

Will you not come that you might have life

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[0 : 00] Before we come to the word of God I would like to thank Dr. Campbell and the session of this congregation for their invitation to me to come and preach at this communion season.

It has been an immense privilege to be with you and you have received me with great kindness and I take the assurance of your prayers and interests back to my own people.

Most people in our nation do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's probable that most people on this island do not believe savingly in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a service of worship and it's probably fair to assume that most of us here do believe in Christ. But I would be surprised in a gathering of this size if there were not some, perhaps many, who do not yet believe.

There is nothing new in that. We find our Lord addressing this again and again in John's Gospel. Chapter 6 he says to his hearers, you have seen me and still do not believe.

[1 : 28] Towards the end of his public ministry in chapter 12 verse 37, the evangelist writes, they still would not believe in him.

Why do people not believe in Christ? Why do some of you here not yet believe in Christ?

There is one great overriding reason among many and it's one which our Lord himself addresses in this fifth chapter.

He is facing people who not only reject him but hate him. We're told in verse 16 that the Jews were persecuting Jesus.

In verse 18 that they were seeking to kill him. And in verse 40 of chapter 5 he makes a statement about them and I believe about some of you.

[2 : 31] a statement about them and I believe about some of you. A statement about them and I believe about some of you. A statement about them and I believe about some of you. A statement which is simple, profound and utterly devastating.

I want to change slightly the reading in our Bible versions to make it just a little more accurate. John chapter 5 verse 40. You are not willing to come to me that you may have life.

You are not willing to come to me that you may have life. That may be the real reason why some of you are rejecting the Son of God.

You are not willing. And our subject this evening is the human will and Jesus Christ.

I want to look at it under four headings. First of all the obstacle of the will. The obstacle of the will.

[3 : 41] Note exactly what our Lord is saying about these unbelievers. He is not saying that they have no opportunity to come to him.

They have ample opportunity. He is in their midst. He is preaching to them. He is readily available. Some of these men, these scribes, are professional Bible scholars.

Who search the scriptures. That is their livelihood. These men knew how many letters there were in each book of the Bible.

They knew what the middle letter of each book of the Bible was. Their knowledge of scripture was exhaustive and minute. It was not that they had no opportunity to come to Christ.

It was not that they had no evidence. The reverse was the case. Our Lord makes it clear that he is not making an unsupported claim about himself.

[4 : 57] Verse 31. If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not deemed true.

He reminds them in this passage of the overwhelming evidence for his Godhead and his saviourhood. John the Baptist, verse 33, has borne witness to the truth.

Verse 35. The works that the Father has given me to accomplish. The very works that I am doing. Bear witness about me. That the Father has sent me. These astounding miracles. Wrought in full public view.

For all to see. With multiple witnesses. Why? He has just publicly healed a man invalid for 38 years.
[5 : 58] You seek proof. There it is. Verse 37. The Father who sent me. Has himself borne witness about me.

Verse 39. The scriptures bear witness about me. It's not that there's no evidence. There's ample evidence that he's the son of God and the saviour of men.

He's not suggesting that what he was asking from people was complicated or difficult.

He wasn't telling them that they had to undertake a course of study. Or go through a program of harsh self-discipline. Or carry out in their lives a thorough moral reformation.

You're not willing to come to me. That was all. To come to me. In repentance and trust.

[7 : 05] Simply to come. And everyone who came to him he received. No matter who they were. He received them.

No matter what they had done. He received them. Whoever comes to me. I will by no means drive away.

No it's not that they had no opportunity. It's not that there was no evidence. It's not that he was asking something terribly complicated.

Nor was it that there was no significant benefit to be gained in coming to him. That it was hardly worth their while to come to him. You're not willing to come to me.

That you may have life. What he had for them was the greatest thing. The supreme blessing. The deepest instinct of every human being.

[8 : 08] Is life. People will fight for life. People will cling to life. And Jesus is here telling them. That he can offer them.

He is offering them. Real life. True life. Life everlasting. It isn't a trivial. Optional extra that Christ brings.

It is that which we most need. And in the depths of our being. Most want. None of these is the problem. The obstacle.

The great barrier. Is the human will. You are not willing. You don't want to come to me. You don't choose to come to me.

I put it to you my friend. Is this not. What's keeping some of you. From Jesus Christ. It's not that you've no opportunity.

[9 : 10] You've heard the gospel. Many times. It's not that there's no evidence. You've seen people changed.

You may be sitting beside someone this evening. Some friend of yours. And with your own eyes.

You've seen them changed. By Jesus Christ. And you know they're a different person.

And he has done it. It's not that it's too complicated. It's not that he's nothing to offer. None of these is true. Simply. You don't want to.

There is a stubborn. Something inside you. That is holding you back. Your will. You're not willing. Is that not the truth?

Jonathan Edwards describes the will. As that by which the mind. Chooses anything. And it is that which is keeping you back.

[10 : 10] Which is hardening your heart. Which is closing your mind. You've heard the gospel. You know the gospel. Perhaps in your heart of hearts.

You suspect that the gospel is true. And that Christianity is true. And you've seen people changed by the gospel. And people have pleaded with you. And prayed for you.

But you don't want to come. You don't choose to come. You're not willing to come. That's the obstacle.

And for many in our world today. That is a very good answer. A satisfying. Sufficient. Perfect answer. God.

So let's look for a moment. Secondly. At the worship. Of the will. The worship. Of the will. Contrary to what we may sometimes think.

[11 : 10] We live. In a very. Very. Religious. Age. Age. There are many gods. Who men and women worship. And perhaps the greatest.

Of all. In our society. Is the human. Will. Age. Age. This is the age. Of choice. For someone to say.

I don't want to. I don't choose to. Is the end. Of all discussion. Choice. Is the god of our age.

This god has. Temples. They're called supermarkets. Monuments.

To choice. The poor husband. Is sent. Once a year. To the supermarket. By his wife. To get a bar of soap. Or a packet of cereal. Naively thinks.

[12:10] It will be a simple task. And then he goes in the door. And he sees. Hundreds. Of bars of soap. Of every color. Shape. Size.

And scent. And row upon row. Shelves upon shelves. Of cereal. Choice. Choice. Of every description. Human sacrifices.

Are offered to this god. Millions. And millions. Of human sacrifices. More. Than to any heathen idol. In history. Millions.

Of little unborn children. Are poisoned. Threshed. Threshed. And dismembered. Why? Choice. Demands. Their death. That's the world we're living in. And that is applauded. Pro-choice. No argument. No answer.

[13:13] The millions must die. The god. The god. Has spoken. This is the god of our age. And we can camouflage him. And people talk about pluralism.

And post-modernism. But underneath it all. Is the naked. Human will. It's as old as judges. When everyone did what was right. In his own eyes.

We've come back to that day. It's older than that. So as old as Eden. When the woman saw that the tree was good for food. And a delight to the eyes.

And a tree to be desired. And she chose. And she wanted. Hymns are sung. In worship. To this god choice.

One of them. Perhaps the wickedest song. Of the 20th century. And there's not a bad word in it.

[14:15] Frank Sinatra sang it. And now the end is near. And so I face the final curtain. My friend. I'll say it clear.

I'll state my case. Of which I'm certain. I've lived a life. That's full. I've traveled each and every byway. And more.

Much more than this. You notice the way the singers draw out the personal pronoun. Howling defiance at heaven.

I did it. My way. My way. My way. That's hell.

That's the destruction of God. We could change the philosopher's victim to say. I choose. Therefore I am. And so my friend.

[15:16] When you choose. To reject Jesus Christ. When you're not willing to come to him. Our society. Will applaud your decision. And defend your decision.

As you're right. And in a sense. The human will. Is very powerful. And the human will. Enables people.

To prodigious. Accomplishment. Accomplishment. An evil man like Hitler. A good man like Wilberforce. And the human will.

Enables them to accomplish mighty things. If you have two athletes. Or two teams. Of equal ability. The team with the stronger will.

Prevails. And remember that the human will is implanted in us by God. We want people to be strong willed.

[16:12] We want our children to be strong willed. We don't want them to be wimps. We don't want them to be swept around by anyone. It is right that people are free to choose.

We don't want to live in a tyranny. But there is one huge deadly problem. And it's the unspoken assumption.

That your will is a safe guide. For you to follow. That your will. Your choice. Is a wise. Neutral. Objective judge. And it will make choices. Which you. Which are best for you. So that you can follow your will. And consult your will. Unhesitatingly.

And that view. Is suicidally false. You're worshipping a false god. So let's come thirdly.

[17:08] To the enslavement. Of the will. The enslavement of the will. For one thing. The will.

The human will. Which seems. So powerful. Is in fact. Pathetically. Limited. And weak. Most of what is important.

In this life. Is quite beyond. Its control. Frank Sinatra. Could sing.

I did. What I had to do. And saw it through. Without exemption. I planned. Each chartered course. Each. Careful step.

Along the byway. I faced it all. And I. Stood tall. And the poor little fool. With a silly looking toupee.

[18 : 07] And his mafia friends. Didn't even know. If he would have one more breath. One more second. On this earth. And he boasted.

And bragged. And that. That word fool. Is not. My description. Remember our Lord. The pro-choice advocate.

Of the New Testament. He spoke about. I will. Tear down. My barns. I will store. All my grain. And my goods.

And I will say. To my soul. Soul. You have ample goods. Laid up for many years. Eat. Drink. And be merry. But God said to him. You fool.

This very night. Your soul. Will be required of you. So my friends. To live. On the basis of. What I want.

[19 : 06] Is just crazy foolishness. What I choose. Or what I will. Is very. Very foolish. You don't know if you'll be alive.

Tomorrow morning. You don't know if you'll be able to move. You don't know if you'll be able to think. None of us knows. To live on the basis of what we want.

Is just crazy foolishness. But far worse than that. Our will. Is not only limited.

It is enslaved. It is captured. It is under control of another force. Paul says in Ephesians 2.3.

We once lived. Carrying out the will. Of the flesh. And of the mind. Your will isn't neutral. Your will isn't unbiased.

[20 : 05] Your will isn't fair. And objective. Your will is corrupted. Your will is biased. Your will is distorted.

Your will is not. Able to make good choices. Your will is in bondage. You're following a slave. You think you're free.

But you're not free. You're a little puppet on a string. And the devil is pulling the strings. And you're prancing about. And saying what you're doing.

And what you're choosing. You're choosing nothing. He's controlling you. Our last dog was a Springer Spaniel.

He died last autumn. Great dog. I fed him every night. And I could have put two bowls of food down in front of him. A bowl of dog meal.

[21 : 03] And a bowl of crisp, fresh salad. Salad. And if I did it a thousand times in a row. Which bowl would he choose?

The dog meal. Always. Always. Every time. Without doubt. Without hesitation. He was quite free to choose. He was quite free to choose.

I would have been happy if he'd eaten the salad. Cheaper than dog meal. But he always made the same choice. Why would he make that same choice?

It's his nature. It's his nature. Every creature chooses according to its nature. So my friend.

In a sense. You're free to come to Christ. There's no outside force. Preventing you. God the Father isn't preventing you from believing in Christ.

[22 : 05] Christ himself is genuinely. And sincerely. Inviting you. To believe in him. Your friends and your family. Are longing for you to believe in Christ.

They're praying for you to believe in Christ. Nothing would bring them greater joy. Than if you believed in Christ. So why do you not believe in Christ? Because your will.

Isn't free. Because your nature's fallen. Because it is governing your decisions. You can will freely. But your will itself. Is not free. In fact. Terrifyingly. Your will. Is ultimately enslaved. By the devil himself.

It's to be. Your father's desire. That's your will. They're right to Timothy. That they may escape. From the snare of the devil.

[23 : 03] Not still being captured by him. To be his will. And if you continue to reject Christ. If you consider.

If you continue to say. I will do it my way. I will live my life. I will choose my path. If you slide into hell.

The devil will look into your face. And he'll check it. You did it. My way. Do you understand.

The implications. Of what the Lord Jesus is saying here. Your unbelief. Is your own fault. It's your own responsibility.

You are to blame. For your condemnation. No you're not. Not God. Not your parents. Not the church. Not your friends.

[24 : 13] Not circumstance. Don't make excuses. You're not willing. You're not willing. Face that. Say it aloud to yourself. When you're going to bed tonight. If you haven't believed.

I hope you will. But if you haven't believed. Look at your face in the mirror. And say. I'm not willing. I don't want Jesus Christ. I don't choose to come to him.

I reject him. Write it down. In black and white. And sign your name. Under it. Look at it. In its starkness. And ugliness.

Because that is you. It isn't cool. It isn't trendy. It isn't with it. It isn't smart. It isn't intelligent. It is nothing but wretched.

Miserable. Wicked. Slavery. You're not willing. To come. You see. Your predicament. Is far worse. Than you realize.

[25 : 15] You really. Are lost. You really. Are dead. Humanly speaking. There is no. Hope.

For you. I can't help you. Your minister. Can't help you. Your parents. Your friends. Can't help you. No human on earth.

Can help you. You can't even. Help yourself. Because you don't want. To be safe. You don't want. To come to him. You're not willing.

If someone is ill. And wants a cure. There's some hope. They don't want to be cured. There's no hope.

And you don't want to be cured. You see. Here's the thing. People think. That when they say. I don't want to.

[26 : 14] I'm not willing. That gets you off the hook. That's a good reason. I don't want to be a Christian. Oh my God. That's the worst thing.

About you. That's far worse than anything else. You don't want. The son of God. You don't want. To have your sins forgiven. You don't want. You don't want to be holy. You don't want to be holy. You don't want. You don't want to go to heaven. You don't want to live forever.

In God's presence. To say I don't want to. Doesn't get you off the hook. It impales you on it. More than ever.

More than ever. If you're not a believer. In Christ tonight. You should be terrified.

[27 : 16] You should be despairing. You should be very. Very. Frightened. Your case is far. Far.

Worse. Than you thought. It's not just that you haven't come. It's that you don't. Want to. Is that true of you.

As you look into your heart. Is that what's keeping you back. I don't want to. I don't want to. The parents are praying for us.

But I don't want to. Something tells me I should. But I don't want to. My friends.

My brothers and sisters. Have come to Christ. But I don't want to. And that brings us. Last thing. To salvation.

[28 : 15] From the will. Salvation. From the will. You find it in the heart of the text. Come.

Come. To me. Come. To me. There is only. One. Hope. For you. And that is the Lord. Jesus Christ. The mighty savior. Because the truth is. That he. Saves. People. Not just. That he is there.

That he is available. When we decide. We want his help. He actually saves. He saves. Lost people. He saves.

Dead people. He saves. Wicked people. He saves. Hopeless people. And listen to me. He saves. Unwilling people. Saul of Tartus.

[29 : 12] Didn't want. To come to Christ. That was the last thing he wanted. And so life was in opposition to Christ. Christ reached down.

He saved him. He saved an unwilling man. He saved someone who didn't want to be saved. James McCosh.

An early president of Princeton College. Put it this way. The spiritually powerless. Are cured. Not. By any wished for movement of their spirits.

But by Christ himself. As he passes by. And he is now passing by. And he is ready. To heal. And what you must do.

Is cry to him. Call upon him. Say to him. Lord Jesus. I know I am unsaved.

[30 : 20] I know I am unconverted. I know I haven't believed. I know I am guilty. I know I am lost. I know I am on my way to hell. I know I haven't trusted in you.

And Lord. I don't even want to. I don't want to. Tell him. The truth. I know I need to come to you.

But I am not willing to come to you. And yet I know I have to come to you. Save me oh Christ. Remember Paul in Romans 9.16. It depends. It depends. Not on human will. Or exertion. But on God.

Who has mercy. Robert Murray McShane. Put it this way. You say. You cannot look.

[31 : 21] You cannot come. You cannot cry. For you are helpless. Hear this McShane. Jesus. Is saviour.

To the helpless. Christ. Christ is not only saviour. To those. Who are naked. And empty. But listen to this. He is saviour. To those.

Unable. To give themselves. To him. You cannot. Says McShane. Be in too desperate. A condition. For Christ. That's the mighty. Glorious. Transcendent. Saviour he is. In all his majesty.

And power. The kindest thing. I can do for you. Is to make you understand. That your situation. Is so desperate.

[32 : 15] That you're not. Even willing. And it's only then. That you'll cry out. In utter despair. Lord Jesus. I can do nothing. I can't move a step.

I'm not even willing. Save me. And we can say that. Because this evening. You're not just listening to me.

The Lord Jesus Christ. Is addressing you. Your soul. Your destiny. Through my voice. God is speaking to you.

And God's words. Are filled. With power. Our Lord Jesus.

Spoke to a man. With a withered hand. And he told him. To do something. That he couldn't do.

Stretch out your hand. And the man.

[33 : 23] Stretched out his hand. Our Lord Jesus. Spoke to a dead man. A dead man. Who couldn't even hear his voice.

And he said. Lazarus. Come forth. And there was a divine. Redeeming. Transforming. Power. In his words. And the dead man. Came forth. And if I didn't believe that. I wouldn't come into this pulpit.

Because I'd be wasting my time. Let the Lord Jesus. Overwhelm your consciousness. It's Jesus you're dealing with.

It's Jesus who's speaking to you. See him now. Listen to him now. The great. Kind Lord. He's calling you to come to him.

[34 : 27] Will you come to him? Ready or not. Willing or not. Able or not. Will you come to him? Tell him now in your heart.

Tell him that you know your guilt. That you know your help. That you know your loss. But you believe. That he saves sinners. And turn your back on your sins.

And throw yourself on Jesus. And ask him to save you. And as you do. Wonder of wonders. God works in you. To will.

And to do. His good pleasure. And you will find. That you do want him. And you do want to come to him. With all your heart.

And the dead man. Comes forth. You are not willing. You are not willing. To come. To me.

[35 : 31] You are not willing. To come to me. How does Christ. Say these words. This evening. Does he say them in. Sorrowful judgment.

Does he say them as your. Final epitaph. Is that Christ's. Is that Christ's. Verdict on you. Young person. Is that his last. Word about you.

You are not willing. To come to me. So that his spirit. Will no longer. Strive with you. That you may never again. After tonight. Have an opportunity. To come.

Your epitaph. To all eternity. Will be. Not willing. But I believe.

That our blessed Lord. Can say these words. In another way. In another way. You are not willing.

To come to me. He can say them.

[36 : 35] Like a warrior. Putting on his armor. Like a surgeon. Preparing to operate. Like a fireman. Preparing to enter.

A burning building. But he can look at you. Tonight. And say. In his love. And mercy. And electing grace. You are not willing. To come to me.

So I am going to save you. I am going to reach out. And change you. You are welcome.

And I will do for you. What you couldn't do for yourself. What a savior he is.

What a mighty. We don't have to bring any. You just have to come. To call.

[37 : 35] I pray with all my heart. That there is a Lazarus. That there is a Lazarus. Here tonight. If you come in here.

Not believing in Christ. Do you feel the constraint.

Of his love. And grace. In your heart. And soul. Oh. Don't you know. What you should do. Are you still going to refuse him.

Why would you refuse him. No reason. No reason. In all the universe.

If you go out of here tonight. Refusing him. What's that saying about you.

[38 : 42] What a terrible. Terrible thing is that. About the doors of this church tonight. Turning your back. On forgiveness. On an everlasting life.

Saying I don't want it. God delights to save. And I say this reverently.

He delights to save. Especially. The unwilling. That's why I preach with hope. Because when such people.

Are saved. It is clear. If ever it was clear. That they're born. Not of the will of the flesh. Nor of the will of man.

But they're born. Of God. And all the glory. Is his. Make the risen Christ.

[39 : 40] Work miracles among us tonight. Amen. Amen. Let us pray.

Thank you God. For our absolute. And utter helplessness. as ministers and elders as parents and friends as Sabbath school teachers as those who are concerned for the salvation of those we love thank you oh God that the work if it is to be done is your work from beginning to end oh God it brings you glory when men and women and boys and girls turn from their rebellion and confess your name and place their trust in you it brings honour and praise to you oh God and to you alone and we pray oh God for glory to come to you for you to be worshipped tonight and to be praised you've said that your people will be willing in the day of your power and so Lord by your power come upon young men and young women and older men and women and boys and girls who haven't been willing to come to Christ

Lord change them work in them that miracle of life that even now they may come and cry and be saved and Father we shall give all the glory and the praise to you now and throughout all eternity through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen