

Why We Don't Hear The Music

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[0 : 00] Have you ever wondered why, if the news of Jesus in the Bible is true, why most people still don't believe it?

Have you ever wondered that? If it's true, why do the majority of the world still not believe it? You know, normally, something that's been proven to be true, let's say, you know, that the world is a globe and not flat.

Okay, even if you disagree with that, please don't, because it's been proven to be true. We have enough evidence for that. And when something's been proven to be true, it's accepted generally in society as a fact.

And most people will believe it. There will, of course, be a minority of strange people who don't, weirdos. But most people, if something's been proven to be true, will believe it.

Why is that not true for the gospel? Why is the gospel not like that? In fact, it's the other way around. Those who believe in the gospel are seen as the minority of weirdos in society.

[1 : 07] Why is that? Is it because maybe there just isn't enough evidence and you've got to kind of make a leap of faith? Well, the sad truth, if we look around in our world today, is that more so than ever, our society accepts unproven things as fact, doesn't it?

Like gender fluidity or evolution. And it also accepts proven things like the gospel of Jesus as myth. It's actually got very little to do with the evidence.

And that is what we see in today's passage. What's happening is that Jesus is facing significant rejection of his message at this point in the gospel of Matthew.

Matthew, but it's from people now who have already seen all the evidence that anyone needs. Look again at what it says in verse 20 of chapter 11.

Then he proceeded to denounce the towns where most of his miracles were done because they did not repent. And so here you've got a situation where Jesus is dealing with people who have seen all the evidence they need, and yet they're still not responding.

[2 : 17] And so it's clear at this point in the story that there is something else that causes people to reject the gospel then and today.

And this is actually a good passage to go to when you come across people who say, well, you know, if only I could see a miracle, if only there were still miracles today, then I would believe.

Truth is, no, you wouldn't, because the people who saw the miracles didn't believe. There's something else at play here. There's something else that causes people not to believe the gospel. Today we're going to find out what that is. But we're also going to discover closer to home that it's the same reason that we who do believe in the gospel are still so often so slow to obey it.

And so let's see what Jesus says. Let's look at how he begins from verse 16. Follow along with me in your Bible. To what should I compare this generation?

It's like children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to other children, we played the flute for you, but you didn't don. We sang a lament, but you didn't mourn. For John came neither eating nor drinking, but they say he has a demon.

[3 : 30] The son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds. Okay, so what is Jesus talking about?

Well, he uses the illustration of children playing a game, and a couple of children get a game going, but then there's other children who stubbornly are not interested in playing.

Have you ever experienced that? Maybe you can think back to your school days, or if you're still a child, you may experience that. You know, you want to play this game, but all your friends are like, no, we don't want to play.

And they're just all stubborn and they're grumpy. Well, that's kind of the picture that's being painted here. And in those days, by the way, what Jesus is referring to is it was common for kids in the ancient world to play wedding and funeral games.

Now, I know that sounds weird, but they didn't have Nintendos then, and so they had limited entertainment options. And so they would play these games where they would mimic major social events that they see the adults doing.

[4 : 39] And they would, some of the kids would play a wedding tune, and then the rest of the kids would dance. And then they would change, and they would play a funeral tune, and then the rest of the kids had to cry. So that was the game, all right?

That's the game that's being referred to, that the kids had to respond rightly to the music they were hearing. You know, I wouldn't be surprised. You read these really practical little parables that Jesus gives, and this is effectively one of his parables, where he takes just an ordinary thing in society and he uses it as a way to explain a spiritual truth.

I wouldn't be surprised if he gets these ideas from the things he's seeing then and there when he's teaching the crowd. So it may well have been that he was teaching the crowd, and then he looked over and he sees a bunch of kids playing these games.

And then he sees a few starting a game, but he sees another bunch who refuse to play. And then he turns to his disciples and he says, you know, that is what the world is like with God's Word.

They stubbornly refuse to listen to it, to respond to it, no matter what song they hear. And that's how he's using the illustration here.

[5 : 53] And then he elaborates. He says, John the Baptist played the lament. The lament song. What did John the Baptist talk about? What was his preaching about?

It was about the realities of judgment coming upon this world. The realities of a just God and the need for people, sinners, to repent. That was John's song. And yet they didn't respond to it.

Jesus came and he played the joyful wedding song of grace and forgiveness and acceptance of sinners. And they didn't listen to that either. You see, both of those songs, the song of repentance played by John and the song of grace played by Jesus, they are not contradictory songs.

They are both part of the gospel. And we need to understand that. We need to understand that this morning. Both of those songs are important parts of the gospel message.

And we need to understand that because often even Christians only hear one of those songs at the exclusion of the other at any one point in time. It's very easy for us to just hear or emphasize one of those songs.

[7 : 00] Either the song of repentance. Those are Christians who are all about just being holy, growing in holiness, and very judgmental on people who aren't. And there's very little grace.

Have you come across people like that? That they're just listening to the song of repentance and judgment. But they're not listening to the song of grace. But you've also got, on the other hand, Christians who are all about grace, grace, God forgives us, God forgives us.

Wonderful. They're singing and they're listening to the song of grace. But they never change because they think, I don't need to do anything. You know, I'm saved by grace alone, not by works. Once saved, always saved.

And they never change. They never become the people God saved them to be because they're only listening to the song of grace, but not the song of repentance. Both songs are necessary to hear. Both songs are part of the gospel.

And both songs are necessary to communicate to the outside world. As a Christian, if we're communicating the gospel to other people, we've got to remember both of those songs.

[7 : 58] We've got to not be ashamed to talk about the reality of sin and judgment, as well as the beauty of grace. In fact, grace only makes sense because of the reality of judgment. Both of those songs need to be part of our gospel message.

And we need to make sure, as Christians, we are listening to both of them. And yet we see in this passage, people are refusing to listen to either.

To either song. They're not going to dance to John's song and they're not going to dance to Jesus' song. But I want you to notice something about what Jesus says, they say, as a way of justifying why they don't listen and respond to the song.

They didn't actually have any good reason to. The way they justified not listening to the message, notice, is by criticizing the messengers. Look at verse 18 again.

Jesus says, For John came neither eating nor drinking, and yet they say, he has a demon. The Son of Man, referring to himself, Jesus, came eating and drinking, and they say, look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

[9 : 09] You see what's going on here? They don't want to hear what they're saying, and so they attack the messenger. It's a very common tactic. You see it today as well. When people don't want to listen to what someone's saying, a really good, well-placed argument, but you don't want to listen to it, you generally attack the messenger.

It's got a name. It's called the ad hominem attack. Basically what it means is you attack the person if you can't refute their argument. You see it a lot in debates online, and you see it in academics.

If you can't refute the argument and you don't want to agree to it, then attack the person ad hominem. Have you ever wondered why Jesus is the most mocked historical figure?

He is. Jesus is the single most mocked historical figure in all of history. His name is a swear word.

In movies, all the time, right? And in shows, you hear Jesus' name being used to express disgust. Why Jesus? Why is no one else's name a swear word?

[10 : 16] In the history of humanity, no one else's name has been used as a swear word, but Jesus is. Why? Well, because if you can't disagree with the message, attack the person.

And nobody can actually disagree with the Christian message. Nobody can actually argue with the evidence we have in history, in Scripture.

Much as people have tried, and they will continue to try, and they will continue to disagree with the Christian message. Because they don't want to hear it. People do not want to hear these songs.

And they will come up with any excuse not to listen, even if that's attacking you as a Christian. And don't take it personally. Because if you're singing one of these songs, if you're singing both of these songs, people won't want to hear them.

And they will do what we see in this passage. They will attack you. They will say bad things about you. And we see it in today's world. The Christians sing the song of repentance and exposing the problems and the things that go against God's will.

[11 : 27] Homosexuality, sex outside of marriage, transgenderism. And what are we called? Evil bigots. Okay? That's exactly what's going on here. They said to John, he has a demon.

He's evil because he's telling us to repent. That's what will happen. They'll attack you. Because they can't refute the message. The question is, why?

Why are people so stubborn not to listen to this? If we've got the evidence for it. If it's great news, which it is, right? The gospel is great news.

Why are people still not wanting to hear it? Well, that's what Jesus goes on to expose next. Why people really reject the truth. Let's read from verse 20.

Then he proceeded to denounce the towns where most of his miracles were done because they did not repent. Woe to you, Chorazin.

[12 : 25] Woe to you, Bethsaida. For if the miracles that were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes long ago. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.

And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until today.

But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you. Now, this is pretty heavy stuff that Jesus is saying here.

No gentle Jesus, meek and mild here. He's talking to Israelite towns and he's comparing them with these pagan evil towns. And he's speaking to Israelites who are still rejecting his message.

And we see in verse 20, it's not because of lack of evidence. They're rejecting his message even though they've seen all the evidence they need to. No, the real reason, as we dig into what he's saying here, we'll discover the real reason that they rejected his message was pride.

[13 : 47] Pride. Because Jesus compares these Israelite towns to towns like Tyre and Sidon. Who are they? And why does he use them? Well, Tyre and Sidon, especially if you know the Old Testament, were known for their immense pride.

And they were known for being judged because they were so proud of themselves. Listen, for example, to Ezekiel 28. This is a judgment against the king of Tyre.

And it says this. Your heart became proud because of your beauty. For the sake of your splendor, you corrupted your wisdom. So I threw you down to the ground.

I made you a spectacle before kings. You profaned your sanctuaries by the magnitude of your iniquities and your dishonest trade. So I made fire come from within you and it consumed you.

I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of everyone watching you. So that was a prophecy against Tyre that the Israelites knew.

- [14 : 50] They knew Tyre as a city that fell because of their arrogance and their pride. And yet Jesus here says that if you reject this message I'm telling you, you're even worse.
- Bethsaida, Israelites, you're even more proud than Tyre was. And then to his home city, Capernaum. Now we've seen Capernaum a lot already because that's Jesus' base of operations.
- It's where Peter comes from. And to his home city who have seen more evidence than anyone. We've already seen in Matthew, Jesus did so many miracles. He healed so many people.
- There was so much that happened in Capernaum. He says this to them, verse 23. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will go down to Hades.
- For if the miracles that were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. Now Jesus talking here about will you go up to heaven? No, you will go down to Hades.
- [15 : 53] Or the Old Testament word would be Sheol. Death. The place of death. Those were the same words, again if you know your Old Testament, that Isaiah used to describe the downfall of Babylon.
- Their great enemy. Listen to what Isaiah says. We heard it earlier. I'll read it again. Isaiah 14 from verse 13. Talking to Babylon.
- You said to yourself, I will ascend to the heavens. I will set up my throne above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of the God's assembly in the remotest parts of the north.
- I will ascend above the highest clouds. I will make myself like the most high. But you will be brought down to Sheol. Into the depths, the deepest regions of the pit.
- So Jesus is essentially quoting Isaiah, but he's applying it to his own hometown, Capernaum. And he's saying to them, to ignore this message from God, to ignore the songs that we've been singing to you about the need to repent and receive God's grace, is actually the most arrogant thing anybody could do.
- [17 : 09] It's more arrogant than Babylon. It's more arrogant than Ty. Because the only, think about it, the only reason that you would ignore this, this gospel, this truth, despite all the evidence, the only reason you would ignore this and think that it's not important in your life, is if you think you don't need it.
- And that's pride. To think you don't need this. To think we don't need to come to church. To think it's okay if I skip today, you know. You know, I like church, but I don't really need that.
- It's pride if you say you don't really need to hear this week in and week out. And it's pride for people to say that they're not interested in Jesus. That's the real reason most people still reject the gospel today.
- Not because of a lack of evidence. Be sure of this. People do not reject the gospel today because they have no evidence. There's sufficient evidence, and if you're still wondering, come to Discover Jesus the next time we run it, and you can see the evidence for yourself.
- It's all there. People don't reject the gospel because of a lack of evidence. They reject it because they don't think they really need it. You know, we just had some fires on the mountain again above Newlands just a few days ago.
- [18 : 25] Imagine that mountain rescue, Cape Town Mountain Rescue, and kudos to them. They do such a good job, don't they? And they have to often.

We often see them on the weekends, especially when there's hikers and stuff, buzzing around, doing their thing. But imagine Cape Town Mountain Rescue discovered that there was some hikers taking a picnic at the top of the mountain, and the fire was surrounding them on all sides.

And they were just sitting there having their picnic. And they realized these guys are going to get burnt to a crisp if we don't get them out. So they get a helicopter. It starts up. They get the rescue guys on board. And they come fly over in a megaphone.

They say, we're going to send down some people. And if you can grab, we'll pull you up. Now imagine the people sitting there are just eating their picnic and going, nah, it's okay, thanks. We're fine. It's like that picture of that, what is it, that little dog, that meme, that dog that's in that burning room going, it's fine.

This is fine. That's what people are like. You know, it's fine. We don't need this. But the fire is coming. It's going to consume you. Oh, we can work that out when we get there.

[19 : 35] It's fine. We'll make a plan. Please stop disturbing our picnic. That's how people are with the gospel. Please stop telling me what to do.

I'm fine. I'll sort it out with God when I see him one day. I'm fine. You know how much pride it takes to have that attitude? But that is the attitude towards the gospel message in our world.

That is why people reject the song of both repentance and grace. People reject the song of repentance that John the Baptist sang, the song that we need to change.

Because why do they reject that? Because they honestly think, I'm fine as I am. In fact, the world keeps telling us, doesn't it? To say the opposite is to be a bigot.

No, I'm perfectly fine as I am. That's why they reject the song of repentance. But people also reject the song of grace. They reject the song of God's rescue.

[20 : 45] God's rescue, apart from work, God's rescue by faith alone. Why do they reject the song of grace? Because they honestly think they can save themselves. And so, therefore, carry on living the way they want.

It's pride. It's the only thing that causes people to reject the gospel. It's pride. But here's the shocking thing.

It's the same pride. That same pride in our hearts. Which causes us, even though we believe God's word.

To still be so slow to respond to it. Because aren't we? We come every Sunday and we hear this word.

And it takes, I know, I'm a preacher. It takes so many sermons before the pennies drop and we actually do anything about what we're hearing. Myself included. Well, it's the same reason Jesus is talking about here.

[21 : 50] Jesus was actually talking, first and foremost, to God's people here. Not to the outside world. He was talking to God's covenant people who knew his word. Who had actually memorized it from young.

They knew his word inside out. And yet, despite that, they had this resistance to let it change them. A resistance to do anything about it. They had what I call spiritual inertia.

You know what inertia means in physics? Inertia is the property of matter to remain unchanged unless it's forced.

Inertia. So, you know, if I put this Bible here on the edge of the pulpit. And there's no force on it. It's going to stay that way. It's not in its nature.

It's not in the nature of matter to change itself. That's inertia. But we're all like that. We all have spiritual inertia because it's not our natural inclination to change.

[22 : 49] Even though every time we come to church and we hear a sermon, that is God calling us to change. And that's what a sermon is, by the way.

We don't preach this just to entertain you. You know, I haven't devoted my life to preaching the word just so you can have something interesting to hear on a Sunday morning.

No, the only purpose we preach this word and draw out these truths and explain them and apply them is so that you can change and so that I can change. That's what sermons are meant to do.

To change us. To challenge us. To move us. Every time we hear a sermon, God is calling us to change things. And yet so often we go out of those doors or out of those doors and nothing changes.

Let's be honest. Am I right? Why? Because of pride. Because deep down we hear a sermon and we might go, oh, you know, so and so should really hear this sermon.

[23 : 53] And yet we don't think we need it to hear. We don't really think we need to change. You know, you might come to me and say, oh, that was a great sermon, Pastor.

I want to send it to my neighbor or send it to my friend. If next time you come to me and you say, great sermon, Pastor, I'm going to ask you, what are you going to do about it? Just yourself. I don't think anyone's going to come to me after this sermon.

But you see the point. We all have this pride. We all deep down don't really think we need to change. We all have spiritual inertia. It's hard for us to change. We're resistant to it.

We need to realize that about ourselves. And that's why we also need to realize one more thing about what Jesus is saying here. And it's not easy to hear, but it's the teaching that he gives here.

And that is that God will judge people based on how they respond to what they hear. That's why he says, verse 24, But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.

[25 : 07] You know what happened at Sodom? Unspeakable thing. Okay? Where the word sodomy comes from. They were like the worst, most evil, wicked city you could think of.

And Jesus says, Capernaum, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for them. Why? Sodom were evil.

Why would it be more tolerable for them? Well, because Capernaum received more revelation. Right? From God. They had Jesus in their town.

They heard the truth. And yet they still didn't do anything about it. Well, the same can be said to Christians today.

We hear the truth every week. We have Jesus amongst us by his spirit convicting us every Sunday as the word is proclaimed and applied. But if you don't do anything with what you hear, if it's not changing you to become more like the person God wants you to be.

[26 : 15] You know, if you're saying, I don't need to change. I don't need to do anything different. I'm fine. If you're only listening to the music of grace, I'm saved.

I'm fine. But you're not listening to the music of repentance, the need to change. Well, then you might get a nasty surprise on judgment day. As Jesus says, will you be exalted to heaven?

No, you will go down to Hades. Don't presume that you're saved if this word is not actively changing you. And if you're not on board with the process of change.

Every time you hear a sermon from this pulpit or any other, ask yourself, what must I do in response to this?

And so let me give you something to do in response to today's sermon. When you, from this moment, when you hear God's word opened up, note down something, at least one thing that God is calling you to do because of it.

- [27 : 26] Bring a notebook to church or on your phone, on the notebook app. Note it down. Every time you hear God's word, note something down God is calling you to change or to do. And sometime later, that afternoon, sit down, look back through your notes and pray over that and ask God to help you to do it.

Get into a habit of doing that. And if you find yourself walking out of here after hearing God's word opened up and applied, thinking that you don't need to do anything, will realize that you don't need to do anything, will realize that you don't need to do anything.

Will realize that you don't need to do anything, will realize that you don't need to do anything. Repent of it and ask God to show you again how to really dance to his music.

Let's pray that we will be like that. O Lord, we thank you for sending those in your prophets, apostles, and ultimately your son to play the beautiful music that we need to hear.

The music of repentance and the music of grace. Lord, help us not to be like those stubborn children who refuse to respond when we hear the music, but help us to dance to the tune you play, Lord.

- [28 : 50] Help us every time we hear your word to know what you're calling us to do and then to resolve to do it. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.