

Luke - Part 44: Games People Play Part 2

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How is everybody doing? Luke chapter 12, let's get going. Before we get into this, I want to chat about one quick thing. The Dallas transition has gone very, very well. In fact, we're just about a month away from launching the Dallas campus. So we're really excited about that. It had me thinking this week just as I was writing some stuff down going into the Fall about just how gracious and generous God has been to us. Over the last two years, we have had deeded over to us close to \$12 million in facilities. We didn't raise money, we didn't do a campaign. Literally, people deeded over church buildings to us. And they're not in horrible locations either. One of those locations is directly across the street from the University of North Texas, which happens to be the third largest university in Texas. And then the other is a building right off of Walnut Hill. So we've just really been blessed. And I say all that because I want to remind you that in my seven years here God has really done some tremendous things when we've humbled ourselves before Him and we've admitted that, despite the creativity, despite some of the talents, God wants to do this in such a way that He is glorified and He is honored and He gets the credit and we can't teach anyone else how to do it. I'm grateful that He's decided to do it. I mean, how do you write that book? How do you write the book to go in Markel that says, "Have someone deed over a building to you?" You can't do that. It's a very short book. It's a pamphlet. And so these things have happened when we have come together corporately and confessed out loud.

And listen, you don't have to be brilliant to draw a crowd. You need some fog machines, some lasers and then something catchy. Like all of a sudden I'll wrestle a white tiger and pull a cross out of its mouth and go, "Aha, that's for all of you." And then you would leave here and go, "Oh my God. That guy wrestled a white tiger. I swear you've got to come check this out." It's easy to draw a crowd. Hire musicians so you have great music, or do a series on sex every three to six weeks. When you're not talking about that, encourage people that they're good enough, they're strong enough and God likes them. And if you'll do that, it's not hard to draw a crowd. But here's the problem with man's power to draw a crowd. Man's power can conform people to a pattern of religion, but they cannot transform their hearts. In order for hearts to be transformed, you need the Holy Spirit and you need God in His mercy to extend grace. So that's why we keep everything here as basic as we can make it. It's why we don't pay musicians. And listen, if you hear me talking about somebody else right now, that's your sin, not mine. Because I'm not talking about anybody else. I'm talking about the Village Church. I'm not putting us above or below anybody. I'm telling you our philosophy. The reason we want to keep it as minimal as we can is because we know that in the end what we really need is the power of God, not a show. So with all of that said, I think one of the most important things we do here is monthly gather corporately to pray and to do nothing other than say, "Thank You for the gifts you've given, thank You for the momentum you've built, but what we want and what we need is You." Biblically and historically there's something very spiritually powerful that occurs when God's people humble themselves before Him and confess out loud with their mouth that it has not been our skill, our plan and it has not been our philosophy that has brought about the transformed lives of men and women at the Village, but it's been His power, His grace and His mercy and we praise Him for it." And we do that the first Wednesday of every month. Following that, the elders are here. So if you want to be prayed for, if you're sick, if you've got some issue, if you want them to pray for you, they do that at the end. But our purpose on that Wednesday night is to thank God for what He's done and to again confess out loud that we know how to draw a crowd but that's not the goal. So this Wednesday night at 7:00, we're going to come in for an hour and just as a community say out loud, "What we need is You. We don't need to grow numerically, we don't need the Dallas campus to open, we don't need the Flower Mound campus to open. All those things are blessings and we love them, but it's not our goal. It's not what we need." So will you join us from 7:00-

8:00 this Wednesday night? I don't think there's anything more important that we do, not Recovery, not groups. There's not anything more important than us coming together and humbling ourselves before the Lord.

Okay, let's get to work. Three weeks ago, we started a two-week series called "Games People Play." Here's what we talked about just to remind you. There's a group of men and women who followed Jesus for His entire ministry. They want to have the appearance of godliness and they want to be respected as men and women of God, but they have no intention of following Jesus Christ...none. They have no intention of following Him, they have no intention of submitting their lives to Him, they have no intention of saying at any real level, "You are my God. I am following You." Instead, they've kind of got this external "I want to look good, look right, be respected as godly but not necessarily be godly." In fact, in one of the dumbest exchanges in the history of mankind, men over and over and over again will choose to have the appearance of godliness at the expense of actual godliness. Which is really silly, but it's an exchange people do all the time. So because they don't want to submit, but they do want to look godly, they play these games with God.

We said the first week that there are things that you play games with and there are things that you don't play games with. Like in my house, my son has some Nerf® guns. It's a lot of fun to play with. We turn off all the lights and get after it. We run around and shoot at each other, which basically means he screams and I blow him up. That's a fun game. But I also have a .45 automatic that we never play with. We never turn off the lights, run around and pop off a few rounds. Because there are guns you play with and guns you don't play with. There are animals you play with and animals you don't play with. And you may be thinking, "No, animals can be trained." I'd just like you to watch a little show called When Animals Attack. It always starts with a "trained" animal and ends up with a model being mauled by some apex predator while she was trying to sell watches. There are certain animals that were designed by God to companion animals, and then there are certain animals that, because of the Fall, will now eat you. You don't play with those animals. It will eventually go bad. So there's some things you just don't play with. And there are a big bulk of us that are attempting to play games with God. The first game takes place when the Holy Spirit, through some sort of revelation, begins to say to us, "This is something you need to do...This is something you don't need to do...This is a place you need to go...This is a place you don't need to go..." and we don't want to submit to that. We don't want to do what we feel the Lord asking us to do. In that moment, either we submit and do it or we begin to play the game. So the first game is to redefine or question the authority of Jesus altogether.

And we do that in three ways. The first way is to simply redefine His authority, to step away from the biblical, historical Jesus and create your own Jesus out here. People do this all the time. They say things like this, "There's no way that God would want me to do that. There's no way that Christ would ask me to do that. There's no way that could be His expectation, because that would make me miserable and God doesn't want me miserable. God wants me to be happy. So there is no way I can stay with my spouse, there's no way I can leave this job. Because God wants me to be happy. Okay, I know what the Bible says...I know that Jesus says that...I know that the Bible commands that, but there's no way that He could actually want that for me because what He wants for me is my happiness." And people think that, say that and behave like that all the time. What they're doing is saying that Jesus, as God has revealed Him in the Scriptures, is not the real Jesus. He's "the Jesus of my imagination, the Jesus of my creation, He's the real Jesus. He never asks me to do anything I don't want to do, He never rubs up against the rough spots in my life and never would demand anything of me that might pull me away from sin and lead me into holiness." He is an imaginary Jesus who apparently hates you. Because to leave someone stuck in what will destroy them eventually is not love, it's hatred. So if you challenge them on that and go, "Well, the Bible says..." they'll go, "No, no, no, I love Jesus in my heart." Okay, what about where the Bible says the heart is deceptively wicked above all things? "Not mine." So your heart is good, your heart knows your imaginary Jesus? And that's one way we play the game. We just create a whole other Jesus.

We'll go, "The authority of the Jesus in the text, forget Him. Because we know the Bible's been tampered with, people messed with it and pulled stuff out of it and added stuff to it. Everybody knows that. Just watch the Discovery Channel or National Geographic. That was culturally formed by men two thousand years ago. How could we possibly trust it?" And so this becomes a Scriptural issue, despite the fact that there's an unreal amount of evidence that says that the Bible wasn't tampered with. We cover this often, and I always want to cover it. There's the fact that women discovered that Jesus' body was missing. In the 1st century, a woman's word was not admissible in a court of law. So if you're going to tamper with the Bible, why not let some powerful men find Jesus missing from the tomb? If Peter and the boys started jacking around with the Scriptures, don't you think Peter would have pulled out the stories where he's an idiot? Don't you think Peter would pull out that part where Jesus calls him the devil? How hard is it to preach to the 1st century church with that story in the text? Any time he says something they don't like, aren't they going to go, "Didn't Jesus call you the devil?" Not only that, but you have an unbelievable amount of eyewitness accounts even a hundred years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ where you have people referencing the sons of fathers who witnessed it first hand. So even a hundred years later they're going, "Talk to Marcus, such and such's son." So there's all this textual evidence, but that never makes it on the TV specials. I don't know why. So that's the first way.

The second way is an interesting way too. We just kind of redefine the word "grace." Historically, grace has meant that you are a God-belittling, God-mocking sinner worthy of the righteous, just wrath of God, but God in His mercy and grace has extended to you unmerited favor. That's what grace has meant. In fact, if you look the word grace up in the dictionary, it will say "unmerited favor." That's what grace means. But because we don't want to submit to the authority of Christ in certain areas of our lives, we will just simply redefine grace to mean that God puts up with whatever we do and He just deals with it. And if we're ever called on the carpet for something, if somebody ever sits us down and tells you that what you're doing is sin, we begin to throw out the "What about His grace?" card. What you've just done is you've made hot mean cold and cold mean hot. And that works really well in slang. "Oh, that's cool." You've taken the game people play with slang words, and you've tried to make grace a word like that. And it's not going to work.

And the third way we play the game, and apparently the one that pulled the heartstrings the most around here, is we barter. So when God comes and says, "Take a step to the left," we go, "There's no way I'm taking that step to the left. So let me do this instead. Instead of taking this step to the left, let me run as hard as I can to the right. So instead of dealing with this one thing (since it's not really that big of a deal), let me get involved in this, let me start teaching here, let me read my Bible more, let me pray more, let me do more over here so I don't have to be obedient to this." So we end up running in all these things that look like righteous acts, but in the end they're acts of disobedience because what God was asking was simply this, but you didn't want to do it. So you frantically end up in religion with no real relationship with Jesus Christ. And that's exhausting. I continue to say that religion is one of the dumbest hobbies in the history of mankind. A relationship with Christ is vibrant, beautiful and real. Religion is a tired way of trying to earn the favor of God. So those are the three ways we try to redefine the authority of Jesus Christ.

Now, the second game has some elements of the first game, but it is a little bit different. I've been wrestling with what to call it. It's just kind of the "change the subject" game. So through some sort of revelation, whether that's the proclamation of the Word, teaching, reading the Scriptures ourselves, God begins to lean on our hearts and we don't want to submit so we play the change the subject game. Let me show you what it looks like. Luke 20:19, "The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour..." That's not a nice "let's lay hands on Him and pray." They want to physically harm Him. "...for they perceived that he had told this parable against them..." For two years we've been in Luke and they're just now figuring out that the parables are about them. We're in chapter 20. There's three chapters left. He's told like fourteen parables. They're just now going, "Hey wait a minute. I think He's talking about us." "...but they feared the people. So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. So they asked him,

"Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, "Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer they became silent."

Now this is a tricky text. Christ has said to them that they are religious but do not recognize Him for who He is and that they need to repent. He has said this over and over and over again to them. They have refused to do that, so they have come up with this question, "What are You going to do about Caesar? What are we supposed to do about Caesar?" Now here's the question and here's why it gets tricky. Rome at this point in history rules the world. From India to England, they rule it and they've supported the army that it takes to rule that massive of an area with taxes. There are some historical writings that show and teach us that there is a very strong possibility that the average Jewish household was being taxed between 70-80% of their annual income, which almost ensures that everyone is living in poverty except for the highest level of wealth. So their question is about justice. Their question is about injustice. Their question to Jesus is, "What are you going to do? What are we to do about injustice?" Now here's where this is tricky. God has commanded their hearts as individuals to submit to Him as God, to confess their sins, repent and follow Him. Their response was, "But what about injustice? What are we to do about Caesar? What are we to do about Rome?"

The reason this is tricky is because God is about justice and is about the destruction of injustice. In fact, if you remember when we said the gospel at 30,000 ft was Creation, Fall, Reconciliation and then Consummation. We are not beneficiaries of the gospel alone, but we are agents of the gospel, and when all is said and done, God is going to establish shalom, a new heaven and new earth and the reconstruction of what He designed everything to be. Now that's coming for us. God hates injustice. In fact, where you follow Christian history, we definitely have our dark moments, but the stories that don't get told enough are where men and women get captivated by Jesus Christ and have battled and won some of the most wicked periods of time in human history. At the height of the slave trade, when idiots in the South were using their Bible to try to unpack that the slave trade was somehow justified by God, a man in Britain named William Wilberforce and man in America named John Woolman, at great cost to their own purse and to their own political careers, fought with every bit of energy they had to derail the slave trade. Years later, after the slave trade had been abolished but racial prejudice was still so pronounced in the United States of America that schools were still segregated in the South, it was a gospel entrenched reverend named Martin Luther King Jr. who began to build steady, non-violent opposition against segregation and against prejudice. In South Africa, Bishop Desmond Tutu fought apartheid. You can go on and on and on like this. God is the God of justice. So it gets complicated. Because when God says, "Follow Me, submit to Me, repent of your sins," and they've said, "Let's fight for justice."

Now here's the problem with having the right mission and the wrong heart. Let me give you some examples that will hopefully pull this together for you. My heart is kind of grieved as I've ask this question this weekend. How many of you have been a part of a church where a pastor, a deacon, an elder, a church leader had a fall of some kind, either because of sexual sin or embezzlement? How many of you have been part of a church where something like that has happened? A lot of you. Let me explain what's happened there. They had a right mission but a heart that wouldn't submit to Him. In fact, they'll even us the mission to justify why they wouldn't submit to Him, specifically if you're talking about pastors who fall. They tend to do this thing where they go, "There's no way I can confess this sin or struggle. Because if I did, then people wouldn't look at me the same anymore and the gospel would be hurt." As if all of God's plans hinge on one preacher. As if God's going, "Don't tell them, bro. Don't come clean or this whole thing will fall off the rails. You are that integral to what I'm doing."

I'll give you some more examples. Let me give you one that will make some of you e-mail me. Do you know what happened to the religious right and why they're such clowns and such a joke? Because, although they fought for things that might have been just and right, they could not back it up with lives that lived the gospel community that they so desired everyone else to live in. So what ends up happening is you've got a guy that's preaching and proclaiming the need to be moral while they're sleeping with their aid, e-mailing inappropriate things to seventeen year old boys and having affairs with other men in bathrooms in airports. I'm just pulling this off of the news. Are you catching the disjoint here? It's a guy that would say "abortion is wrong" and then murder the doctor that does the abortion. There's a disjoint there. There is a "Let's not talk about my heart, let's not talk about my life. Let's talk about justice, let's have justice, let's fight for justice, rally around a cause that might even be good and a cause that the gospel would lead us to while at the same time not submitting our own hearts." It happens all the time.

I love people who teach the gospel at 30,000 ft. I love people who teach the gospel like there's a loving Creator God who created everything perfect, rhythmic, in motion, then with the Fall, sin entered and fractured those things, Christ is reconciling to Himself all things and there will be a consummation of all things in the future and we are to be agents of the gospel until all things are reconciled at the return of Christ. But if you never come down to the ground and say, "You as an individual are a God-belittling, God-mocking sinner that personally needs to repent and believe," then you're going to get this playing out over and over again. Because you can rally men to a cause, but you cannot transform their hearts.

This is a game people play all the time. It's got shadows of the first game, doesn't it? "I don't want to be obedient to that, so let me just do all these things. I don't want to be obedient, so let me just gather all the people I can and let's fight against abortion. I don't want to do that thing, so let's talk about this." So we don't want to deal with the fact that some of us are proud; we don't want to deal with the fact that some of us are not submitting our lives to Christ. Instead, we just take one of His missions and make it our mission without ever submitting our hearts to Him. And that's how we play game two. It's the change the subject game. "Repent and confess? Uh uh, fight injustice and tithe."

Here's the second way we play the game. It's a variance of it, but let's look at it. Verse 27, "There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. And the second and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. Afterward the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife.'" Now when I first read this, I thought it was just a silly question. Here's what I mean. I've had multiple opportunities to sit in front of non-Christian crowds and answer questions about our faith. It usually involves me apologizing a lot and then pointing out their flaws in their way of thinking. The funny thing about skeptics of Christianity is they are far less likely to look at their own belief system before attacking ours. So it's really not that difficult to go, "Actually, we're doing what we're saying better than you're doing what you're saying." I've never done it where I haven't gotten this question: "Can God make a rock so big that He can't lift it?" Do you see what he's trying to do? It's a little philosophical game. Because if He could, God's not all powerful, and if He can't, then God's not all powerful. It's a philosophical game that has no genuineness of heart, no actual seeking. It's a philosophical question to which I always say, "That's a silly question." I thought the Sadducees were asking a silly question like that one.

And then I got married. And now what if anything happens to me, what if I'm killed on my way home tonight. Lauren is an attractive woman. I've put some "man repellent" on her by having three kids with her, but she's still beautiful. I'm assuming that at 29 and beautiful, even with three well-behaved children, some man is going to try to snatch her up. My question is, when we're all in glory, is that awkward? "Hey Lauren, who's that?" The Sadducees are just going, "What if that happens seven times?" If it's awkward with two, how awkward would it be with seven? I think it's a legitimate

question about an issue that's very personal to the Sadducees. It's an area of doctrine; it's an area of theology; it's something that Jesus has clearly taught on that they don't like. So they've got this little area, and they're saying, "Answer me this question." It's a "I will not submit to You as God unless You answer this the way I want You to answer it." And that's the change the subject game, because God will confront us and confront our hearts about our own lives and our hearts and where we stand, and instead of dealing with that, we'll pull up an issue that's important to us and go, "I cannot submit to You because of this over here, this over here and this over here." And God's going, "No, I'm talking about your heart right now. I'm about a secondary issue. And so, people all the time will feel the call from God to submit to Him, and instead they'll pick an issue like the role of women and men, whether that's homosexuality, they'll pick an issue that's close to them because of family and friends and they'll say, "I can't submit to You over there because I know where You land over here. And eventually, You're going to want to take me and work on me about this, but I'm not giving that up." And so we decide not to follow Him at all because we've got this thing that we don't want to let go of. It happens all the time. It's a game that we play. And because we want to have the appearance of godliness, we'll stay close to church, but in the end we have no intention of beginning to give our hearts to Him because we know that He's going to want to talk about this. That's the second game we play.

Now Jesus' response to this question is very interesting. Let's look at it in verse 34. "And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." Now if that's confusing to you, there's a book called *Momentary Marriage* by John Piper that might be able to shed some light on that. Don't squeeze your husband's hand right now going, "No baby, no. I want to be married to you in heaven." Or maybe some of you are like, "Yes! Freedom." Let's keep reading. "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." All three of those are men who have died, but Moses was speaking of them in the present tense. "Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him." Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." For they no longer dared to ask him any question." But I want you to see how He confronts them back. Verse 41, "But he said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is David's son? 42For David himself says in the Book of Psalms, "'The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.' David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?'" Let me make this very, very easy for you. Jesus is saying, "Since you want to talk about a topic, let Me remind you of this. David called Me 'Lord.' I have always been; I will always be." You can even go to the last two chapters of Job where God says, "Where were you when I built the mountains? Where were you when I hemmed out the river beds?..." He's saying here, "I am God. How in the world, in your limited, culturally informed brain are you going to grasp how I designed the universe to work?"

And I'll continue to say that, for all the accusations made against us as being arrogant and ignorant, it's humorous to me that our culture at large has become so arrogant as to believe that we are at the pinnacle of human progression and what we think is right, good and acceptable should be the norm for all, despite the fact that the rest of the world does not line up there. Take 9/11. 9/11 was a horrific reminder that religion matters and that religion shapes and moves the hearts of men all over the world. Where everyone on our news stations and television channels are trying to tell us that religion is on its way out as a dead, outmoded, soon to be dead idea, the rest of the globe says that's nonsense, including parts of the Western world where religion is on a crazy upswing, specifically in Europe. God designed the universe to work a certain way. All the commands of God are lining us up with how He designed the universe to work. This is seen even when Paul is pressed on the role of men and the role of women. Paul doesn't pull an argument from culture. He pulls an argument from creation. "God has created it like this."

Whatever that thing is for you, whatever you don't like that the Scriptures teach, God's not trying to take from you. And let me say this. I'm not pretending that to be obedient is always the easiest thing in the world. Please don't hear

me saying that. Now I will give you this. For some people today, to be obedient to Christ is a life and death decision. Obedience to Christ could involve them being killed, their families being killed. That's happening. But you live in the suburbs of Dallas. What could happen to you here? You can accidentally get a second Golden Retriever? I'm kidding. There are horrible things that could happen in the suburbs. In fact, it might be more dangerous spiritually because of the slow descent to hell that it is. What I'm saying is that obedience to Christ for us here is rarely this weight that falls on our heart where it could cost us everything or it feels like our heart could rip out of our personhood. But sometimes it is. And the hope we have in the triune God of the universe is that all His commands and all His leadings are leading us to life and not begrudging submission to His power simply He can command what He wants to command. That is not our God, that is not the God of the Bible. So even if it feels like it's pulling at something that feels so much like it's yours that if you let it go, you wouldn't know how to define yourself anymore and you would be naked and afraid, those commands are leading you to life not into death. He is not trying to take anything from you but what would eventually destroy you, even if that feels like it's impossibly woven into who you are as a person.

Now He's going to close us out with a few words of warning. Verse 45, "And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts,..."" There's two ways to look at this. The first way is to beware to whom you give authority to speak into your life spiritually. Don't give people authority to speak into your life spiritually who by action and deed are much more concerned about themselves and their own comfort than they are the mission and gospel of Jesus Christ. Be wary of people who don't constantly point you to the blood-splattered cross of Jesus Christ.

Here's the second one in verse 47. Beware of those "who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." This is a word play here. Do you see what He did? He set two words next to each other, two words that shouldn't go together. Beware of those "who devour widow's houses" and "make long prayers." Beware of giving men and women authority in your life to speak to speak spiritually into you who at the end have a mouth and a life that don't line up. Now no one is going to do this perfectly, correct? No one is going to do this perfectly this side of heaven, but beware of glaring gaps. I think the example I've always used to you is the guy on television begging for money to save starving children while wearing giant diamond cuff links. They're like, "For \$36 a month, you could..." and I'm like, "Or you could sell your cuff links and we could adopt a village.

But that's secondary. Here's primary. How do you know if you're playing game two? Do you define yourself by a cause other than the cross of Jesus Christ? At the end of the day, are you really utmost in your own affections? And then do your life and your actions not match up? Are you the guy going, "This matters, this matters..." when you're actively violating the very thing you say matters? There's an old saying, "Methinks he protests too much." I don't know where it came from. But that idea of "Oh, this guy sure talks about this all the time. I wonder if he's protesting a little too much." Now are you one of those people who have this thing that you're so passionate about because you're guilty of it? That's the second game. Are you able to go to small group, are you able to sit around Christian friends and talk and talk and talk about how we should do this, this and this? Have you ever given someone advice that you're not living by? This is the second game. Are you able to sit someone down and tell them what they ought to do when in the end you don't do any of those things yourself? That's the second game and, you need to repent. Because it is a crazy trade to trade in nearness to God and godliness to pretend to be near God and godly. But sin has a way of making us think and feel that if we aren't seen as strong and powerful, then somehow it would wreck us. And Jesus says, "Unless a seed falls into the ground and dies, it's never going to grow."

I don't know how you've come in here today. I know that a real vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ can very quickly be replaced with a bunch of religious activity to avoid being obedient to an area of our lives that we didn't want to be

obedient in. It's happened to me multiple times. It's happened to the people I know. It honestly happens so slowly at times that we're not even sure when it happened or how we did it. It's almost like we can wake up there. It's like we wake up and all of a sudden, we have exchanged this real relationship with the community of faith and the Lord for pretending to be or trying to look like we have it. And so I'm wondering if you're playing the second game, if you've just changed the subject, if the Holy Spirit has revealed to you how you are to be obedient to the Lord and instead you've just changed the subject or you've avoided it because you knew a subject was coming.

So the response when that becomes clear to us is repentance. Our response is one where we confess that we've done it to the Lord and we ask for forgiveness and we do that thing that He's asking us to do. The preaching of the Word is a difficult thing because it does two things. It will soften some hearts towards and it will harden others. Because if you hear and you decide to do nothing with it, then that actually hardens your heart towards the things of God. That's your other option today, to just take one more step toward the hardening of your heart.

So my hope and prayer all week has been that we would hear, that we would respond, that we would search our hearts and ask the Lord to speak to us, that we would lay our hearts at His feet.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women, and I thank You for the opportunity today to come and open the text. My prayer is that You would read it to our hearts, not that we would just hear with our ears but that we would use our ears to draw in information that You empower use transform our hearts. So help us. I know that there are many here who are probably playing the second game, so my hope is that we would grow weary of playing. I know there is genuine fear sometimes in being obedient, there's a genuine fear that exists in trusting You with our kids, trusting You with our spouse, trusting You with what's next for us. I just pray that we would take a step off that cliff. Give us the courage to do that. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."