had real power.

They draw their power from who is speaking. Well, this morning we're starting our series in the portion of Scripture known popularly as the Sermon on the Mount.

[3 : 05] It comes from the Gospel of Matthew. And basically, for three long chapters, from chapters 5 to chapter 7, Matthew lets Jesus speak for himself.

And Jesus masterfully weaves together a tapestry of words, highly structured and pointed in such a way that it has left its mark on history.

Over the centuries, even non-Christians have found the Sermon on the Mount powerful, even transformative. These words of Jesus, for example, influence the hearts of Muhammad Gandhi so much that it influenced his approach to non-violent resistance.

And you know what? They still influence your non-Christian friend even today. If you're a non-Christian listening in today, you might not know this, but the Sermon on the Mount might have influenced some of your ideas.

You see, have you ever heard your friend say something like this? Do not judge, or you too will be judged. Do to others what you would have them do to you.

[4 : 21] They've just quoted bits of the Sermon, even though they probably don't realize it. But interestingly, it is Christians who sometimes have had trouble with these words of Jesus.

When we hear them, many of us find them deeply discouraging rather than deeply inspiring. We read words like, be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect, and we wonder how could that ever be possible?

Or we hear Jesus say, Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not see the kingdom of heaven.

And we wonder how is that compatible with the gospel? As a result, sometimes Christians either choose to avoid these words of Jesus, or else to downplay them.

But what happens if we do so is that we rob them of their transformative power. We miss out on a compelling vision of a life, indeed a culture, that Jesus has called us to.

[5 : 31] And so this morning, what I want us to do is to help us see and hear this sermon in the way Jesus wants us to. You see, one of the big reasons why we have so much trouble hearing these words properly is because we have divorced the Sermon on the Mount from the Preacher on the Mount.

We've forgotten that these words of Matthew 5-7 are transformative because it is Jesus himself and not someone else who says them.

And so today, my aim is to reconnect these famous words with its preacher by setting the sermon in its wider context in Matthew's gospel.

And then once we have done that, towards the end of today's sermon, I hope to provide us with a way into knowing and understanding how to understand Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

And so that's why this morning, we're going to begin not with Matthew 5, but right at the end of Matthew. And one reason I begin in Matthew 28 is because it is here Jesus treats our doubtful hearts.

[6 : 48] Jesus treats our doubtful hearts. You see, Jesus has more or less completed his mission by this point. He's died on the cross. He's risen again.

And he's arranged to meet with his disciples on a mountain. And verse 17, when the disciples saw him, they worship him. They know now that he's truly worthy of all honour.

You know, think back to the moment when it first began to dawn on you that Jesus is really who he said he is. Think back to the moment when you realise that the resurrection is a fact of history, not some made-up fantasy.

I'm sure your response was similar to the disciples, wasn't it? That was the moment you knew that you could do nothing but fall at his feet, giving him your life.

But the end of verse 17 contains a big surprise. But some doubted. Now how could that be? After all, these disciples recognised him, they knew him, they even worshipped him.

[7 : 54] But they doubted. At least some of them did. One or two commentators tried to sidestep this by suggesting that Matthew was talking about some others present and not the disciples.

But Matthew is quite specific in verse 16 that it is the 11 disciples, the ones who have followed him all these years that we are talking about.

Some among them doubted. Now what were they doubting? It helps if we can clarify what kind of doubt we are talking about.

This isn't the doubt of sceptics. This isn't the doubt of those who think that Jesus' resurrection is nothing more than a con job. Rather, this is the doubt of hesitation and uncertainty.

This is the doubt of people who know Jesus, who love him, and even worship him. But at the same time, they are not sure how Jesus will respond to them.

[8 : 55] Perhaps they are worried that having let Jesus down in the past, Jesus won't exactly be happy to see them. Or perhaps they are unsure what life holds for them now that their master has come back from the dead.

Now what I want us to see is that that's us, isn't it? Aren't we in the same boat as the disciples? We sincerely do believe in Jesus.

We have faith, even if it's often shaky and imperfect. We're convinced that Jesus is risen and we do love him. Although sometimes we do wish that our love would burn brighter.

But it is there. And yet, alongside our faith and our love lies the presence of doubt. That's what actually lies at the heart of our difficulties with the Sermon on the Mount.

We often wonder, how does it make sense that the meek will inherit the earth? How can turning my cheek to my enemy benefit me in any way?

[10 : 04] Isn't it unrealistic to just think that God will provide for my daily needs while I seek his kingdom first? We doubt and that makes us hesitate to fully follow Jesus.

Well, we're happy to follow some of his words, but we don't dare put the harder stuff into practice because we're afraid that Jesus isn't really telling the truth.

We're afraid that if we live out the vision of the sermon, we would discover that it really wasn't worth it in the end and it's just too counter-cultural. We are doubting disciples.

But Matthew 28 shows us that we are not the first doubting disciples the risen Jesus has encountered. And so how does he treat our doubting hearts?

Does he go, I've risen already, what more do you want? No. For one more time, he teaches. More specifically, he teaches them about himself.

[11:12] He points them back to the preacher on the mount. And for our purposes this morning, there are three things he wants us to see about himself.

Number one, he is the son of David who has all authority. He is the son of David who has all authority. Look at verse 18 with me.

All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Now those are familiar words to many of us. And because they're so familiar, they lose their impact. And so to try to regain their force, let me briefly take you on a short tour through Matthew's Gospel to help us to hear those words afresh.

You see, did you realise that Matthew's Gospel begins and ends on this note of Jesus' authority? How does Matthew begin?

[12:14] Chapter 1 verse 1. This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. For today, we'll leave aside that Abraham part because of time.

But from the very first verse, Matthew introduces us to Jesus as one who wears a crown. As the son of David, he has royal blood.

Now even if you didn't know that before, Matthew makes it pretty clear in chapter 1 verse 6. When he gets to David in this family tree, he deliberately calls him King David.

And so Jesus has authority because Jesus is royalty. And this comes up again and again in Jesus' story.

All throughout Matthew's gospel, Jesus is shown as someone with authority. He possesses authority over nature. He calms the storm.

[13:14] He cures diseases. And as one with authority, he expects people to follow him even above family obligations. You can find both these themes in Matthew chapter 8.

And then in chapter 12, he keeps saying things like he's greater than the temple, he's greater than Jonah, he's greater than even Solomon. And so he's saying that he carries more weight than even the most important religious institution and the wisest king in Israel's history.

He's not afraid to state his authority. But here's the thing. when Matthew begins his gospel, he shows us clearly that Jesus is the appointed king, but he is not yet the enthroned king.

Authority is his by right, but it is not universally acknowledged. After all, turn back with me to Matthew chapter 2. Now, this is the account of Jesus' birth, a familiar story to us from Christmas time.

But look closely. What does this story tell us about Jesus' authority? It tells us that his authority is under challenge. You see, Jesus is born in the city of King David, Jerusalem.

[14:40] And when the Magi visit him, they even call him the king of the Jews. But there is another king present, Herod. And this king is not friendly towards Jesus.

He tries to kill Jesus. And this challenge comes up again and again in Matthew's Gospel. The Pharisees plot against him. The teachers of the law cannot stand him.

The crowds abandon him and the Romans finally execute him. Heaven's king has come, but the earthly inhabitants say, no, we don't want you.

And so earth and heaven, you could say, are at loggerheads. Indeed, one of the most interesting things in Matthew's Gospel is how often heaven and earth are contrasted.

Now take these famous words from the Sermon of the Mount, for example. Don't store for yourselves treasures on earth, but store up treasures in heaven.

[15:42] Or in 23 verse 9, Jesus advises, don't give people on earth the title of father, because you already have a father in heaven.

And so earth and heaven are contrasted as two different realms with contrasting values. things. But now, at the end of Matthew, Jesus has risen.

And the earthly realm can no longer deny him his claim to be king over them. All authority on earth as in heaven has been given to him.

He has jurisdiction over both spheres. and so his followers can now live in hope that his heavenly authority will one day be universally acknowledged all over the earth.

If Matthew 1 verse 1 has Jesus sounding like a particularly Jewish king as the son of David, by the time we get to Matthew 28 verse 18, he is the king whose authority knows no geographical or ethnic boundaries.

[16:58] He is the son of David who has all authority. But that's not yet the complete picture. Before we return to the Sermon on the Mount, bear with me a moment as I fill out this picture further.

You see, Jesus is the king. But while on earth, how did he exercise his authority? Well, come with me to Matthew chapter 3 and notice how Matthew introduces Jesus' ministry. Jesus comes and then he gets baptized by John. And as a result, 3 verse 16 to 17 tells us, the spirit of God comes on Jesus and the voice from heaven says, this is my son whom I love. With him I am well pleased. Now, what's so significant about that? Well, remember, Jesus has been introduced as a king. But Matthew now shows what sort of king he's going to be. If you know your Old Testament, especially the prophet Isaiah, then you would know about someone called the servant of the Lord. We started this morning by reading about him.

[18:13] And originally, the nation of Israel was meant to be the Lord's servant, bringing light to the nations, so that the whole world would know who God is.

But they failed. But God says, there will come an individual, also called a servant. And in Isaiah chapter 42, God says that he will put his spirit in this servant. He will be pleased with him. He will be delighted in him. For this servant will do what Israel failed to do. And that's Jesus.

He's the king, but his baptism by John shows that he is also the servant. Now, in case you're doubtful that's really true, check out Matthew chapter 12 on your own later on.

There, Matthew makes clear that Jesus is fulfilling the ministry of the servant by directly quoting Isaiah 42. He will be the one who will bring light to people living in the darkness.

[19:22] But there's more. According to Isaiah 52 and 53, this same servant will go on to take the curse of sin and be pierced for our transgressions.

That's how the light comes. And that's exactly what happened to Jesus. As he hangs on the cross, the soldiers spit on him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews.

They mean it as mockery. But of course, they're actually right. He is the king. But he's the servant king. He's the king who serves, and he's the servant who is enthroned.

Jesus brings the categories of king and servant together as he dies and rises again. And so number two, the preacher on the mount is the suffering servant of Isaiah.

Or to bring the two now together, Jesus is the son of David who has all authority because he is the suffering servant of Isaiah. But there is one more thing I want to bring into play from Matthew 28.

[20:40] You see, Jesus meets the doubts of his disciples by reminding them who he is. And today, that is how he also meets our doubts. Friends, he tells us, I know that you'll find following me difficult.

But don't forget, who is with you always to the end of the age? It is I, Jesus, servant and king. And with that reminder, he now has a mission for them. Verse 19. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

As disciples, they are to make more disciples. But how are they to do it? By baptizing, that is, by initiating all those who have accepted Jesus into the Christian community.

And here's the key thing, by teaching them everything Jesus has commanded them. And so number three, this servant king has commissioned disciples to make disciples by teaching everything Jesus taught.

[22:02] Did you catch that? Everything. That would, of course, include the sermon on the mount. Now, how does all this help us to hear the sermon as doubting disciples?

Well, remember what I said at the beginning? Words often draw their transformative power from who is speaking those words. And who is it that speaks the words of Matthew 5-7?

Answer, these are the words of the servant king. And that changes everything. You see, when it comes to reading the sermon on the mount, Christians often fall into two errors.

The first error is to read it as pure moralism. We come to these words as if it's the rulebook of a severe headmaster. So we better do our best to keep it because if not, uh-oh, out comes the rotan.

But when we read the whole of Matthew and see that Jesus is the suffering servant who had to die, we know we can't read the sermon on the mount like an entrance exam.

[23 : 16] Neither do we approach it as if it's a test for the renewal of our citizenship, as if Jesus initially gave us free entry into heaven, but to stay in we need to pass these requirements every 12 months.

No. The one who spoke these words is the servant who came not to give us an entrance exam, but to die to make us his disciples.

And so we can't read the sermon as pure moralism. The second error is in some ways its opposite. It's to read it as pure condemnation.

Now some Christians look at the sermon on the mount and they conclude, Jesus can't be for real. All the things he says, they're so high level. How can we make sense of it?

Ah, I know. Jesus wants non-Christians to read this sermon and to think, hey, there is no way I can live up to this. And then they will feel convicted of their sin.

[24 : 20] And so they would come to Jesus and accept him and be safe. And so they say, ah, actually that's the entire purpose of the sermon is to help non-Christians or maybe nominal Christians feel condemned so that they will find relief in the gospel.

Now there's some truth to this perspective, and it can be especially attractive to Christians who believe that reading it this way is especially, is to be gospel-centered. Jesus is not not to be not afraid of God.

But this doesn't work because it doesn't fail to appreciate enough that Jesus is the son of David who has all authority.

Indeed, the note of authority also frames this sermon. Let me show you how. Come with me first of all to chapter 7, verse 28 to 29, where Jesus has just finished his sermon.

And notice how the crowds responded. They were amazed at his teaching because he taught as one who had authority. That's because it's the king speaking, even though it hasn't quite dawned on them yet.

[25 : 34] And then come with me back to the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, to Matthew 5, verses 1 and 2, which is where Jesus hasn't quite spoken yet. And in verse 1, we're told that he went up on the mountain side and sat down.

Now, sounds very ordinary, doesn't it? Except none of those actions are ordinary. By going up a mountain, Jesus is deliberately echoing Moses as he goes up to take the Ten Commandments. You know, in the original language in the Greek, the phrase is actually a direct quotation from Exodus chapter 19. And so Jesus is showcasing his authority to lay down a new law, if you like. And then he sat down. In the ancient world, sitting is actually a symbol of authority. Kings sit when you come into their presence.

verse 2. And once again, this is the king speaking. And perhaps most importantly, notice who he's teaching in verse 2. He's teaching his disciples.

[26 : 52] The crowds are listening in, that's for sure. But it is his disciples that he's focused on. These are not words merely for not-yet-followers of Jesus.

These are words for those who already follow him. And so to read the sermon as mere condemnation would be wrong. But when we see these words as the words of the servant king, it helps us to see the sermon for what it really is.

It's not about morality in general. It's about life in the kingdom. Jesus is addressing those who have already repented, who have put their trust in Jesus, who say that Jesus is their king.

And remember what Jesus said at the end of Matthew? He said to make disciples. He said in order to make disciples, you have to teach them everything he has taught.

And so the Sermon on the Mount is about formation. It's about forming us to become a distinctive community of Jesus' followers. who are in the world, but different to the world.

[28 : 05] And who as this community are then able to invite others to become Jesus' followers too. And I'm just going to use the remainder of my time to give you an orientation to the sermon.

But just before we do that, there's one more picture of Jesus that I want to draw your attention to first. Come with me to Matthew 11 28-30.

Verse 28, Jesus says, Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Now, many of you might be familiar with verse 28, but it's verses 29 and 30 which makes what Jesus says really astounding.

Jesus has just invited us to himself because he alone can give us rest. But then, he tells us we find rest as we take his yoke.

[29 : 17] Now, if you don't know what a yoke is, it's a harness usually put on oxen so that they can pull a cart. And that doesn't sound restful, does it? But Jesus says his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

But what is his yoke? It's actually his teaching. That's made clear in verse 29 when he says, take my yoke, and then what does he say next?

Learn from me. And so the yoke is his teaching. And so the preacher on the mount is not just the servant king, but also the master teacher who offers us rest.

This is Jesus' promise. Learning to be his disciple is really about discovering true rest. But let's go back to the sermon on the mount.

And remember, we're meant to hear these words as the words of the servant king who is teaching us how to live in his kingdom and become disciple making disciples.

[30 : 26] So what is kingdom life all about according to this sermon? Well, let me just draw your attention to four characteristics. Firstly, it's founded on dependence.

Now, notice how the Sermon on the Mount begins. It begins in chapter 5, verses 3 to 12, with what is often called the Beatitudes, which we'll take a closer look at next week.

And so the sermon actually begins with grace. You see, remember what we are like? Doubtful disciples. In fact, you could say that we're worse than that.

You know, there was a book published a few years ago called *The Imperfect Disciple*, and that title captures our experience well. And when we acknowledge that we're imperfect disciples, even failed disciples, we're actually in the right place.

For when you cry out to Jesus, Lord, I'm so rubbish at following you, please help me. What does Jesus say? Verse 3, Blessed are the poor in spirit.

[31 : 36] When you cry out to God, Lord, I do what I don't want to do, and I don't do what I should do, help, why can't I follow you as I should?

Jesus says, verse 6, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. The first word Jesus says to his disciples is this, when you're truly humbled and broken, be encouraged, you're ready for life in the kingdom.

Why? Because Jesus says, life in the kingdom must start from the foundations of dependence. Another feature of the sermon confirms this.

Take the time later on to read through Matthew 5-7, and I want you to count how many times God the Father is mentioned. Maybe one of you can tell me the exact number later, but basically it's everywhere.

And did you notice what lies right at the center of the sermon? It is the Lord's prayer. It is God's children addressing their Father in heaven, asking Him for help and longing for His glory.

[32 : 56] And did you notice that in the Lord's prayer, there is an ongoing need to ask for forgiveness? Jesus expects that we will fail.

But He says to us, because I am the suffering servant, you can keep going back to your heavenly Father and be forgiven. You can keep asking to depend on Him.

And you know what? Because I'm the King, when you pray, your will be done on earth as in heaven. You can be sure that prayer will be answered because all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

And so we must not miss this note of grace and humble dependence that saturates the sermon. We mustn't miss that this is addressed to disciples who already know God as Father.

And that is a precious truth, because these disciples have left their earthly fathers behind to follow Jesus. And so whenever we read parts of the sermon that is incredibly challenging and leaves us feeling defeated, then this is what we should keep coming back to.

[34 : 14] Keep remembering humble dependence on the Father is the heartbeat of this sermon. second, it's concerned with righteousness.

Don't miss that either. You see, the Beatitudes themselves already reveal that righteousness is what the Father desires. Just look at chapter 5, verse 6. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Or verse 10. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. If you were to jump ahead to 6 verse 1, you would notice that Jesus wants us to practice righteousness, just not in a hypocritical way.

And then 6 verse 33 tells us that seeking God's righteousness is paramount. Now, what kind of righteousness is in view here? Let me borrow the definition of Ben Cooper, a pastor who's done lots of scholarly work on Matthew.

He defines it simply as an alignment with the will and purpose of God. Jesus is concerned here especially with the practice of righteousness, to be doing the will of God.

[35 : 34] And he's especially interested in a righteousness that goes beyond the externals. You know, if you were to survey 5 verse 21 to 48 later on, you'll find that Jesus consistently goes for the heart.

You know, that's why he says things like being angry with someone is actually murder. And so Jesus is not interested in just what we do, but who we are.

Kingdom people are people who align with God's ways and values as captured in the Beatitudes. You know, in some ways, the rest of the sermon is an application of the Beatitudes.

So when Jesus talks about anger and murder, for instance, he is calling us to be peacemakers.

When he talks about self-control and marital faithfulness, he is calling us to be pure in heart.

when he teaches us to pray the Lord's Prayer, he is calling us to be poor in spirit, submitting our neediness to God the Father.

[36 : 41] You see, Christianity isn't just an insurance policy. You know, believe in Jesus, get out of hell, wait for heaven. No, life in the kingdom goes beyond that.

It's about exhibiting a righteousness in the concrete situations that you will face tomorrow, in the weeks ahead, in the months ahead.

Thirdly, it's interested in consistency. Here, let me quickly address that difficult verse in 5 verse 48. Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Now, the problem is that when we hear the word perfect, we immediately think of moral perfection and absolute purity. But that is not quite what the Greek word behind the translation perfect means. Rather, the idea here is one of wholeness and completeness in the sense of whole hearted devotion to God. But the problem is finding a good way to translate that into English.

[37 : 47] We could say that 5 verse 48 should be translated be whole as your heavenly Father is whole. though some people might find that a little strange as well.

Perhaps another way is to say be undivided as your heavenly Father is undivided. In other words, don't be like the Pharisees who might do the right thing but not have the right hearts.

Their hearts and their actions are divided from one another. And so Jesus is not so much calling here for moral perfection. after all, remember in the Lord's prayer we are still asking for forgiveness. But he is calling for consistency. Indeed, Jesus says that if your heart and your actions don't match, eventually it will come out. As he says towards the end of the sermon in 7 verse 18, good trees cannot bear bad fruit and bad trees cannot bear good fruit.

And fourthly, in the end, it's all about living for God's glory. Why does it matter how we live in the kingdom?

[38 : 59] Because in the end, it's about making more disciples of Jesus who would glorify God. That's best captured in Matthew 5 verse 16. And so life in the kingdom is not inward looking, but outward looking.

In fact, it's basically the outworking of the servant's role in Isaiah. Remember in Isaiah that Israel was meant to be a light to the nations, but they failed. But then Jesus came and then he became that light to the nations and now he joins, asks us to join with him to continue to be that light to the nations.

And so my hope is that all that will give you some fixed points as you read through the sermon. And here is the overall basic idea of the sermon.

As you come before God, humbled and broken, in dependence on him, and as you seek to show the same concern for righteousness as he does, you will be a light to the nations, as Jesus was, and find true blessing there.

Well, this is going for long enough already, but let me just conclude this sermon the way Jesus does. In the end, Jesus says, there are two basic ways to live.

[40 : 32] When you look at 7 verse 13 to 7 verse 29, Jesus keeps laying before us the two choices facing a disciple or potential disciple. There are only two gates, he says.

There are only two kinds of trees. There are only two foundations. Which one would you choose? Would you choose to see Jesus as the servant who died for you, and the king who has rightful authority over you?

Or would you reject him? And if you are already a follower of Jesus, would you allow yourselves to continually be broken and dependent on the Father, letting him shape your heart so that it might overflow into righteous behavior which brings glory to him?

Or would you harden your heart and choose destruction instead? That's what the Sermon on the Mount lays before you.

But be encouraged. As we work through this sermon in the coming months, remember these are the words of the servant king. These are the words of the one who says to you, come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

[41 : 52] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. And may that cause us to hear the sermon not as doubtful disciples, but as joyful ones.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, this morning we come to you again, remembering who Jesus really is.

help us not to have a very obscure and veiled vision of him, but help us to see him as the son of David, the one to whom all authority is given, and also as the suffering servant who came to be pierced for our transgressions.

and Lord, as the risen king whom we now serve, we pray, Lord, that you help us to listen to your teaching in particular, to the Sermon on the Mount.

Help us to come in humble dependence, to be ready to be broken, to be ready to be challenged, to be ready to have the same concern for righteousness as you do, so that we might be a light to the nations, and bring glory to you, our Heavenly Father.

[43 : 24] So prepare our hearts and minds in the coming weeks, so that we might hear your words afresh, and be transformed by them. All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.