

Last Things

By Bob Vincent

Bible Text: Jeremiah 3:1-11; Deuteronomy 22-24

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Our scripture text is taken from Jeremiah 3 beginning at verse 1, page 1,173.

“If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again? Would not the land be completely defiled? But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers— would you now return to me?” declares the LORD.

“Look up to the barren heights and see. Is there any place where you have not been ravished? By the roadside you sat waiting for lovers, sat like a nomad in the desert. You have defiled the land with your prostitution and wickedness.

Therefore, the showers have been withheld, and no spring rains have fallen. Yet you have the brazen look of a prostitute; you refuse to blush with shame.

Have you not just called to me: ‘My Father, my friend from my youth, will you always be angry? Will your wrath continue forever?’ This is how you talk, but you do all the evil you can.”

During the reign of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, “Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. I thought that after she had done all this, she would return to me, but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery. 9 Because Israel’s immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood. In spite of all this, her unfaithful

sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense,” declares the LORD.

The LORD said to me, “Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah.

Go, proclaim this message

...

The word of the Lord.

Lord, help me to deal with complex issues in a simple way but not simplistically, clearly, concisely, compellingly, with practical application, and may every single one of us who is here now and every single person who hears this on the internet hear a word truly from the Lord Jesus Christ who by the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the reading and proclamation of holy scripture. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, I want you to notice this passage of scripture and it's very important several things we note. First of all, it's during the reign of King Josiah. Josiah was the last godly king of Judah. Israel never had a godly king, not a single one. From the time that Jeroboam and the rest of the Israelites rejected King Solomon's son, Rehoboam, the Israelites never had a righteous king. No, not one, in fact, it's amazing the best king they ever had, not a truly righteous king, was the very last king they had, and so this is during the reign of Josiah.

What has happened? Well, what has happened is that the Assyrian Empire has taken Israel into exile and sent them all over their empire and replaced them with other people, and so God has a word through Jeremiah the prophet to Judah because Judah is all that's left.

Of course, there were people in Judah from other tribes. The remnant of Israel ended up traveling down and going to Judah and, of course, Benjamin was part of that as well and Levites and so on, so it isn't that Israel was completely annihilated; it was absorbed into the empire of Assyria, later Babylon, later Persia, and later the empire of the Greeks. That's why there are people as far away as China and India who were descended from those tribes of Israel. They were never lost; it's just that they ceased to be as a people, God's people. The remnant, however, was always preserved. The remnant returned and the same was going to happen to Judah. So, we notice this.

Now if you study this, you see that in verse 7 of Jeremiah 3 he says, “I thought that after she had done all this,” he's talking about Israel, “she

would return to me, but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it.” So, you would think, you know, if you saw a whole group of people annihilated, you saw their capital laid flat, you saw them deported and other people imported to take their place, wouldn’t you think that people would wake up and say, “Oh wow, God really is a God of judgment as well as grace”? But Judah didn’t. Under Josiah there was great revival but great revival that did not last.

So, we notice this phrase here in verse 8, “I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away.” Now that takes us to Deuteronomy 24 so I want you to turn there with me, Deuteronomy 24 and we’re about to read some very chilling words. Deuteronomy 24, page 309, and this is verse one. Deuteronomy 24:1,

“If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, 2 and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, 3 and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies [notice that, or if he dies], 4 then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.”

I want to think about something for a moment. If you analyze the Torah, if you analyze the law of God, the first five books of Moses, it’s very clear that women are chattel.

Notice what I said, if you analyze the first five books of Moses, the Torah, it’s very plain that women are chattel, that is, they are essentially like slaves and it’s not equal.

Notice the man can send the woman away because he doesn’t like her. Moses never tells us in the Hebrew text what the indecency was, maybe she had bad breath. I’m not kidding. It may be she had terrible body odor. I don’t know. It’s not necessarily some sexual thing. In fact, it really cannot be some sexual thing at all as we’ll see in a moment. It’s something he didn’t like about her, something maybe she had her face veiled and had broken teeth. Anyhow, we don’t know what it was, but he found something displeasing in her, something indecent, and that’s not probably a completely accurate translation, it’s just something that repulsed him. Maybe she talked too much. Anyhow... Thank God my wife doesn’t do that. She prays too much. But anyhow...

All right, turn over the page because this is very, very compelling. Page 307, Deuteronomy 22:13, “If a man takes a wife and, after lying with her, dislikes her.” Notice it’s a similar situation to Deuteronomy 24. He dislikes her, but this is after he has had marital relations with her, “and slanders her and gives her a bad name.” Notice this is different. In 24 he doesn’t slander her, he just doesn’t like her, so he writes her a certificate of divorce and says, “Get out of here,” but here it’s different. He slanders her. He’s saying, “I married this woman, but when I approached her, I did not find proof of her virginity,” that’s verses 13 and 14.

Verse 15, “then the girl’s father and mother shall bring proof that she was a virgin to the town elders at the gate.” Now, what does that mean?

It means that under the Old Testament law, being a virgin when you were married was absolutely essential and it meant, as it’s still practiced because if you want to see who practices the Old Testament more closely than almost anyone else, look to the Muslims, because the Muslims love Joshua, they love Judges, they love all of that, and they do practice this with regard to women far more.

The only Jewish people who practice this today are the Orthodox Jews. But what would happen is that they’re engaged to be married, which is a kind of marriage, and then before they consummate the marriage, the father and mother would take a special cloth, a large cloth and place it on the marriage bed and then as the husband and wife consummate their marriage, there would be evidence that she was a virgin at the moment of consummation.

And notice what we read further, verse 16, “The girl’s father will say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter in marriage to this man, but he dislikes her. Now he has slandered her and said, “I did not find your daughter to be a virgin.”’ But here is the proof of my daughter’s virginity.”

I was talking to a Catholic priest I guess about 15 years ago. He was Hispanic, and he said in Spanish culture we still do that today. So anyhow, here’s the proof.

So, continue on, “Then her parents shall display the cloth before the elders of the town.” Look at verse 18, “And the elders shall take the man and punish him. They shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver.”

That’s a lot of money back then, a lot of money, “And give them to the girl’s father.” Now we can look at a practical reason. If he can never divorce her after this, he might try to use that money, but the father kept it as the equivalent of a bride price but it’s more than a bride price, “Because this

man has given an Israelite virgin a bad name. She shall continue to be his wife; he must not divorce her as long as he lives.” Wow. Wow. Wow. Here’s the deal.

So, under the Torah if a man married a woman and didn’t like her, he had chapter 24, the procedure to follow there. “I don’t like you. Your breath stinks and no matter what you do it stinks. You repulse me, gross me out. Here’s your certificate of divorce. Get out of here!”

But if he decides to go beyond that and slander the girl, he can never divorce her. Never. It’s life-long commitment, no matter what.

Now look at verse 20, “If, however, the charge is true and no proof of the girl’s virginity can be found, she shall be brought to the door of her father’s house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death.”

What about the guy? He gets off, other than being punished and paying a fine. But if it’s true, stone her to death, “She has done a disgraceful thing in Israel by being promiscuous while still in her father’s house. You must purge the evil from among you.”

Now let’s keep on reading, verse 22, “If a man is found sleeping with another man’s wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.”

Verse 23, “If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married,” so she’s engaged but she hadn’t yet been married, “and he sleeps with her,” verse 24, “you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death—the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man’s wife. You must purge the evil from among you.”

Now look at verse 25, “But if out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die.” Verse 25, “Do nothing to the girl; she has committed no sin deserving death. This case is like that of someone who attacks and murders his neighbor, for the man found the girl out in the country, and though the betrothed girl screamed, there was no one to rescue her.”

Verse 28, next page, “If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged,” this is just simple fornication, he meets a girl who is not engaged “and rapes her and they are discovered,” verse 29, “he shall pay the girl’s father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the girl, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives.”

Now notice the note in the margin there, it takes us to Exodus 22:16, and I want this to sink in and here we are on page 122.

Exodus 22:16, “If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price.”

Have you ever been present at the negotiation of a bride-price? Probably not. I have. I had a friend who was Indian, and his son was a medical doctor, was in medical school in Shreveport, and he called his dad one day and said, “Daddy, I think I need to get married. Would you find a bride for me?”

So, his father, who happened to be a pastor, began to contact all of his people he knew who were in India and Indians who lived in America. These were Christians. And he selected three girls, and so his son met with each of the three and chose one, and so that girl and all her family and all her church rode down on buses to a little town in Louisiana, and I watched them negotiate the bride-price. And the fathers agreed there would be no bride-price, they waived the dowry which was very unusual. But anyhow, so notice here, “he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife.”

Verse 17, look at this: “If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins.”

Let that sink in for a moment. Here’s a man, he meets an unmarried woman who is not betrothed to be married to anyone, and he rapes her. He must marry her. He must pay the bride-price. But the father can say, “You vile wicked man, there’s no way in the world I’m going to let you be married to my daughter after you raped her. You go away but you give me your 50 shekels anyhow.”

Now I want you to see that as we turn over first to the gospel of Matthew 19:9. Matthew 19:9. Let that sink in for a moment and we’re going there and verse 3, Matthew 19:3, page 1,528 to get it in context and it’s a question that the Pharisees posed to Jesus. A question the Pharisees posed to Jesus.

Now, if you haven’t picked up on it, between Exodus and Deuteronomy, a female is her father’s property, and if you want to really look at that in Leviticus, look at the value that is placed when you sell someone in your own family either to the Lord or to someone else. The value, the value when they’re very young, whether male or female, is very little. As they get older, it’s more. As they get of a working age, it’s much more, but it’s always more value for the man than the woman (Leviticus 27:3-7). I want this to sink in.

Now, as we look at Matthew 19, page 1,528, “Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?’”

And he goes on and he explains that God intended marriage to be a never-ending union between one man and one woman. A never-ending union. Why? Because there was not death then.

When God created the institution of marriage, it was in the time of human innocence before Adam or Eve had sinned and so they were intended to live together forever, never age, and wouldn’t it be...I sometimes think—We’ll have been married 54 years this coming summer, and I think, “Man, if I were 21 again, and Sandy were 19.”

No, I don’t ever want to be that age again mentally because I’ve learned a lot after being married for almost 54 years. I’ve learned how, well, what was it that in Lerner & Loewe’s “Camelot?”

“How to handle a woman, there’s a way said the wise old man. The way to handle a woman is to love her, simply love her, merely love her.” Well, I learned that, and it wasn’t talking about romantic love there. But anyhow, so I’ve learned a lot—But they would never age, the two would be one forever.

So then notice the response in verse 7, “‘Why then,’ they asked, ‘did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?’” Taking us back to that passage, look at verse 8, “Jesus replied, ‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives,’ now notice this next clause, you really ought to underscore it because it helps us understand the whole Old Testament, “**BECAUSE YOUR HEARTS WERE HARD.**”

Do you want to understand what God’s character is like when it’s refracted among an ancient people with hard, hard, hard, hard, hard hearts. That’s the law of God. You know, we need to think of it that way. The law of God in the Torah with its principles, with its penalties, are an example of God’s law being refracted among a hard-hearted people, very few of whom truly knew the Lord in a loving and saving relationship.

I want to say that again. If you want to understand what the law of God is in the Torah, it is God’s character refracted not simply in the Ten Commandments, but in all of the issues of life among a hard-hearted, legalistic, callous group of people. Let that sink in.

Note further he says, “I tell you, but it was not this way from the beginning.” Verse 9, “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

Now, what is he saying except for marital unfaithfulness? Let me tell you what that word is, that word is the word from which we get the word “pornography (porneía πορνεία).” It’s any single, solitary, sexual act whatsoever.

So, back in 1960s I took abnormal psychology, and in that textbook, there were all kinds of interesting things, go through the whole list. Porneía refers to every single form of sexual act, and in this case you see what happens is God permits, he says, he permits divorce on the basis of some act, some sexual act of immorality.

Now we’ll get to more of that in a minute, but I want you now to turn over to John 8 and bear with me. John 8 and what do we find here in John 8?

What we find here is the good ol’ boys’ club. What is a good ol’ boys’ club?

You know, I still am a deputy sheriff, it’s strictly honorary. I have a badge and I have an I.D., but I’ll never get paid for this, but I’ve been friends with the sheriffs, and I’ve also been a police officer in Wichita, Kansas years and years ago back in the early ‘70s. But again, no pay but I had a badge.

And I learned something about policemen. It’s the shield of protection. The same thing is true with doctors. It’s very rare for a doctor to rat out another doctor unless it’s egregious, terrible, like a doctor coming in and he’s stone drunk, and he does surgery and just butchers the patient. In that kind of case, they’re willing to go to court and testify, but what you find is that people who are in the same profession or people who have some common bond, protect each other. And so that’s true for many professions.

Most police officers I know would have a Saturday night special with no fingerprints on it, wrapped in a plastic bag, hidden underneath the spare tire in their trunk. Why would they have that?

Suppose some kid aims a water pistol at them, and they shoot the kid dead to protect their own lives, or suppose he does this, and points his finger, and he’s shot and killed a person.

He’s not about to take a rap for murder or manslaughter for that, he’s going to go and very carefully remove that Saturday night special, and he’s going to put it in the hand of this man very carefully, and with heavy gloves he’s going to pull the trigger so that the powder will be on the man’s hand, and the Saturday night special will be there. Do you think police do that? Almost all of them do it, and there’s cover-up.

Well, what’s the good ol’ boys’ club?

You know the difference in locker room talk with men and women? It's a huge difference. So, what I want you to see here is in John 8, page 1,661, and we see here in verse 1, "Jesus went to the Mount of Olives." Verse 2, "At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery."

Where was the man? Good ol' boys' club. They let him get away. How did they catch the woman without catching the man? Good ol' boys' club. And it says, "They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus." Do you realize the poor woman?

First of all, she sinned. Anybody here never sinned? Would you stand? Anyhow, she sinned. Now she's caught in her sin, and she is absolutely humiliated, and she's terrified because she knows the penalty under the Torah is death by stoning.

And notice what they say, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"

They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

Now, I have had friends, including a man who was in seminary with me who gives an answer to this. His name was Greg Bahnsen. Now, Greg was super smart. He sure was smarter than I am, but he came up with some nonsense that has no basis in Greek. He said, "Well, this is simply an appeal to two or more witnesses of integrity." (Deuteronomy 17:6)

That's not true. This is what's called a *hapax legomenon*, it means it occurs only one time in the New Testament. It means to be WITHOUT SIN. Without sin. In other words, my friend Greg was wrong. He read the Bible with tainted spectacles.

Now listen, do you know how we know this is true? "He who is without sin, let him be the first to throw the stone.' Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away, starting with the oldest." Do you know why? The older I get, the more wicked I realize I've been all my life. May I say it again?

The older I get, the more wicked I realize I've been all my life. Am I maturing in my Christian walk? Am I a better man than I used to be? Yes,

but what happens as you grow closer to Christ, the more you see your own wickedness.

So, the older ones leave first, “until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.” Look at verse 10, “Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ ‘No one, sir,’ she said.” Look at Jesus’ words, “‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’”

Do you understand what Jesus is doing there?

He’s setting us free from the law’s obligation, of the penalties of the Torah. He is. He’s letting her go free. He didn’t say, “Go out and sin.” He says, “Go and sin no more.”

But he washes away her sins because he was going to take her sin on himself and be punished in her place. “Neither do I condemn you.”

You see, it’s a strange and an amazing thing, and as we read further, just quickly go over to the book of Acts 2.

With the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, something extraordinary happens. Page 1,692. And what I want you to see here is when the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, dead and buried, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, something extraordinary happened.

The two testaments are radically different in certain points. Let me say it again. The two testaments are radically different in a couple of points.

One. They are absolutely alike. The moral standard of the Old Testament is the moral standard of the New. Why? Because it’s based on the very character of God himself. Why is adultery wrong? Because God doesn’t commit adultery. Why is murder wrong? Because God never murders. He kills people all the time, but he never murders. Stealing is wrong because God never steals. In other words, God’s character is refracted in the Ten Commandments but supremely in the life of Jesus.

Now, something amazing happens and look at verse 17. The Holy Spirit has been poured out, Acts 2:17, page 1,692, and what I want you to see is not only are the penalties of the Torah done away with under the New, that doesn’t mean people can get off scot-free, civil government still punishes people today, but the church hasn’t called people to punish people.

What’s our job? Our job is to restore people. When the church engages in church discipline, it’s about trying to get the person to repent of his sins and

come back to the Lord, turning him over to Satan, 1 Corinthians 5, so they'll be broken and come back. Civil government, that's a totally different matter.

We can have an effect on civil government and should pray for civil government and "according to our place in calling" try to influence it, but the church is distinct.

Now notice what Peter says in verse 17, "In the last days."

When are the last days? Well, obviously they began with the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost because this has happened just now. He says, "In the last days," are we in the last days? Sure, we are. Sure, we are. The last days began with the coming of the Spirit and continue on until the return of Christ.

Notice what he says, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people." Notice this, "Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants," notice, "both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."

Let's reflect on that for a moment. Under the Old Testament a woman is a virtual slave that her father sells to a man for marriage. Think that, just examine it for yourselves.

I've been reading through the Torah and am now in Joshua in my first English chapter each day.

Man, I would not want to be a woman in the Old Testament. No rights. But what happens with the New? What happens with the New is Joel's prophecy begins to be fulfilled. It happened on the day of Pentecost. He's explaining what was going on to all the people around him.

Notice he says, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people." And he's explicit, "Your sons and daughters will preach," that's what "prophesying" means. It means to proclaim the word. And you know, it's interesting as you examine the New Testament, you discover that Philip the evangelist had four virgin daughters who preached. Who preached. They proclaimed the word of God.

Why? Because they were full of the Holy Ghost and there was like fire burning in their bones (Jeremiah 20:9), they had to open their mouth and tell people about Jesus. And they did. They did.

I was reading just this morning in Eusebius who was an early church historian in the fourth century, describing Philip's daughters. Wow! They had an incredible ministry of evangelism.

He says, “Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants.”

Notice verse 18, both men and women, and it’s interesting as we think about it, women prophets, women preachers in the Old Testament were very rare.

We had Deborah, of course, and then we had Huldah. Huldah is not well-known, but she was so respected by the Jewish people she was the person that King Josiah sent word to and said, “Ask Huldah what we should do in light of discovering God’s law in the temple.” And she told him exactly what to do. Not her husband, she did (2 Chronicles 34:14-33).

Do you know that after the Jews returned from exile, 70 years after the temple had been destroyed in 586 BC, in 516 when they built the completed building of the temple again, they named one of the gates the Huldah gate in honor of this woman prophet.

But when you come to the New Testament, it’s very common. Have you ever realized as you see Priscilla and Aquila. Aquila was the husband, Priscilla is the wife. Who is the one that was the better teacher? It wasn’t Aquila, it was Priscilla. Over and over again you see this, and you see in 1 Corinthians 11 a woman may preach in public and may pray in public if she’s under the authority of a man (1 Corinthians 11:4-13). That’s always important. What about where Paul forbade women to speak out? Do you know what he was talking about? He was talking about rebellious women who wanted to challenge a preacher and make him look foolish and you can see it so plainly in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

So, notice here as we look at the difference in the Old Testament and the New Testament what’s so important? What’s so important are three things.

One. “Neither do I condemn you.” Hallelujah. Praise the Lord because I’ve committed sins in my life that are worthy of death under God’s Torah long ago. “Neither do I condemn you.” I can come into the presence of the Lord without fear. I can come with boldness because, “Neither do I condemn you.” I’m not under the penalties of the Torah. I’m free in Christ.

Secondly, there is this strong emphasis on liberty and freedom. Do you know what the regulative principle of worship is? It was enunciated in the Westminster Standards. If you read the proof texts for that, it’s all about, not telling you what you can and cannot do in public worship; it’s all about protecting the liberty of people’s consciences, the freedom of people to do and be whom God has called them to do and be.

And lastly, it's all about Christian unity. We should always defer to one another to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

I don't know about you, but as I think about God giving the northern kingdom of Israel a certificate of divorce, I'm so glad, I'm so glad, I'm so glad that I will never get a certificate of divorce because Jesus keeps his own.

The remnant was always who was saved in the Old Testament and even today in the Christian church, which in America is in big trouble, even today not one member of the remnant will ever be lost.

Instead of a certificate of divorce, do you know what I've got? I've got a certificate in my hand right here in this word that says, "I will never leave you. I will never forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Joshua 1:5; Hebrews 13:5)

That says, "All that the Father gives me shall come to me, and him who comes to me I will never, never, never cast away" (John 6:37).

Man, I don't know about you, but thank God Almighty that I live on this side of Calvary, this side of an empty tomb, this side of the ascension, this side of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit because the emphasis of the New Testament is this: God wants you to go and do.

"Now, wait a minute, I'm not equipped." You know, I look at the book of Acts and I don't see much about equipping. You know what they said when the Sanhedrin summoned in Peter and John they said, "These are unlearned men." But they'd been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

What does God want of you? God wants to send you forth, maybe he wants you to go to India, maybe he wants you to go to Saudi Arabia, that's a tough place.

He didn't say he'd bring you back. Maybe he wants you to go there. I don't know what he wants.

You say, "But I'm a woman." That's okay. "I will pour out my Spirit on my servants, men and women." You're a young woman, you're an old woman, go, do, share Jesus with people, share Jesus with them.

Do you know that God might want you to start preaching on the street corners downtown Texarkana? Huh? Well, that's what they did in the book of Acts.

Do you know how I learned to preach? I preached on street corners. Do you know what you learn there? When the man pulls the shotgun in the bar and points it at you, it's time not to sing another stanza of "Just as I am," it's time to say, "Amen. See you later."

But you learn how to preach on street corners you can preach to anybody anywhere. And tell your neighbors about Jesus. Listen, people in Texarkana are on their way to hell and so are most American Christians because what God wants is a personal relationship with people.

Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Share your faith with others. When men weren't willing to go, God sent women. Some of the greatest mission works that have ever been done in the history of the Christian church were done by women. Huh? Huh? Huh?

What does God want of you? What does he want of me? You know, I began to tear up when we sang that song just before the preaching, "Here I am, Lord, send me."

I want to thank you, Trinity Presbyterian Church, because the great privilege of my life is to care for God's people, to love them, to teach them his word, to declare the forgiveness of sins. It is the most enormous privilege in my life to be able to come here every Sunday morning, declare his word and then to take some of you out to eat to get to know your story.

I love being a preacher. I love being a pastor. It's what God made me to be. It's what he designed me to be. And I'll say this to you, turning 75, God willing at midnight tonight, that I'm in north Louisiana visiting a church.

If God took me home before I turned 75, if I've completed my mission, I'm okay. The only thing I'd be concerned about is who's going to take care of my wife. I love God's people and I love proclaiming God's word.

It is the profoundest blessing of my life to be your pastor even though I'm part-time and temporary. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

And as God has called me, in another way slightly different than he's called you. Go tell your neighbors and friends that Jesus lives, that he saves, that he forgives sins and that you can say to them no matter what they've done

It doesn't make any difference about divorce in the past, God never says to people, "Well, I could bless you today if you hadn't done that." That's not where God is. God says, "I can bless you today, if you will turn from where you are, cast yourself on my mercy. I'll forgive you. I'll restore you. I'll bless you and I'll use you."

May we pray.

Lord, we pray that you would bless each of us in a powerful way this day. Lord, I thank you we're under the New Testament where there's no condemnation, where men and women are not like men and women in the Old Testament where women were virtual slaves but under the New Testament where they're free because you said through Paul in Galatians 3, "In Jesus Christ there's neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female." Lord, we're all one in Christ Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen.