



# ENOUGH

**DEVOTIONAL**

July 22- July 28, 2018



## *Enough*

In our daily lives, that word may occasionally come to mind as we question what we have, what we need, or our place in life:

*Has God given me **Enough** to survive on?*

*Do I have **Enough** to share with others?*

*Do I have **Enough** strength to make it through life's challenges?*

*Have I done **Enough** to please God?*

*Does God have **Enough** grace to cover even me?*

Each week of July and into the month of August we will look at the appointed New Testament Scripture readings to answer these and other questions. Join us as we learn, together, that by grace in Jesus Christ, God gives more than **Enough!**

### **We invite you to join us each week, too!**

Daily devotional booklets like this one will be provided each week in an effort to connect the Sunday messages with your daily life.

The Sunday devotional offers a “review” of the morning’s Scripture readings and message, allowing opportunity to reflect on that day’s sermon. Throughout the rest of the week, each day offers a passage and a few thoughts to consider.

We pray these devotionals will be a blessing to you and your family, and in your Christian life!

### *When God Speaks Sermon Series Themes:*

**July 1:** Enough to Share (2 Corinthians 8:1-15)

**July 8:** Enough Weakness (2 Corinthians 12:1-10)

**July 15:** Enough Riches (Ephesians 1:3-14)

**July 22:** Enough Barriers (Ephesians 2:11-22)

**July 29:** Enough to be Filled (Ephesians 3:14-21)

**August 5:** Enough to Go Around (Ephesians 4:1-16)

**August 12:** Enough is Enough! (Ephesians 4:17 – 5:2)

# Enough Barriers

## Sunday Sermon Review

July 22, 2018

*Barriers are all around us—some physical, some figurative; some helpful, some harmful. Throughout history, walls have been constructed to keep invaders out, or to even confine a population wishing to break free. Politics and rhetoric become barriers between people, as parties divide the nation and hatred rises. Walls of irreconcilable differences separate families and marriages all the time. In Pauls' day, such barriers were not uncommon, as he pointed to the separation between Jewish and Gentile Christians. A sort of hierarchy had emerged in their minds. But the greatest barrier, of course, is that which separates sinful humanity from a holy God. God's Law serves as a barrier, a curb, to keep us on the right path, but we are quick to break through it. But God has essentially said, "Enough barriers!" In Christ, God has reconciled us to Himself. Within the Body of Christ, there is no hierarchy; no barriers separating one believer from another. And God sends us out to break down walls all around us with His love; to break down the barriers between God and unbelievers with acts of mercy and compassion, and with the message of salvation in Christ alone.*

### The Scripture Lesson Summaries for Today:

**Jeremiah 23:1-6:** The Lord speaks a word of judgment against the leaders of His people who led them astray (shepherds); but He also points us to His Righteous Branch, Jesus, who will reign and act justly.

**Ephesians 2:11-22:** Paul speaks of former separation between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. He points out there is no more separation, for we are one in Christ. Jesus is our cornerstone as the Spirit builds us into a temple of the Lord.

**Mark 6:30-44:** Jesus' disciples returned from their mission. While they were trying to rest, crowds pressed upon them. The disciples urged Him to send the people away; instead Jesus chose to feed them.

### Reflecting on Today's Sermon:

1. At what point was I confronted with the Law?
2. What comfort did the Gospel bring?
3. What story/phrase/teaching stuck out to me?
4. What did I learn about God from this sermon?
5. In response to the Word of God, I will...

*Pray: O Lord, our sin keeps us from Your presence and creates barriers between us and other people. In Your great love You made Your presence among us in Jesus; in Him all barriers are torn down between us and You, and we can be in communion with others in faith. Bind us in the one true faith by Your Spirit, and use us to end divisions. Amen.*

## Backstage Access

Monday, July 23, 2018

*Text:* Matthew 27:45-54

*Emphasis:* Verses 50-52: “Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were split. The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.”

When I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I performed the opening act for my school’s variety show. I did several magic tricks which my dad, my friend Tim, and I had practiced multiple times prior to the show. My final trick, which was the most complex, consisted of making a bowl of water “disappear.”

The next day, some older boys came up to me and said, “We know how you did the trick!” They explained with excitement how they snuck backstage after the premiere night of the show and looked at the equipment to find out the secret behind my tricks. While they weren’t supposed to, those boys had backstage access and saw things for how they really were.

Because of Jesus’ death on the cross, we have “backstage access” to God. This was signified by the supernatural tearing of the temple curtain. The temple curtain separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. God was known to be present in the Most Holy Place and only certain high priests could enter it. They would make prayers on behalf of the people because none of the people were allowed to get too close to God.

Jesus changed all of that by eliminating the barriers that separated us from God. Now, everyone can be close to God because of Jesus’ perfect sacrifice. Unlike my experience mentioned above, God doesn’t have any tricks that He’s trying to conceal. Instead, He desires a close relationship with you and *intentionally* granted you access to see how things really are.

The reality we now see, because of our access to God, is that God loves us beyond what we could ever imagine. We see how God’s love powerfully destroys the barrier of sin and even death that once separated us from Him.

There’s nothing tricky or hidden about God’s love for you. Jesus displayed the reign of God’s kingdom on earth by His death, the tearing of the temple curtain, the raising of dead bodies, and His own resurrection. Through Jesus, you have unlimited, eternal access to your Father in heaven!

*Pray:* Lord Jesus, thank you for giving me access to my Father who is in heaven. Thank you for making your love for me known in a way that’s clear and real. Cause me to constantly praise you for taking away the barriers of sin and death. Amen.

## Hostile & Threatening

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

*Text:* Read Matthew 10:34-39

*Emphasis:* Verse 39: “*Anyone who finds his life will lose it, and anyone who loses his life because of me will find it.*”

Reading this passage on its own – separated from the greater Gospel context – it can be easy to see why Jesus’ teaching earned Him so many enemies. Put yourself in the shoes of a Pharisee, a scribe, or just an everyday, faithful God-follower who was passing by and overheard these words. Jesus seems uninterested in peace and declares He is coming with a sword. How would you react to this kind of preacher, teaching in the name of God?

The Jesus who encounters us in these isolated verses is not the kind and cuddly Jesus we learn about in Sunday School. This Jesus sounds threatening, hostile. Without a wider perspective, it is no surprise that some people got the wrong picture of Jesus. Some still do.

So how should we read these verses?

First, we should notice that Matthew records these words as instructions Jesus gave to His disciples. These difficult words are meant for those already following Jesus. Second, we should note that the centerpiece of Jesus’ words in this section is a quotation from the Old Testament. Jesus is telling His followers (us!) that He is the fulfillment of all the Bible’s promises.

If this Jesus sounds threatening, He is. He is a threat to the ways of the world that would tempt us to ignore God, His promises, and the Savior He sent. The Bible records that some of Jesus’ own family disbelieved that He had come as God’s promised Savior. At times, His relatives even tried to interrupt His ministry. But Jesus wouldn’t let these barriers stand in the way of His mission.

If this Jesus sounds hostile, He is. He is hostile toward all the things of this world that stand between His followers and their connection to God. Our selected verses end with Jesus declaring that He is death’s enemy and His promise to undo the worst death can dish out.

Beloved, Jesus has come in a relentless pursuit to make you His family. The ruthlessness of His cross opens the door to life for all as His sisters and brothers.

*Pray:* *Jesus, thank you for your relentless love that would stop at nothing – even death on a cross – to make me part of your family. Defeat the temptations that draw my trust away from you and your promise of life through your cross. Amen.*

## Gut Reaction

Wednesday, July 25, 2018

*Text:* Read Joshua 3

*Emphasis:* Verse 9: “Then Joshua told the Israelites, ‘Come closer and listen to the words of the Lord your God.’”

I imagine Joshua would be really good at leading Vacation Bible School stories. His instructions to God’s Old Testament people sound a lot like the rules we had in our energetic, excitable preschool classroom last week.

Our lesson on the thief on the cross was part Bible story, part Mr. Wizard science experiment. Using a few mason jars, some water, food coloring and a little bleach, we illustrated how Jesus takes away our sins. The kids ooo’ed and ahh’ed at watching dirty colors disappear right before their eyes.

The whole time I was terrified that one kid or another would be so excited that they’d jump up and spill this toxic concoction on themselves, their clothes or someone else. I warned them not to get too close. I wanted them to stand back for their own safety, but I told them to move back so they could better see the amazing thing happening in front of them.

Joshua justifies himself the same way. He tells the people in verse 4, “don’t go near” the ark. He knows getting too close would have powerful, irreparable consequences, so he tells them to keep their distance “so that you can see” as God does something amazing.

Joshua wants them all to get there in one piece, so he sets up a barrier for his people’s own safety. Picture thousands of Israelites on the doorstep of the Promised Land. Their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness are over. Home is finally in sight. Reining in hordes of expectant Israelites might have been even harder than corralling excited preschoolers.

Even if our preschool days are long behind us, God still declares certain things off-limits for us. God’s law is a barrier meant for our own safety. God wants to keep us away from impatience, jealousy, selfishness, and carelessness. And while it’s true that our sin separates us from God, His law is meant to draw us closer to Him. It reveals His heart for humanity. He wants to see humanity flourish and even gives us a roadmap to follow.

Israel must’ve done a good job obeying the rules, because five verses after telling them to keep their distance, Joshua has to instruct them to “*come closer and listen to the words of the Lord your God.*” The same Lord draws you close as He reveals His good, gracious will for you through His Word.

Like a preschooler at VBS, come closer and listen.

*Pray:* Great God of heaven, thank you for your Law that reveals your gracious will for me. Help me not to resist its demands. Draw me close to hear your word of forgiveness. Amen.

# The Barrier No One Wants to Talk About

Thursday, July 26, 2018

*Text:* Read Luke 16:19-31

*Emphasis:* Verse 25: "...A great chasm has been fixed between us and you, so that those who want to pass over from here to you cannot; neither can those from there cross over to us."

A pastor once told me of a time when his church (a thriving church) was asked to partner with another church (a struggling church). Various leaders from both churches gathered to discuss possible changes that needed to occur for this struggling church to bring in new people.

After hours of getting nowhere, the pastor suddenly said, "So, you would rather keep things the way they are knowing some people may go to hell because you didn't want to change?"

When this pastor told me this story, I was shocked by his blunt statement. I was also shocked by the struggling church's unwillingness to enact any changes the thriving church recommended. The pastor told me the partnership ended that day and he said to me, "I don't think we're bothered often enough by the fact that people are going to hell."

I'm not sure what I would have said in a meeting like that, but the pastor has a point: Hell is real, and people are headed there.

This is an abrupt truth Jesus reveals in his story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16. Jesus communicates clearly that after death there are no second chances. The time for faith, acts of mercy, and proclaiming God's truth is right now.

The truth is that we were all headed for hell. Yet, thanks be to God! Jesus saved us from being condemned forever by dying for us and rising again! It's by God's grace we believe in Jesus' saving work and receive the assurance we'll be with Him on the perfect side of the eternal barrier between God's kingdom and hell.

God wants everyone to be saved and be with Him forever. That's why He sent Jesus, to offer everlasting salvation to all people. Sadly, some people reject this gift God offers through Jesus. This bothers God and it bothers us too. God forgives us for all the times we've ignored opportunities to tell others about Jesus or expressed apathy toward others' rejection of God. He gives us His Holy Spirit to remind us of the great gift He's given us and to give us the ability to speak about Jesus in truthful and loving ways to the people we encounter.

*Pray:* Lord God, I praise you for saving me from eternal condemnation. Thank you for granting me faith by your Holy Spirit and giving me your grace through Jesus Christ. Guide me to share the good news of Jesus with people who are already in my life. Amen.

## Gut Reaction

Friday, July 27, 2018

*Text:* Read Mark 1:40-45

*Emphasis:* Verse 41: “*Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched him.*”

Our family has a dirty diaper ratings system. We score each dirty diaper we change, typically on a scale of 1 to 10. Every now and then, there’s a 12 or 13. Anything higher than that and you’d need a hazmat suit. I’ll be honest; I still gag whenever it goes over 8 or 9. Even with my stomach churning, I can’t help but do my parental duty.

Sorry if this illustration has your tummy turning, too. But it’s the best way I can think to convey the feeling the Bible says Jesus had when He met a leper on his knees.

Leper in Jesus’ day were outcasts. Their disease made them ceremonially unclean, and the ravages of prolonged sickness could make them grotesque to look at. No one would consider letting a leper live under their roof, eat at their table, or share their cup of coffee. You’d never have a conversation with a leper, and you’d *certainly* never touch one.

Unless you’re Jesus.

Mark’s gospel uses one of my favorite Greek words in verse 41 to describe exactly how Jesus felt looking down at the leper groveling in the dirt. It’s a form of the verb *splagchnizomai* (which if you say it out loud, it sounds as funny as it looks.) It’s a verb that literally means Jesus’ stomach was churning. Jesus was having a gut reaction to the man asking Him for healing.

And Jesus’ gut reaction is to heal. His stomach was churning with compassion. Like a baby unable to change his own diaper, Jesus saw the leper in a helpless situation. And He touched him.

Notice Jesus touches first and speaks second. He was so moved that He touches the leper even before announcing He is willing to heal him. How intense is Jesus’ compassion! Before He can even get a word out, Jesus has stretched out His hand to touch the poor, sick soul at His feet.

No hesitation. No hazmat suit. No barriers stood between Jesus and the terrible consequences of leprosy. And because Jesus touched him, no barriers stood between the leper and total healing.

Beloved, no barrier – not even the filthy ugliness of our sin – can stop the healing hand of Jesus reaching out to you, too.

*Pray:* Jesus, we pray along with the leper, “make me clean.” Answer with compassion, touch us through your Word, and create in us clean hearts. Amen.

# The Graveyard Shift

Saturday, July 28, 2018

*Text:* Read Matthew 28:1-10

*Emphasis:* Verses 2-6: *There was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men. The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay."*

I love the etymology of words and phrases. Things that have become so common and idiomatic to our language intrigue me. One such phrase that many have speculated on for years is the phrase "the graveyard shift."

For some time, it was believed the phrase came into being in reference to those keeping watch over cemeteries at night after a burial. The legend is that, after trying to make room for the countless people dying from the plague in the 1500s, towns began digging up graves to consolidate space. What they supposedly found were scratch marks inside graves, indicating people had been buried alive. From there on, beside the grave was placed a bell with a string leading into the casket for the maybe-alive person to signal for help. Thus, the phrase was born: "graveyard shift."

Unfortunately, there's plenty of evidence that this explanation is a myth with very little truth to it. It's true, such bell-to-casket graves did exist for those with a fear of being buried alive. But, the earliest use of the phrase on record was from 1897. In 1927, "graveyard watch" was defined in a naval glossary as the hours between "12 to 4 a.m., because of the number of disasters that occur at this time."

I like the mythical version better. There's just something eerily interesting about it. But also, there's hope in that version of the phrase: someone MIGHT be alive! And in that case, everything really shifts! Grieving loved ones suddenly have joy, again. A grave becomes empty, and life wins!

Our reading today is no myth, but it describes a seismic graveyard shift for you and for me! There's not a bell, but an earthquake. Those keeping watch over this cemetery expected nothing, but were practically paralyzed by the events. There was no frantic digging to save a life, for the stone was rolled from the tomb and the one who IS Life was already free, having saved us. And those grieving suddenly had joy, for Christ the Lord is risen, defeating our greatest barrier yet. Death is defeated, and life wins! All praise to Christ who made this graveyard shift possible for us!

*Pray:* *Lord Jesus Christ, I thank You for willingly going to the grave for me! By Your death and resurrection, the barrier of death is defeated and we have the hope of life! Let me be joyful in this new life I have in You. In Your name I pray. Amen.*

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