

Erlo Stegen:

Summary of sermon by Erlo Stegen

Mark 16

14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

This happened on the day of His Ascension. This text contains vast amounts of riches. Even in eternity we would not discover the full wealth found here!

But may the bit we discuss today be a blessing to you and touch your heart.

In the first verse of our text we read:

"**14** Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen."

We know that He ascended from the mount of Olives. It was on this very same mount where His suffering started, in the garden of Gethsemane.

Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus. He was at the head of the mob that arrested Jesus. Judas stole of the money and thought it a small thing. But the moment Jesus gave him the bread at the table the Bible says that satan took control of him.

It is a fearful thing to give the devil even a small finger for he will demand the whole hand, and you will do things that you never wanted to do.

During His suffering in Gethsemane He suffered greatly so that His sweat was as drops of blood. He was in agony and bitterness, with a foreboding of what was to come. Never was there anyone who suffered as He did. His sorrow was so deep that He felt the agony of death.

He even said to His disciples that He was sorrowful to death. He wasn't trying to put on a show, but it was genuine agony.

We read of this agony in Isaiah 53:

1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

In our original text we also read how He rebuked them for their hardness of heart, not believing those who had witnessed Him after His resurrection.

This was a serious matter for our Lord Jesus, for He rebuked them here on the day of His Ascension!

This sin had to be dealt with, even though it happened shortly after His resurrection.

It might seem inappropriate for the Lord to rebuke them with these sharp words. One would think that He should have been more loving, as this was the time of His departure.

It's not that He did not love them. He loved them and that is precisely why He rebuked them. A father that doesn't rebuke and use the rod doesn't truly love his children.

One might say that the things that happened long ago should be forgiven and forgotten. But if you haven't truly repented from them, they must be dealt with before God can use you.

Closing an eye to sin does not show love.

John Bunyan's mother showed that she truly loved her sons. When she saw their wicked ways and that they would not listen to her corrections, she said to them, unless they repent, on Judgement Day she herself will be a swift witness against them. That shook them to their senses and that's why we know of John Bunyan today, the man of God that he was and his great works being a blessing to the church till today.

This applies to preachers too with their congregations. Unless you rebuke them, correct them and lead them in God's way, they will perish, but you too will follow them.

You must be able to rebuke them and correct them in a godly way, not with bitterness and wrath and anger, but in God's holy love.

Maybe you yourself have unbelief and hardness of heart while you correct your children, wife or congregation. How then can you claim that you're on the way to heaven?

You might even say there's a hell, while you yourself is on the broad way to hell.

We should be heavenly minded, as we read in God's Word:

Christ's Ascension victory is yours - part 2

"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." (Col 3:2), and

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matt 6:33)

Where is your riches? Jesus said in Matt 6:

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."