

HE'S

He's "All In"

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, December 24, 2023
PASSAGES	Luke 14:25-33; Philippians 1:3-6; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; John 4:31-34; Luke 10:27
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:49:55 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus asks for everything — not ninety-eight percent, not the parts that are convenient. But the reason is not that he is hard to please. It is that he is consistent. A God who tells you not to start what you cannot finish would be a hypocrite if he started a work in you and then walked away from it, and he is not a hypocrite. So the standard that rattles you is also the thing that should settle you.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ "Hate" in [Luke 14:26](#) is deliberately shocking language for a strong preference — a refusal to let anything come between you and Jesus. It is not a revocation of the command to love your family.
- ◆ Both parables — the tower and the war — are about the ridiculousness of a half-finished project. You lose the time, you lose the money, and you have no building to show for it.
- ◆ God wants one hundred percent commitment, and that number tells you more about his character than about your performance.
- ◆ The passage will rattle you into an inventory of your own failures. Matt's ask is to look past that and read the standard as a statement about God — that is where the encouragement is hiding.
- ◆ Paul is certain the Philippians will be completed not because the apostles were the A-team but because "God is faithful." The confidence rests on the one who called, not the ones called.
- ◆ Jesus called doing the Father's will his *food*. Redeeming a broken humanity is not a chore he grimly follows through on because people are watching.

- ◆ God has seen human weakness before. Your failure is not the thing that finally exhausted him.
- ◆ The incarnation is the visible beginning of a great salvation — and he does not begin what he does not intend to finish.

► 0:49:55

It was raining on Christmas Eve morning, and Matt had gotten up in the dark assuming almost nobody would come. “I’m shocked at how many people are here,” he admitted from the platform — he had been bracing for the cardboard-cutout congregation of the COVID years. With a 5 p.m. service still ahead, he promised to be concise, and then kept the promise. What he preached in that short window was not a nativity text at all.

1. A parable that does not sound like Christmas

► 0:52:10

He opened in Luke 14, in the middle of a crowd following Jesus down a road.

“Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.’”

LUKE 14:25–27 ↗

“You might think that’s not the Christmas passage you could have chosen,” Matt said. “Just hang with me for a moment.”

► 0:53:37

The word *hate* is doing something specific, and it is not overturning the rest of what Jesus taught. This is the same teacher who said to love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself, and who, when pressed on who counts as a neighbor, told a story about the most distant person in the room’s imagination (Luke 10:29–37). If a stranger on the Jericho road qualifies, so does your mother, your father, your spouse. Matt’s reading: this is shocking language, used on purpose, to convey a preference for Jesus so strong that it amounts to a refusal to let anyone come between you and him.

2. Count the cost — the tower and the war

► 0:54:21

“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’”

LUKE 14:28-30 ↗

Matt lingered on how funny that would be. A man with a foundation and no tower, being laughed at by everyone who walks past. And the reason abandoning the project is ridiculous is arithmetic: you lose the time you invested, you lose the money and the materials, and you still have no building. All that loss, nothing to show for it. Being *sort of* a disciple works out the same way.

► 0:56:17

Then the stakes climb from a building to a battle, and the demand widens from family to possessions.

“Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

LUKE 14:31-33 ↗

3. One hundred percent — and what that says about him

► 0:57:32

So what has the passage taught? That God wants total commitment, not half. Matt guessed at the negotiation already running in the room: will he take ninety-eight percent? Ninety-five? “Just hold on,” he said. “Keep that pressure. It’s okay, keep the pressure.” The answer is no.

► 0:59:30

He knew exactly what that does to a room, and he named it before moving on. “The first thing is, you get kind of shocked and rattled, and it’s really easy to find places in your own life where you’ve not shown that kind of commitment — and so you might get stuck on your own failures.” The whole message turns on refusing to stop there: “If we have an opportunity to look past that and think about

what this says about God, I think you'll finally get encouraged." Then, almost as an aside, the line that keeps the standard intact while he pivots: "Let's not settle for ninety-eight percent."

► 1:00:06

And then he turned the whole thing around, which is where the message actually lives. God's standard for commitment reflects his own character before it describes ours. "It would be really hypocritical for him to tell us not to start something we can't finish," Matt said, "and then for him, having said that to us, to go around starting things he can't finish." Jesus is the one who called the half-built tower laughable. So take him at his word about himself: God did not lose his mind — when we look at the incarnation, we are looking at the beginning point of a great and wondrous act of redemption for a broken humanity, and the God who began it is not a God who abandons foundations.

4. Why Paul is so sure

► 1:00:56

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-6 ↗

Why is Paul sure? Matt named the self-flattering answer first: we get so us-focused that we assume it is because the church had the A-team on the job — "you got Peter, you got John, you got Paul. I guess we're sure because we have our best men on the job." He invited the room to laugh at that, on the grounds that Jesus had just invited them to laugh at things. The real answer is two letters over.

► 1:02:10

"...so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

1 CORINTHIANS 1:4-9 ↗

Matt had a warning attached to this. The teachings of the gospel get routinely divorced from the rest of the Bible by people who want a moralistic faith with Jesus' sticker on it — as though the plan were, in his paraphrase: *I tried with Israel, I tried under the judges, I tried with Moses, but this time we're going to*

nail it, because I'm going to use extra-strong language. As though Paul's confidence rested on the strength of man finally showing up. Previous generations were a disappointment, apparently — "I don't know what was wrong with them, but us — do you feel it? You feel the strength?" Our faith rests on a God who is faithful and who has taken responsibility precisely where he knows we will fail.

► 1:04:27

"And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'"

1 CORINTHIANS 1:30-31 ↗

Jesus is our righteousness. Jesus is our sanctification and our redemption. We do pour ourselves out in the greatest obedience we can muster, Matt said. But looking back, the boasting will all be in him. Even the ones who poured themselves out furthest — to the point of death and humiliation — would, if you asked them one at a time, boast in the faithfulness of the Lord.

5. Not a chore. His food.

► 1:05:46

There is still a way to hear all this wrongly: *yes, he is faithful, but it is grit. It is discipline and mental fortitude. He is a man of his word. Somebody has to take out the trash.* Matt went to a well in Samaria to close that door.

"But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' So the disciples said to one another, 'Has anyone brought him something to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.'"

JOHN 4:31-34 ↗

Matt offered two ways to hear that line. "One way of reading this is that Jesus is just using confusing religious language again — here he is, just talking some stuff that's hard to understand." The other is the one he meant: doing the Father's will is not Jesus' chore, it is his food, and he feeds on it. "Rescuing, saving, redeeming the lost and loving a broken humanity, revealing himself — this is totally what he loves doing." Not follow-through because everyone is watching. Not a commitment honored out of stubbornness. Wanting.

6. He has seen human weakness before

► 1:07:10

This is where the message got personal and stayed funny at the same time. He began a work in you, Matt said, and if you are anything like him, he has had to restart it a few times. You may have even failed him — *gasp*. Which raises the fear underneath everything: maybe he is done with me. As if God had started a work, realized it was going to be more work than he bargained for, and decided to go find new people. As if he had never seen human weakness before, or as if it freaked him out. As if he had never met a generation of people who want to be faithful and struggle every day at it. As if this crowd, this decade, this particular screwy weirdo was finally the one that did him in — “he was tired in the ’80s, but man, these days, maybe he’ll have to retire, because y’all are so much work to him.”

► 1:09:18

Then he put the parable back on its feet, and it is worth hearing in his own words how silly he made it sound: “It’s laughable to start something that you can’t finish. What a ridiculous thing to do — like a king who just kind of goes off to war willy-nilly without even counting his people. Why would you just start kind of building a tower, you don’t even know how much money it’s going to take, you just did it — it’s like, oh, that’s a little more work than I thought it would be, well, let’s just leave that half tower.” So: do we really think Jesus has had the thought, *being their shepherd is harder than I expected — I guess I didn’t count the cost of being this person’s Lord, I just sort of took on this giant church thing without thinking it through?* Or the other version: that he will finish the work, but grudgingly, because it is a matter of public record now and quitting would look silly. “You may have given up every once in a while,” Matt said, “but he doesn’t start things he can’t finish. He doesn’t start things he’s not willing to finish.”

► 1:10:30

And then he ran it the other direction, which is the part that stings in a good way. Shepherding weak people is not the regrettable part of the job — it is the job. “This is totally his thing: shepherding weird, screwy people, people who want to be faithful and struggle with it. This is his thing. Why else would he have done it? Why did he make you?” He wants to be our God. He wants to be our shepherd. That is not a concession he made after reading the fine print.

► 1:11:14

And it is not only about you as an individual. It is the whole worldwide body of Christ, the thing we read the news about and worry over — *the apostolic generation came and went, and now it’s up to us, and I don’t know if we have what it takes*. We don’t. But the conclusion people draw from that — that Jesus is old and tired and unwilling or unable to finish what he started — describes us, not him.

The last word

► 1:12:06

“I don’t know where you are spiritually today, discouraged or encouraged,” Matt said, “but I know this: he’s totally amped about sanctifying and redeeming you. He never once gave up. His finger wasn’t on the eject button. Yours was. His wasn’t.” He is near, knocking at the door of your heart even now. He knows exactly how weak you are, and he is all the more willing to reveal himself to you anyway. He is not one bit tired, because he does not start things he will not finish.

► 1:12:48

He prayed it back in one sentence and sat down: “God, thank you for your faithfulness. Thank you that it is you that we trust and we lean on. And I ask that you would reveal yourself to us all over again, in your mercy and generosity.” Then the housekeeping — no kids’ classes next week, a truncated New Year’s Eve service, Heart Ministry teams up front — and the benediction that fit the morning better than he probably planned: go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- [Luke 14:25–27](#)
- [Luke 10:27](#)
- [Luke 10:29–37](#)
- [Luke 14:28–30](#)
- [Luke 14:31–33](#)
- [Philippians 1:3–6](#)
- [1 Corinthians 1:4–9](#)
- [1 Corinthians 1:30–31](#)
- [John 4:31–34](#)
- [Revelation 3:20](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Jesus chose shocking language on purpose in Luke 14:26. What do you think he was trying to dislodge in the crowd — and what does the same sentence dislodge in you?
2. Matt said the pressure you feel reading this passage is fine — keep it. Where does your own negotiating start: at ninety-eight percent, or somewhere further down?
3. Where in your life is there a foundation with no tower on it — something begun with Jesus and quietly left unfinished?
4. Paul is sure because “God is faithful,” not because the apostles were strong. When you picture God finishing his work in you, whose strength are you actually picturing?
5. If Jesus genuinely wants to redeem you rather than dutifully getting through it, what changes about how you come to him this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMqTe-lz-jk&t=2995s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.