

# The Roll

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Shall we turn now for a few moments to the passage which we read together in the prophecy of Jeremiah. The prophecy of Jeremiah chapter 36 and at verse 23.

And it came to pass that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he, that is the king, cut it with the penknife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.

Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king nor any of his servants that heard all these words. Nevertheless, Elnathan and Deliah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll, but he would not hear them.

Despite our society's determined dedication to progress and its equally determined pursuit of pleasure, we discover all around us a residual sense of fear and a deep lack of inner certainty.

One obvious reason for this is the threat of nuclear war and global disaster between the two superpowers of this point of history, the Soviet Union on the one hand and the United States of America on the other.

[ 1 : 5 8 ]     We find ourselves today in this country, as in other countries in Western Europe, between the two great powers of this point of human history.

Now, such a situation of fear, such a situation of uncertainty is by no means new. In fact, the passage which we have read from the book of Jeremiah was written against a similar kind of background.

The two great powers in Jeremiah's day were Babylonia and Egypt. And there was fear on the part of many people in Judah because the nation of Egypt had suffered a great defeat.

It is as if the Americans had been defeated by the Russians. You can imagine the panic, the fear, the uncertainty that would spread throughout Western Europe and indeed throughout the rest of the world.

And that's the kind of background against which this incident took place. Israel and Judah were buffer states between the great powers of antiquity.

[ 3 : 3 2 ]     First of all, Syria and later Babylonia to the north and Egypt to the south. And much of the ministry of the prophets of the Old Testament was enacted in that power situation.

And they were called upon to bring God's word in that situation. The situation at this particular point of time was that the Egyptian army had been defeated by the Babylonians at Karkomish.

And the Babylonians were marching towards Judah. There was only one superpower. And Judah previously had allied itself with Egypt.

And so one can imagine the panic. One can imagine the sense of unsettlement on the part of the people in Judah.

In fact, Jehoiakim the king was a protégé of the king of Egypt. And he was deeply worried as the Babylonian army under its brilliant commander, a man called Nebuchadnezzar, drew ever nearer.

- [ 4 : 57 ]     And so the king called a fast. He called a fast which seems to have celebrated the defeat of the town of Ashkelon by the Babylonians.
- A town which, although outside Judah, was geographically very near. Now Jeremiah, as a prophet, had the word of the Lord.
- And his word was that the Babylonian empire had been raised up by God as a judgment upon Judah. Unless Judah would repent.
- He emphasized that the Babylonians would come as a judgment. But he also emphasized that that judgment could be averted if there was repentance and if there was a turning to God in faith.
- And this is why Jeremiah was banned from the temple. He had been silenced from speaking, officially at least, in the place of, in the religious center of the land.
- [ 6 : 15 ]     And surely if a prophet had the right to speak anywhere, it was in the temple. But that right was denied Jeremiah. Because the king regarded his message as treason.
- And so Jeremiah was forbidden. Jeremiah was silenced. Jeremiah was told to keep quiet. Because God's word disturbed the king. And still today, God's word has a disturbing role.
- And first of all, this morning, I would like us to think of ways in which God's word today still comes to us as a disturber. God's word comes very often into the lives of men and women breaking in.
- Breaking into the lives and into the personalities of men and women who don't naturally want it. Who don't want to hear what the word of the Lord has to say.
- [ 7 : 20 ]     And their attitude is often similar to that of the king on this occasion. They want to cut the word of God off.
- They want to resist it. They want to turn their backs upon it. So the word of God has to break through this barrier which men and women erect against it.
- Martin Luther said that when God comes to us, he comes to us first of all as an adversary. He comes to us as an adversary because we have made ourselves his enemy on the part of our sins.
- He comes to us as an adversary because we reject him and we have rejected him.
- And we find ourselves the members of a race, of a humanity which has not only turned its back upon God, but has rebelled against him.
- [ 8 : 31 ]     Our sin is not merely negative. It is also positive. And so that's why when God's word comes to us, it comes to us as an adversary first of all.
- It comes to disturb us. It comes to alarm us. It comes to awaken us. And this was why the king cut up the word of God and burnt it in that dramatic fashion in the fire as he and his courtiers that cold December huddled round that fire.
- He took it as it was read, inch by inch, and he cut it and he burnt it. It wasn't the first time, nor was it the last time, that the word of God was burnt.
- But it may be that there are many people who have never literally burnt a Bible, who nevertheless have rejected and perhaps still are today rejecting the message of the word of God.
- The word of God comes in this disturbing role. Why is this? Well, there are various reasons. First of all, because the word of God respects no person.
- [ 9 : 53 ]     God's word comes to us all as men and women made in his image, as men and women who have sinned against him. And God's word is the same for the person who's king as for the person who may be a peasant.

God's word addresses men and women equally, because all of us are made in the image of God and therefore have a primary responsibility to do the will of God.

But equally, all of us have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. So God's word comes to us. God's word is a great leveler in that sense. It comes to all of us, whatever our station in life, whatever our influence or our position may be.

And we see that the word of God respects no person in this incident here, and that the word of God came to the king.

The prophets of the Old Testament were men who were faithful in proclaiming the message of the Lord to their rulers. And if you look at the history of other civilizations, you will find almost without exception that the religious leaders and the so-called equivalent of the prophets were sycophants.

[ 11 : 17 ] In other words, they were people who told the kings and the rulers what they wanted to hear. But not so. God's faithful prophets of the Old Testament, they proclaimed God's word without fear and without favor.

So God's word comes to us today. It comes to all rich and poor, black and white, high and low. And God's word is a message for all of us.

And initially, God's word comes to us to disturb us. God's word comes to us to break in to our complacency. God's word in that sense is like a thief.

It breaks in. We don't want it to come. We don't want to be disturbed. Many of us have a big sign up outside our lives which says, Do not disturb. But nevertheless, God's word comes to us.

And God's word breaks in. And some people are taken by surprise when they discover that the word of God has already broken in. And has already arrested them.

[ 12 : 23 ] And has already disturbed them. God's word disturbs us because it respects no person.

And we need to remember that today, do we not? We remember how Andrew Melville challenged James VI on one well-known occasion.

And he said to him, Sir, There are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland. There is Christ Jesus and his kingdom, the Kirk. Whose subject James VI is.

And of his kingdom not a king, nor a head, nor a lord, but a member. God's word respects no person.

And God speaks to the high as he speaks to the low. He speaks to the rulers as he speaks to the ruled. God's word comes.

[ 13 : 26 ] And challenges us. And disturbs us. It lays the demands of God's law before us. It brings the command to follow the Lord God to heart and to conscience.

And God's word, when it comes to us, it comes to us in such a way that it pulls no punches. We see, for example, the word of the Lord as it came to Jeremiah in verse 3.

It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them, that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

The word of God calls a spade a spade. There's no beating about the bush. There's no mild, ambiguous, diplomatic language here.

The word of God comes and tells us where we stand. There's no ambiguity. There's no doubt. The issues are much too serious and much too solemn.

[ 14 : 43 ] And, of course, this is another reason why we find the word of God disturbing. Because when the word of God comes, there's no sugar on the pill.

The word of God comes as a sword, says the writer to the Hebrews, to pierce, to divide asunder a soul and marrow.

The word of God comes to penetrate our conscience. The word of God comes. Pulling no punches. A friend of mine who, for a number of years, was a prison chaplain in the South, said that on one occasion he was preaching at a chapel service in the prison.

And one prisoner came up to him afterwards and he said, What we like about you is that you tell us the score. And the word of God certainly tells us the score.

It brings us to the bottom line. And it tells us that we are sinners. It tells us that because of our sin we are under the judgment of God.

[ 15 : 55 ] It tells us that we cannot save ourselves. It tells us that we need a saviour. It tells us that God has given a saviour in Jesus Christ. And it tells us that that saviour is able to save us and is willing to save us on our turning to him in repentance and in faith.

The word of God pulls no punches. And because of this, the word of God offends. Because there is something in all of us which likes to think that we can save ourselves.

That we can somehow or other pull ourselves up to the standards that God expects of us. But the word of God reminds us again and again that we simply cannot do that.

That we constantly fall short. That the standards are perfection. The standards are the holiness of God. The standard is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. And none of us, not one of us, can attain that.

And we are disturbed when we discover that and when we are reminded of it in the word of God. The word of God respects no person.

[ 17 : 03 ] The word of God pulls no punches. But the word of God goes even deeper because the word of God cuts us to the quick.

We read in verse 16 that the officials were afraid. They were afraid or they were alarmed. They were badly frightened.

They were disturbed. Here was the word of God coming and disturbing the court. Disturbing the nation. They thought that they had silenced Jeremiah.

But Jeremiah, under the guidance of God, had found a way of bypassing this prohibition. And of communicating the word of God.

And as a result, the officials were alarmed. And so also were the king. He was so alarmed indeed that he took his knife and he cut. And he cut and he cut and he cut the word of God.

[ 18 : 06 ] He did it out of fear. Because he was deeply concerned and afraid. The word of God is a sword, as we have said. It pierces to our conscience.

And the word of God wounds before it heals. It breaks right through to the heart. And makes us conscious of our standing before God.

And it brings us to recognize our hopelessness and our need of a savior in Jesus Christ. I read just yesterday of a Muslim devotee in Indonesia.

And he began to read the New Testament because he wanted to be able to argue against Christianity. But the more he read the Gospels, the more he came to realize that his life fell far short of the standards of Jesus Christ.

He found that that word which he took and which he read in order to be better able to oppose Christianity, in fact, cut him to the quick.

[ 19 : 26 ] It became a sword, the sword of the spirit. And it brought him to realize his need. He came to realize that he could not get to heaven through his own good works.

He came to realize that he could not hope to stand before God on the basis of his own religious performance. And by the grace of God, that man was brought to the feet of Christ.

And that's the whole point for which God has given us his word. That it might bring us to the feet of Christ. But in order to do that, we have to be broken down.

Because we're stubborn and we're hard and we're rebellious. But God's word comes in order to break us down, to break into our lives.

And God comes to us through his word, both as an adversary and as a friend. But never let us forget that God's word comes to us in this adversarial role.

[ 20 : 29 ] It comes to us in order to disturb us. It comes to us in order to alarm us. In order to bring us to our spiritual senses.

In order to help us to realize our need of a savior in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the first point that I want to emphasize this morning is that the word of God fulfills this role of breaking in.

Breaking into the complacency. Breaking into the religiosity. Breaking into the self-righteousness of men and women. It breaks in. It disturbs. It alarms.

And that's one of the reasons why there have been people and there still are people today who do not want to see the word of God being spread. Because it disturbs them.

Because it offends them. The word of God offends and breaks in.

[ 21 : 36 ] But secondly, I believe that this story shows us ways in which the word of God breaks through barriers. Human barriers which are erected against it.

We see, for example, that the king here sought to silence the prophet Jeremiah. And he thought he had succeeded.

He had had him excluded from the temple. But Jeremiah, under the guidance of God, found a way round or through this prohibition.

He was prohibited from speaking. But he was not prohibited from writing. And so, he committed his prophecies to writing.

And Baruch took them down. And Baruch read the message in the temple court. He read the message to the people.

[ 22 : 36 ] And in the providence of God, Jeremiah's prophecies have been recorded. And they have come down to us in this book.

And one of the reasons, perhaps, why many of these prophets' messages were recorded was that they were rejected initially. And we have today these prophets, the message of these prophets recorded in the providence of God.

Because there was this opposition. Because there were these barriers erected. And so, although the temple was denied Jeremiah, he was able to, under the guidance of God, to overcome this barrier.

And still today, there are barriers which have to be overcome in communicating the word of God.

The word of God is a message which comes to us not only through one medium. Or we are accustomed today to think of the word of God in written form.

[ 23 : 47 ] But, of course, initially the word of God came verbally, as we see in this story. And it was translated into a written medium in order, very often, to overcome a barrier.

And sometimes today, we have to convert the word of God from a written medium back into a verbal medium in order to overcome a barrier.

Let me explain what I mean. There are many millions of men and women who cannot read in the world today. It is true that many of them are learning to read. Someone has reckoned that there are four new readers in the world every minute of the day.

But, that being the case, nevertheless, there are many millions of men and women, especially women in African and in Muslim countries, who, as far as we can see, will never learn to read.

And how can we provide the word of God for them? Well, one of the ways in which we do it is to put the scriptures onto cassette.

[ 24 : 51 ] And so, cassettes can be distributed. And it's quite extraordinary how cassette players are found in many different countries of the world and in all sort of obscure places.

One problem, of course, is that batteries are not found in many of these isolated villages. And so, the Bible societies have helped to create two types of cassette players which are independent of batteries or of electricity.

One has a winding mechanism somewhat similar to the old gramophones that there used to be many years ago. And more recently, we've developed a solar-powered cassette player.

And, of course, in many of these countries, there's no shortage of sunshine. And the sun can, in this way, help to spread the word of God. And there are many thousands of people who are discovering the word of God for the first time because a little bit of imagination has been used to overcome a barrier.

Just as Jeremiah the prophet overcame the verbal barrier that he had by committing his message to writing, so today we are seeking to take this message which has been written and to make it spoken again to enable people who are unable to read to hear the word of God.

[ 26 : 18 ] And in some tribes in Africa, the Walaita people, for example, in the Sudan, many of them know passages of scripture by heart, many of them who cannot read.

In the case of the Walaita, the reading of the scripture was sometimes in places set to some of their traditional music so that they sing it at their work and they sing it as they travel.

And those who have visited that tribe have told me that, in fact, the Walaita Christians who can't read know their Bibles better than those who can because they've committed so much of the scriptures to memory.

And so the word of God is still today breaking through barriers. There's the barrier of education, the barrier of literacy or of illiteracy is one which, by the grace of God, we seek to overcome.

And of course, there are also superstitious barriers. There's the barrier of superstition. For a few weeks last winter, it was my privilege to visit the country of Brazil, one of the largest and most dynamic countries in the world.

[ 27 : 37 ] A country where the evangelical reading tremendous strides. I was tremendously impressed by the missionary spirit of the church.

And the church in Brazil is today sending God's word not only to Brazil, but sending it to other countries as well. In one of the churches I visited in the town of Belém at the mouth of the Amazon, the night I was there, they were appealing for support for four missionaries from that church to go to Canada.

A church which already supported 13 missionaries in different countries of the world. But in Brazil, the great opposition to the word of God today comes from superstition, comes from something called Macumba.

Some of you may have read in the newspapers about Macumba. It's a form of spiritism which has come partly from Africa and partly from France. And has taken root in Brazil.

And it is reckoned that up to half of the 140 odd million people in Brazil are involved to some extent in Macumba. Now Macumba involves animal sacrifices, offering of chickens and the shedding of their blood.

[ 28 : 58 ] It involves a great deal of black magic. It's a superstition which grips and which binds the hearts of millions of Brazilians.

And the word of God is being discovered today as the only means of delivering men and women from this. Some of the highest people in the land of Brazil may be nominally, nominally, and I emphasize nominally Christians.

But when the crunch comes, when they're up against it, when they're down to the bottom line, they turn to Macumba. And I was told again and again that it was the word of God and only the word of God which was able to deliver men and women.

Just a few weeks ago I met an evangelist from Brazil who was over in Europe. And he told me that as he travels around Brazil, he gets threats from the worshippers of Macumba.

He said he's found a sacrifice chickens hanging on the door of his hotel room as a warning that they have invoked the curse of the devil upon him.

[ 30 : 15 ] But he says, I believe in the power of God's word and in the power of Christ to deliver me and to defend me. And you see the opposition, the barrier to the word of God there in Brazil.

And I hope, God willing, on Friday evening at the meeting in the Nicholson Institute to say more about the ways in which the word of God is breaking through into the lives of men and women in Brazil.

I'll never forget meeting a man in the same town of Belém, which I mentioned earlier, whose face was radiant with the love of Christ. He couldn't read.

He was well over 60. He wasn't going to learn to read. But he spends his days distributing leaflets, copies containing short portions of the word of God, in the buses, in the street corners, among his neighbors.

And his face was alight because he told me that two years ago he was brought by the grace of God to be delivered from a kumbha.

[ 31 : 19 ] He was delivered from the sphere of evil spirits, delivered from the sphere of devil worship. He was set free. He said, I can't speak. He said, I'm not an orator.

I can't read. But I can thank Jesus for what he's done for me by distributing his word. And he told me that for years he never went out of his house without carrying a gun in his belt and a knife in his sock.

Now he said, I no longer carry these things because I've been delivered from the fear of people who may put spells on me, of people who may invoke a curse upon me.

I've been delivered by the power of God's word and by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so the word of God still today breaks through the barrier of superstition.

And let us remember that that barrier is still there. That underneath the veneer of civilization which has come in many countries, there is superstition.

[ 32 : 21 ] Even in our own country we are seeing a return to Satanism. I heard just a few weeks ago of a group of Satanists in Edinburgh who meet to pray to Satan that he would disrupt the marriages of Christian leaders in that city.

Prayer being offered to Satan that he would break the marriages of Christian people in the city of Edinburgh. And we need today to rediscover the power of the word of God to break through that kind of barrier.

Because as our Christian civilization, alas, is crumbling away, the vacuum is being filled by a return to the old paganism. To the old superstition that we had when the Druids were here.

We find that coming in again. And we need to rediscover the power of the word of God to break through barriers such as these.

And so the word of God breaks through the barrier of superstition. Just as it breaks through the barrier of illiteracy. But there are also ideological barriers in the world in which we live.

[ 33 : 41 ] And the world in which we live is divided in two ways. First of all between north and south. And basically the division there is social and economic. But it is also divided between east and west.

Between the communist world and the capitalist world. And in many instances the word of God has suffered in communist countries.

A communist country is officially an atheist country. And especially in the early days of a revolution. The word of God suffers.

This was the case in China during the cultural revolution in the 1960s. Hundreds of thousands of Bibles were literally burnt. Were destroyed in that land.

Christians were dismissed from their positions. And they were sent either to prison. Or to work in communes in another part of the land. The church suffered greatly.

[ 34 : 50 ] And the word of God became very scarce. And people actually hand copied the scriptures. And for a number of years the Bible societies organized a program.

In Manila on the radio. Which dictated. Which read the Bible at dictation speed. So that people could write down. In their own handwriting.

The word of God. But today we thank God that that barrier is being overcome. In that we have seen a dramatic change. In the attitude of the Chinese government.

To the western world as a whole. And to the production of the word of God. In particular. We see today that China from having become one of the most closed of the communist countries.

Is perhaps one of the most open today. Open to western influence. Open to western ideas. An extraordinary situation. It was my privilege just to spend one day in the Republic of China.

[ 35 : 52 ] 18 months ago. On my way to Korea. And I was constantly amazed by the openness. And the frankness. Of the guide.

As he took this tourist group round. A part of China. Next to Hong Kong. And so we see barriers being overcome.

So that today. The Bible societies have been able. With the full permission of the Chinese government. To make an arrangement. With a university.

The university of Nanking. The normal university of Nanking. To build a printing press. It's a joint project. The university will produce academic books. For the university.

And the Bible societies. Or the Amity Foundation. Which has been set up in China. Will produce copies of the scriptures. And we have been guaranteed. That at least.

[ 36 : 49 ] A quarter of a million Bibles. And half a million New Testaments. Will be produced. On this printing press. Every year. Now what a difference. From the 1960s. When Bibles were being burnt.

What a dramatic difference. The word of God. Can overcome. Barriers. Of ideology. And one has seen. An easing of the situation.



Also in Eastern Europe. I hope to say something. At the Youth Fellowship. This evening. About a recent visit. I made. To Eastern Europe. But let me emphasize. That although.

By no means. Is the door. As widely open. As we would like. And nor is the situation. Similar. From one country. To another. Nevertheless. There has been.

A gradually. And a quite remarkable. Easing. Of the situation. So that. In all. Countries. In Eastern Europe. Except. Albania.

[ 37 : 45 ] It is possible. On occasions. To produce. The scriptures. Or to import them. In some countries. These occasions. Maybe. Not very frequent.

A country like Bulgaria. For example. But in countries. Like East Germany. In countries. Like Romania. In countries. Like Poland. And increasingly. Thank God. In Russia. At least among the Baptists. These countries.

Are opening up. The ideological. Barriers. Are being broken down. God's word. Is finding. Its way. And so much so.

That. In many ways. Our brothers. And sisters. In Eastern Europe. Appreciate the word of God. More deeply. Than we do. And perhaps.

They have a depth. Of spirituality. And a depth. Of devotion. To Christ. Which we might. Well envy. And they are. Able. In their own situation. To exercise. A ministry.

[ 38 : 42 ] Of. In a low profile. Of. Communicating. The good news. Of Jesus Christ. And they are. Communicating. That message. Not only. To their own people.

But also. To students. Who come from. Many different countries. Of the world. Some of them. With socialist governments. Or some of them. With the. With. Sent by. By. By. The communist party.

Sponsored by the communist party. I heard a few years ago. Of. A Latin American. Religious. Leader. Who.

Went. To Russia. And he sat down. In the Baptist church. And to his amazement. He. Discovered himself. Sitting beside. Someone. Who had a Spanish Bible.

And he asked this lad. Who he was. Where he came from. And he said. He came from Colombia. And he told him his story. He said. I was sent here.

[ 39 : 35 ] By. A communist. Student group. In Colombia. To become a better Marxist. He said. He'd been brought up. In an evangelical home. He'd rebelled. Against his upbringing.

He'd become a communist. And he became a leader. And he was handpicked. To be sent to Moscow. To become a student. He got a bursary. And when he was in Moscow.

He met Russian. Baptist Christians. Who witnessed to him. And brought him. The gospel of Jesus Christ. And by the grace of God. That young man.

Was arrested. By the word of God. And he came to Christ. In communist Russia. And he's gone back. To his own country. A Christian man.

The word of God. Is not bound. The word of God. Can break through. The barriers. Which men. And women. Erect against it. God's word.

[ 40 : 33 ] God's word. Is not bound. God's word. Is its own work. But nevertheless. We see from this story. That God. God gives his word. In such a way. That he uses.

People like Jeremiah. And people like Baruch. In other words. God. Has chosen. To work through. Individual men. And women. God. Uses people.

And because God uses people. God needs people. And it's not simply. A question. Of. Of thanking God. For his word. But also. Praying that God. May provide the people.

And the means. Through which that word. Might be communicated. And I want to thank you. On the part. On behalf of the Bible Society.

For all that you've done. Through your gifts. And through your prayers. To enable. Us to do. What. In a sense. Baruch did. To put the word of God.

[ 41 : 28 ] Into print. To communicate. The word of God. And to be able. To overcome. The barriers. Which. By his grace. He has. Enabled us. To overcome.

We want to thank you. Because. Without. The help. Of Christian. People. In Scotland. It would not. Have been possible. To do. What has been done.

God. Used. Baruch. And God. Is today. Using individual. Christian. Men and women. Who are enabling. The word of God. To spread. And as it spread. It fulfills.

These two roles. Which we've noticed here. It breaks. In. And disturbs. The complacency. Of sinful men. And women. But it also breaks. Through the barriers. These great barriers.

Which we erect against it. And God. In his grace. As. Enables us today. To continue. This ministry.

[ 42 : 24 ] There are some. Leaflets. At the door. Which explain. Ways and means. In which. You might. Be able to help.

Further. Should you so desire. Please feel free. To take one with you. But let me. Cover it above all. Your prayers. And let me. Urge you also.

To spread God's word. Here. Now. I'm sure. You might say. Everybody in. Stornoway. Has a Bible. Well that may well be. And probably they do. And I would be surprised. If that's not the case.

But there may well be. And I'm sure there are. Men and women. And young people. In Stornoway. Who. Are keeping the word of God. At arm's length. And perhaps God is.

Asking some of us here. To be his witnesses. To encourage men and women. To open God's word. To share it with us. Others. To spread it.

[ 43 : 24 ] We think of the large number of visitors. That come to the island. In the summer. An opportunity to spread. The word of God. Perhaps in their own language. If they come from abroad. And sometimes when people are away.

In a strange land. They're more open. An opportunity to spread. The word of God. Over in Alapu. They have a supply of. Russian Bibles.

To give to the Russian sailors. As they come in there. An opening. To spread the word of God. All of us need to be alert. To the opportunity.

Because God gives us opportunities. If we have eyes to see. We don't need to go out and look for them. We don't need to go out and collar people. And drive the gospel down their throats. We don't need to do that.

God provides us with the opportunities. If we have eyes to see them. If we are alert. If we are alert. To what he has to say. To what he is doing.

[ 44 : 23 ] The challenge that we are facing today. Here in the western world. Is I believe a challenge to live by the word of God. Not to live according to the materialism.

Of our age. Or the pleasure. The pursuit of pleasure. Which is so common. But to live according to the word of God. To be willing to live with the word of God.

As our scepter. To be willing to lose our lives. In order that we might find them for Christ. I was reading the other day. That in the Turkana language. Which is spoken by the people.

The tribal people. Who live in a very dry. Arid desert area. In the north of Kenya. That the phrase which they have used. To translate. That phrase.

That sentence. In that saying of Jesus. Whoever loses his life. The verb loses. The word that is used there. Is a word which means. To pour out liquid from a container.

[ 45 : 21 ] And the person who was writing the article. I was reading. What belonged to the. He was a native speaker of Turkana. And he said. Here in the desert. Water.

Is the most precious thing we have. And he said. That's why the translators chose that verb. To bring home to us. What Christ is saying here. Are we willing.

To give up the most precious things we have. In order that Christ's will might be done. In us and through us. In order that we might live.

Under his lordship. As he mediates his lordship. Through his word. In order that he. And he alone. Might be lord of all.

That surely is the challenge. That God's word brings to us. God's word has been given. As the scepter of Christ. And we are being challenged. Do we follow him.

[ 46 : 16 ] Or do we live for the materialism. Do we live for the pleasure of our age. Which way. Are we going today. Are we going the way of the world. Or are we going the way of Christ.

And of his word. May God grant that all of us here. May go the way of Christ. Let us pray. Our gracious lord and god.

We give thee thanks again this morning for thy word. That word which was given so many centuries ago to Jeremiah the prophet. A word which is still so relevant to us in our situation today.

And we give thanks oh lord. That that word is a word which the holy spirit brings. Illuminates and brings to life in our experience.

And we pray that he may fulfill that ministry now. That we may indeed. Commander not only the sound. But also the power. Of the word of Christ. And we pray for the spread of that word among us.

[ 47 : 22 ] And in our own land. And in all the nations of the earth. Be pleased oh lord. To bless that seed. May it germinate. May it burst forth into life.

May it become the seed of eternal life. In the hearts of millions of men and women. And grant oh lord. That here in our own land. And in the western nations. We may see this tide of materialism.

And of the pursuit of pleasure. Being stemmed by the word of God. That men and women may be challenged. To rediscover. That their chief end is to glorify God.

And to enjoy thee forever. Grant oh lord. That thou will therefore own and bless thy word. And enable us to be willing like Barach. To be instruments in passing it on to others.

May we be faithful to this word which thou hast given to us. For we ask it in and for the sake of Christ. Amen.