

Making Disciples who Make Disciples

Ministry year 2021-2022

Kenwood Baptist Church Sermon Series

Pastor David Palmer

August 21, 2022

TEXT: Matthew 24:15-35



Good morning, Beloved. It's great to be with you, with the Word of God open before us. We are nearing the end of our year-long journey of discipleship. We are taking seriously Jesus' final words in what we call the Great Commission, when Jesus says:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

We've looked this year at Jesus' words to *“go and make disciples of all nations.”* We've looked at what it means to be baptized, and then we've looked for several months over Jesus' teaching on different areas—areas of sexuality, marriage and family, areas of work and calling and vocation, holy time, how we spend our money. We've looked at righteousness and justice in society. We've looked at sharing Christ in the world in July, and, finally, now in August, the last stage of our journey is to look at Jesus' teaching, particularly as it pertains to local and global mission and His glorious return. As we've looked at that so far this month, Chris did a fantastic job of opening up Matthew 24 and helping us to see that at the heart of Jesus' teaching around His return is the certainty that the gospel will complete its global course, that Jesus will not return in visible glory until the gospel has circumnavigated the world. Pastor Scott showed us last Sunday that the church, the people of God, have a sacred responsibility to steward the gospel and to keep the light of the lamp of Christian witness burning brightly in the world as we await the wedding, the marriage feast of the Lamb.

This morning we look together at this next section of Matthew 24. Now, I'm going to ask you to keep the Bible open in front of you as we look at this text, because this passage is actually one of the most difficult passages, I would say, in the Gospels. It's not an easy passage to

understand, so I'm going to appeal to you to pay close attention to this passage with me. It's an important passage. I would say that it seems very different and foreign in some ways from other things we hear our Lord teaching, and yet I hope, that as we journey through it together, you'll see that it has a large story that's conveyed in it. That large story has these three elements to it.

The first element is that Jesus warns His disciples, His first disciples and us today, to **flee from God's imminent judgment**, and that is a loving and important instruction that we all need. There is a reality that Christ, when He returns, returns as judge of all the earth. God's people are warned about that and urged to flee from it.

The second element is that Jesus warned His disciples that **we are not to believe in false saviors**, and there are many. There are first century false saviors and 21st century false saviors. Jesus, again, lovingly and wisely warns us not to believe in any other savior. We don't believe in any other savior, because we have one. The world has one in Jesus Christ.

The third element is that Jesus teaches us the **promise of His glorious, visible, and personal return to the world**. Do you know that every person who has ever lived will see Jesus? We will see Him visibly, personally, in unveiled glory. So if that's true, and that's coming, then we must live in light of that great coming event. Jesus teaches His disciples these three elements in our passage. Their reception of His Word and their obedience to His Word instruct us today.

Let's dive into this key passage this morning. The passage starts with a warning for the disciples to flee from God's imminent judgment. In Matthew 24:15, Jesus tells them:

"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)."

Remember a few weeks ago we fell in love with the parenthesis. Jesus highlights the value of God's Word in Daniel. The image of desolation is a very specific reference. It's three times in Daniel—Daniel 9, Daniel 11, and Daniel 12—that speak of a desecration of the sanctuary of Jerusalem and a desolation that is a prelude to a devastation on the city. In Daniel 9, we read that this is a sign of destruction of the city and the sanctuary. In Daniel 11:31 we read:

"Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate."

In Daniel's prophecy, this is initially fulfilled in the intertestamental period by a bad Greek king named Antiochus Epiphanes, who sets up an idol of himself in the sanctuary and commands people to worship him—always a bad idea. The sanctuary is devastated. This is a prophetic image that Jesus uses to invoke the Old Testament precedent of the temple being desecrated,

the temple being profaned when something is set up in it that is abominable to God. Whenever we set up things that are abominable to God in our lives, in our spaces, then we are inviting God's judgment against us. Jesus warns the disciples: *"When you see this, then leave the city."* When you see this, it's a sign, it's a signal that God's judgment is imminent, that it's coming.

Sometimes the judgment of God is a teaching; it's a doctrine that we don't talk about enough. In the Bible, God's judgment is always righteous. It's accurate. For those who have trusted in God, the prospect of God's judgment actually causes God's people to rejoice. We'll look at that a little bit later. God's judgment is a righteous judgment. It is a purging of the world of evil. Jesus tells the disciples: *"When you see this happening, it's a signal that the city, the sanctuary, are about to be destroyed, so leave. Flee to the mountains. Don't be attached to earthly goods. Don't go down to gather your things from your house."*

My best friend, who shared Christ with me in high school, married a woman from Chile, and they have a beautiful family. Gabriella's parents were in a high-rise condo in Santiago. They were lying there and waking up in the morning when there was a major earthquake—not a great place to be up in the condo. As the condo started shaking, Gabriella's mother said, *"The Lord is coming back,"* and that's what she thought was happening. But her dad.... They had just bought an HD flat screen TV for the condo and put it up. He's a practical guy; he's a banker. So he pulled the HDTV off the wall and was holding it, and there they stood. *"The Lord is coming back,"* and he was trying to make sure the TV didn't break. Now they both love the Lord. They just interpreted that moment a little differently.

Jesus says: *"Don't be too attached to earthly things."* In Matthew 24:18 and 20, we read:

"Let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak....Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath."

"Pray your flight might not be in winter or on the Sabbath," so that the harshest conditions of the year and the most revered traditions would not increase the difficulty. But when God is coming to bring judgment, we are to leave that space. This is a motif in Scripture. Noah and his family are warned to flee from an imminent judgment. Lot is warned to flee from an imminent judgment, and in Genesis, Lot's wife turns back. She looks back, and it's a picture of devastation. In other moments in Scripture, when God's judgment is coming, God tells His people to flee the city. Jesus wisely and lovingly warns His first disciples and us this morning that when we see judgment coming, we flee.

In Matthew 24:21-22, Jesus says:

“There will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”

This is the first of three mentions of the elect in our passage. The “elect” is the term for the chosen people of God. These are Jesus' people. All who believe in Him are His elect. Not only does Jesus warn us to flee from judgment, He secondly warns the disciples not to believe in false saviors. We've seen this earlier in Matthew 24, and He says it again because it happens again and again and again. People will come to you and to me with offers of deliverance. They will come with an offer of help: “Trust in me, and your life will be good.” Jesus says in Matthew 24:23-24:

“Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.”

There's a second mention. Jesus' people will not be able to be deceived. Jesus says in Matthew 24:25-26:

“See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.”

It's one of the surest indicators of a false teacher, a false prophet, who says, “Let me bring you over here into the shadows.” Jesus' teaching and Jesus' identity is open, public truth. In Matthew 24:27, Jesus says:

“As the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”

When Jesus comes in visible glory, everyone will see it. It will be open, public—no secret knowledge. When you see lightning flash across the sky, it can be seen by everyone.

Jesus promises His disciples to expect His glorious appearance. He teaches them to expect His glorious, public, visible, personal appearance, and when He comes, He will instigate and lead this great harvest of the nations. In Matthew 24:29, Jesus says:

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

This language, which George Caird calls “cosmic dissolution language,” is language that describes an earth-shattering event. Have you ever used that expression? Do you really mean that? When we say, “This was earth-shattering,” where are we standing then? It's metaphorical language that describes something huge, but it would be wrong to take it literally.

We have several expressions like this. A member of Kenwood and I share an ongoing list of expressions in English that we use but we don't really mean, like "That's spreading like wildfire," or you see your children "growing like a weed," but they're not really. We recognize metaphors and similes and sometimes they help us. This language is metaphorical. "Metaphorical" doesn't mean "not real," but it does mean that you would misread it if you took it literally.

This language comes from the Old Testament prophets. In Joel 2:1, the Lord says:

"Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations."

It's a day of darkness; the earth quakes; the heavens tremble; the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw from their shining in Joel 2. What is being described? A locust plague of judgment. In Joel 3:15-16, we read:

"The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. The LORD roars from Zion, and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake."

Jesus uses earth-shattering language to signal to us the promise of His coming. The promise of His coming will shake the world. It will shake the world in judgment and shake the world by opening up a New World of salvation for all who believe in Him.

This language that our Lord uses with the disciples would have been familiar to them, maybe less familiar to us, but it's language that Jesus uses to say, "Don't believe in false messiahs, because you have a Messiah in Me. Don't believe or follow false saviors who invite you into the darkness, because I am the Savior of the world and the Light of the world." Jesus tells the disciples then and now that the earth will shake, the powers of the heavens will shake, but what will be unshakable is Jesus' everlasting Kingdom. In Matthew 24:30, we read that when He comes in visible glory:

"Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

The whole world will mourn when they see Him, because this represents the people who have heard of Him and not believed in Him.

Beloved, I do not want to be part of this group. I don't want you to be part of this group. I don't want anyone in the sound of my voice or anyone in the sphere of your life or family system to be part of this group, who, when Jesus appears in visible glory to all, weep. When He appears in great glory with the clouds of heaven power, this is an occasion for His people to rejoice. When He comes, the world rejoices. All who have believed in Him rejoice. When He comes, He comes in glory and power, and He sends out the angels with a loud trumpet call. These may be the literal angels of the heavenly realms, but the Greek word "angel" can also mean "messenger." It's possible that the messengers who are sent out to the four corners of the world are you and me, that Jesus will come, and He will send out global emissaries to bear witness that He has died and risen again and that all who believe in Him are in position to celebrate His appearance. He will send them out, and He won't just send them to your neighborhood or mine or one ZIP Code or one city or one country. He will send them out to the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. That means that the whole world is invited to the wedding. Christianity is not a national religion. It is not a parochial religion. It is the worship of Jesus, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, who gave His life as a ransom for sinners and welcomes all who believe.

This imagery is exhilarating. It's Old Testament imagery. Some of you know I'm married to an Old Testament scholar, so in my house, when there are Old Testament echoes in the New Testament, we get excited. We get excited, and you should be excited, because this imagery comes from Deuteronomy 30:1-3, when the Lord says:

"And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey His voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and He will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you."

The Lord says, "I will gather you." We are not in a position to gather ourselves. We must be gathered because we are lost people, and Jesus gathers us. In Deuteronomy 30:4, we read:

"If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will take you."

In Isaiah 11:11-12, we read:

"In that day the Lord will extend His hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of His people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

When He comes, in the Old Testament expectation, God comes to restore. God comes to gather the world to Him. He comes in judgment for His adversaries and to bring salvation for all who believe in Him. His coming is an occasion, for those who believe in Him, of tremendous joy. In Psalm 98:1-3, we read:

“Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done marvelous things! His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him. The LORD has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered His steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.”

And what’s the result? In Psalm 98:4-6, it is written:

“Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD!”

It’s not enough for us to sing. We need instruments to amplify our sound. It’s not enough for our instruments. The Psalm continues in Psalm 98:7-9:

“Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the LORD.”

Why? Because the Lord comes. In Psalm 98:9, we read:

“For He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.”

God's judgment in the Scriptures is an occasion for tremendous joy for all who have trusted in Him, for creation itself. Evil will be banished, and God's people will grab their instruments and the rivers will say “Yes.” The trees, the hills will burst into joyous celebration. That's the Bible's image, and Jesus says: “That happens when I come back.”

I imagine the disciples looking at Jesus at this point, just saying, “I’m going to need a minute.” I think Jesus recognized that, because Jesus is not only Lord, Savior, but He's also a brilliant communicator. So He says, “Let me just bring this down for you for a second. Let's go from My global appearance, My glory, to the Garden,” and He focuses their attention for a minute and



allows them to catch their breath, and says in Matthew 24:32:

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.”

Just take a look at the fig tree, and you think, “Okay, fig tree,

got it." "Look at the fig tree," Jesus says. The fig tree, when you see it, as soon as its branch becomes tender, it shoots out its leaves. When its leaves come out, its fruit comes out right behind it, and when that happens, you know it's summertime. When you look at the fig tree, it grows as God designed it, and it grows to produce fruit. When that time comes, God's New World is bursting forth. In Matthew 24:33, we read that Jesus continues:

"So also, when you see all these things, you know that He is near, at the very gates."

In the end of this passage, Jesus says something that is difficult. You know, sometimes Jesus' teaching is difficult to understand. In Matthew 24:34, Jesus says:

"Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place."

The generation that He is talking to, the disciples, *"will not pass away until all these things take place."* In Matthew 24:35, He continues:

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Words will not pass away."

We have to understand Jesus' teaching as this warning to flee the city from imminent judgment, not to believe in false saviors, and to trust both His appearance and His gathering of the nations through them to be realized in some measure in their lifetime. That's what He said.

When we read the letter to the Romans, most of us feel its application immediately, maybe too immediately, because we don't live in Rome, and most of us are not from there. Yet, we feel that Paul's letter to the Romans describes Christian life, and we all benefit from it, because the truth that's true for them is true for us, and it's the same way for Jesus' teaching. His teaching on warning against God's judgment, to flee from it, to turn away from false saviors, to look for His glorious appearance, and to trust in Him to gather the nations is realized in their time and also predictive of ours.

So what happened? How did the disciples obey His Word over time? Jesus' teaching in this passage will lead to His death and resurrection in just a few days. When Jesus teaches these words, He will die and be raised in just a few days, and the earth will shake. Jesus will command His followers to preach and to share the good news of His death and resurrection and the launching of God's new creation with all the world. And you know what? They did that. They preached; they taught; they shared His Word; they translated His Word. The teaching of Jesus started to radiate out around the first century world. And as that happened, events around the disciples in their own lifetime exploded. It exploded with a conflict that was brewing in the society around them. It was a conflict between an aggressive paganism in the Roman Empire, which demanded that its emperors be worshiped as gods, and a zealous religious nationalism within Judaism. This conflict grew. It was a conflict of world views that ended up leading to the

devastating destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and an expression of dehumanizing power in Rome. These tumultuous events of the first century world gave a context for Jesus' followers, where they had to take His Word seriously.

Do you know that you and I have to take His Word seriously? Christian teaching and discipleship took on intense urgency with this escalating tension. The tension between pagan Rome and nationalistic Israel erupted into violence in A.D. 66. The flashpoint was in Caesarea. Violence spread quickly to Jerusalem. A young zealous priest named Eleazar stopped the daily sacrifices for Rome and declared Judea in open revolt. A zealous faction attacked the Roman garrison and seized the Herodian fortress at Masada. When the revolutionary faction in Judaism took control of Jerusalem and of the Temple, they assassinated the high priest Annas and defeated the Roman garrison.

Cestius Gallus, who was the Roman legate of Syria, set out from Antioch with the 12th Legion to put down the revolt. He advanced the Temple Mount and thought he had quieted things down. He withdrew with the Roman army, through the heights of Beth-Horon, and was ambushed by the revolutionary forces. Jewish leaders gathered in the Temple. They appointed regional governors and prepared the country for war. When the Roman Emperor Nero learned of Cestius' defeat, he appointed Vespasian to suppress the revolt. Vespasian was a career soldier. He sent his son Titus to bring up the 15th Legion from Alexandria, and he crossed over with two legions himself. In A.D. 67, within the lifetime of Jesus' disciples, Vespasian launched a devastating campaign in Galilee. Josephus laments that Galilee from end to end had become a scene of fire and blood. The Roman army killed all who could bear arms. They sold the others into slavery.

The next year, A.D. 68, was the year of four emperors in Rome. It was the most chaotic year in Roman history. Nero committed suicide. One of the Praetorian Guard commanders took power— Galba, the Roman governor of Spain. He was assassinated. Otho took power. He was assassinated. Vitellius took power. He was assassinated. And finally, Vespasian was heralded as Emperor of Rome, the man leading the war in Judea. He left Judea with his son Titus in command. Titus was 29 years old. Titus led the tumultuous attack against the city of Jerusalem. The city had become an armed fortress. Civil war raged inside the walls. Three different zealot factions fought against each other. They destroyed the food stores. The area around the temple became defiled with the dead. As Jerusalem swelled with Passover pilgrims in the spring of A.D. 70, the zealot leaders closed the gates and trapped everyone inside.

Beloved, Jesus prophesied this event. Remember when Jesus came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and the crowds were celebrating and heralding Him, Jesus wept as He came to the city.

Jesus wept and lamented that Jerusalem did not recognize the moment of God's visitation, and He announced in Luke 19:43-44:

“The days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another.”

He told His disciples in Luke 21:20-21:

“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it.”

He told them to leave the city because Christianity cannot be consumed inside a smaller cause than global evangelism. Leave the city because we are not called to bear arms against our enemies. Leave the city because we herald the Savior who suffered and died for His enemies.

According to the early Christian historian Eusebius, the Christian community left Jerusalem right before the Roman siege. He tells us that they were warned and “commanded by a divine revelation given before the war.” Jesus' disciples took His Word seriously, and they left the city. To their kinsmen they were viewed as traitors. They left. Titus completed the preparations for his assault against the walls of the city. The outer wall fell within fifteen days, the inner wall five days later.

On July 24, A.D. 70, settlement forces took the Antonia Fortress. On August 5, the daily sacrifices ceased. Titus held a council of war with his generals, and some said, “Leave the Temple standing. It's a great honor for the Roman Empire.” Others said, “Destroy it.” The battle for the Jerusalem Temple took place on August 29, which is the ninth of Ab in the Jewish calendar, the very same day that the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the temple built by Solomon. The Temple fell. The city was desolate, not one stone left on another.



Total Roman victory in Judea was not achieved until the spring of A.D. 70. The only place of resistance that remained was the Fortress of Masada by the Dead Sea. “Masada” means “fortress” in Hebrew. It's a rocky fortress, 1300 feet high, only accessible by a winding snake path. The Roman commander Flavius Silva faced a nearly impossible task, and yet what he did was to build an



enormous artificial ramp up to the top. He used Jewish captives from the war, so they wouldn't be assaulted from the walls. You can still see the outline of the eight Roman camps around Masada today. Silva attacked Masada, and he pushed up a 100-foot high siege tower to the top. The zealot troops at the top knew that in the morning they would be killed. They knew that



those captured in Roman wars were sold into slavery or forced to compete in gladiatorial games for the entertainment of their captors, and so they proposed an almost unimaginable solution. Each head of the family wrote his name on a potsherd. There were a thousand people on the top. The commander was Ben Jair, and this is the image of the potsherd of Ben Jair that was found on Masada.



When your name was drawn, then you were responsible to take the lives of your immediate family. Then the next man whose name was picked took your life and then his family. When the Romans breached the walls in the morning, they expected to hear war cry, and they were greeted with silence, and the Roman troops were awestruck.

This war changed the landscape of the first century world in dramatic ways. The Jewish community reacted with lament and dismay. The sanctuary in Jerusalem has never been rebuilt. The Romans reacted with triumph and celebration, and they held a massive triumphal parade. Vespasian and his son celebrated their victory with monumental architecture, like the Arch of Titus. The Arch of Titus still stands in Rome. It's dedicated to the "Divine Titus." The inside panels depict scenes from the Jewish war. This panel is the most moving of all because it depicts the plunder from the city of Jerusalem. There are placards indicating the treasures. The first treasure is the silver trumpets from the sanctuary. Behind them is the large gold menorah, and you see its weight by the number of people required to carry it. Behind them is the most valuable thing of all. The most valuable thing in Israel is the Word of God, and they took the copies of the Scriptures. They took the gold and the silver. They took the copies of God's Word.



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was known originally as the Flavian Amphitheatre and later nicknamed the Colosseum. A dedicatory stone inside the Colosseum says that Vespasian built this structure with the plunder from Jerusalem. It is 157 feet high with 80 entrances and a movable canopy to protect spectators from the sun. A network of underground



tunnels suddenly releases animals and contestants for the excitement of the crowd. Titus dedicated the amphitheater with 100 days of gladiatorial games and public spectacles. Nine thousand animals and 3000 human beings made in the image of God were killed on the first day. Thousands of Christians would bear witness to faith in Christ on the sandy floor of the arena, called "arena," the Latin word for sand.

How did Christians react? Christians reacted to this war by continuing to preach the gospel to all nations. Christians reacted to this devastation by obeying Jesus and fleeing the city and obeying Jesus by offering forgiveness to all. Beloved, this is our most valuable possession. Christians reacted by heralding the good news that the Kingdom of God will never be destroyed. Christians reacted by saying: "Atonement for sin, whatever it is." Sometimes it's easy to see religious sin and easy to see pagan sin. But, you know what? Sin is sin, and Jesus died for the sin of the world. Christians reacted by proclaiming that forgiveness is possible by Jesus' final sacrifice on a Roman cross. Jesus has been killed, but now He lives and reigns again. Christians reacted by spreading out across the known world. Andrew went to Europe. Thomas went to India. John, the beloved disciple, went to Asia. Christians by name and with countless others, thousands of others, spread out. They were sent out because Jesus calls His people from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. They went out. They proclaimed forgiveness of sins and new life to those devastated by war.

Beloved, it is only the gospel of Jesus Christ that announces forgiveness, and we can look to people to say that Jesus Christ died to forgive you from the violence birthed by war. We can say that Jesus Christ died for the violence born out of religious zeal. Jesus Christ died to forgive us for our idolatry, and only the gospel of Jesus Christ can provide a new identity and a new community for all who believe in Christ. When you gather on Sunday morning and announce Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, that means that you can have a Roman soldier in the pew and you can have a religious zealot, and you can call everyone to believe in Him.

Beloved, the disciples obeyed Jesus. They trusted His Word. They fled the city because they

were in the service of a greater King. They obeyed the King by extending His Word of forgiveness to all. The gospel produces a living, vibrant community of forgiven sinners from all over the world. When you look around Kenwood as just a microcosm, this is just one piece of Jesus' Kingdom. As you look around, you see we're from 40 different ZIP Codes in Cincinnati, we speak 20 different languages, and we have four—some say six—generations. But why are we here? We are here as a community of forgiven sinners. We are here because Jesus Christ died and rose again. We are here because He died to forgive our sins. He rose again. He warns us to flee from judgment. How do we flee from God's judgment? We flee from it, ultimately, by trusting in Him. He tells us, "Don't believe false saviors." Why? Because we have a Savior in Jesus Christ. He teaches us to expect His glorious, visible, global appearing, which He tells the disciples: "You will see in some measure in your lifetime. And yet, when I come in glory, I will come to gather My people from the whole world." And that's why we're here. We're here because others in the generations between the disciples and now have also obeyed Jesus. They have not been conscripted into other causes. They have proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and the launching of God's New World, and that New World includes all who believe in Him, those whom Jesus in this text calls three times His chosen ones.

Beloved, if you have believed in Jesus, you are His. You are His forever, and you are part of His people forever, and you have a mission in this world, the very mission that He is engaged in, and that is to proclaim His death and His resurrection until He comes. As we do that, life on life, family to family, Jesus gathers His people from the four corners of the world.

Jesus' teaching to the disciples allows them to have their feet on solid ground. When you think of Jesus' return, I don't want you to be afraid. I want you to prepare your instruments. Prepare your voices, because when He returns and He banishes evil forever, He will gather His people from one end of the heavens to the other, and we will celebrate with great and unquenchable joy. Jesus, our Savior, has died. Jesus, our Savior, is risen. Jesus, our Savior, calls all people to Himself.

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, Your Word is important in our lives, and we need Your teaching, Lord, to guide us and instruct us and show us both who You are and who You are calling us to be. And, Lord, even as You instructed the disciples with a clear Word about how they were to obey You in their generation, that task remains and is applicable to us today. Lord, we want to be among those who do not face Your judgment but escape it through faith in You. Lord, we want to be among that group who does not trust in any other savior but You. And, Lord, we want to be among that group who is eagerly expecting Your glorious, global, visible return and is humbly serving

You, gathering people from all nations. Lord, we look to You this day, and we ask that You would fill our hearts with faith and faithfulness, that You would cause us to step out of the places where we're comfortable, that Your grace would overwhelm us, that we would rest, Lord, in Your provision, and that Your Holy Spirit would lead us and guide us to cross borders in our city and in our world. We love you, Lord. We ask Your blessing.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.