

Luke 9:51-56

"Sons of Thunder"

March 16, 2025

1. Intro

- a. I think we can all agree that the growing sentiment across the world toward Christianity is becoming less and less tolerant, isn't it?
 - i. Obviously, when we look at the countries we've been praying for these past few weeks...
 1. Countries like Afghanistan and Iran, and Somalia and North Korea
 - a. It's clear from looking at THOSE countries that persecution and tribulation for the church is VERY real, and VERY serious
 - i. Just for example, in our country that we are praying for this week, Afghanistan...
 - b. Ever since 9/11, we have been familiar with the terrorist group known as the Taliban
 - i. They are still VERY MUCH the ruling authority in Afghanistan
 - ii. Under their rule, ANY act that is against the tenets of Islam is considered illegal
 1. Conversion to Christianity is seen as blasphemy against Islam AND blasphemy against the country
 - a. The government regularly conducts cellphone checks to see if there has been any "Christian-like" activity
 - b. If someone is suspected of being a Christian, their homes can be destroyed, their marriages annulled, and their children can be taken from them
 - c. If proof is found of their conversion, such as a Bible or other Christian materials, then execution is often the immediate punishment
 2. So clearly, when we look at these countries where the church is being heavily persecuted, we are reminded that Jesus meant his words in John 15:18-19 when he said,
 - a. *¹⁸If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*
 - i. Our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan surely understand these words in a very real and tangible way, don't they?
 - ii. But what about closer to home?
 1. With the recent elections, there's been a lot more talk about the United States becoming a Christian nation again...
 - a. There's been a new White House Faith Office established, with one of its primary functions being to root out anti-Christian activity in the US government
 - b. There's been more mention of the name of God from many of our politicians, even the name of Jesus
 - i. So does that mean we should no longer expect the people in our immediate "world" to hate us?
 1. Not according to the numbers...

- a. In a study conducted last year by the Family Research Council, there were 436 incidents against churches reported in 2023
 - i. These incidents include vandalism and arson, but they also include gun-related incidents and bomb threats
 - b. These numbers have doubled since the previous year, and have gone up eight times the numbers reported in 2018
 - ii. In a statement from Arielle Del Turco, the author of this report from the FRC, she writes,
 - 1. “[These acts of hostility] send the message that churches are not wanted in the community or respected in general. Our culture is demonstrating a growing disdain for Christianity and core Christian beliefs, and acts of hostility against churches could be a physical manifestation of that...”
 - 2. These numbers certainly don’t even begin to compare with what our brothers and sisters are experiencing in many other parts of the world, but they do show an undeniable trend...
 - a. Persecution against Christianity is on the rise
 - i. And, even if we do get a brief reprieve under the current administration, the backlash on the other side will likely be even stronger
 - b. Now, despite what it may feel like, this isn’t meant to be a doom and gloom message!
 - i. Friends, this is simply what Jesus TOLD US to expect
 - 1. The Scriptures are clear... as the time of Jesus’ return draws near,
 - a. Wars are going to increase
 - b. Natural disasters will be on the rise
 - c. And the Church will become more and more hated
 - 2. This is the BIBLICAL promise of what IS to come
 - a. So the question is, how are WE to respond in light of this promise?
 - i. I pray that, as we look at our passage for this morning, we will come away with a very clear answer to this question
 - 1. So let’s dig in, starting in verse 51
2. Luke 9:51 says,
 - a. ⁵¹*When the days drew near for [Jesus] to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.*
 - i. Now, obviously we’ve still got a LOT of content to cover before Jesus is taken up to heaven...
 - 1. We’re still only in chapter 9, and we’ve got fifteen more chapters to go!
 - a. So it may not feel to us like “the days are drawing near”
 - i. But for Jesus, who was now maybe thirty-two, maybe thirty-three years old, this day was certainly drawing near
 - 1. He had spent the previous thirty years of his life, living in relative obscurity in the little town of Nazareth
 - 2. His ministry had started just a year – maybe two years – earlier
 - ii. But his time was growing very short
 - 1. His hour was coming very quickly
 - ii. Luke writes that the days were drawing near for Jesus to be taken up
 - 1. But before the ascension could happen, there must first be a resurrection
 - 2. And before the resurrection, there must first be a crucifixion

3. And before the crucifixion, there must be a rejection and a condemnation
 - a. Therefore, Luke writes that Jesus “set his face” to go to Jerusalem
 - i. This is a clear reference back to Isaiah 50, verses 6-7, as we read there,

*iii. ⁶I gave my back to those who strike,
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face
from disgrace and spitting.
⁷But the Lord God helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like a flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame.*

- iv. Jesus KNEW all that was awaiting him in Jerusalem

1. And he KNEW that this was the reason for which he had come
 - a. So he set his face like a flint
 - i. The Rock of Ages showed his determination, and he steadfastly continued down the course laid out for him

3. Luke 9:52 continues...

- a. ⁵²*And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him.*

- i. Now, we need to realize that this verse is simply an extension of what we read a few weeks ago in verses 1-6 of this chapter,

1. As well as a “looking ahead” to verses 1-12 in chapter 10

- a. In Luke 9:1-6, we saw how Jesus sent the twelve Apostles out into the surrounding villages,

- i. Giving them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases

- ii. And as they did these things, they were commissioned by Jesus to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God

2. In a couple of weeks, we’ll see how Jesus then does the same thing with SEVENTY-TWO of his disciples, sending them out into the villages, two by two, with the same mission

- a. And verse 1 of chapter 10 tells us that these 72 went into every town and place where he himself was about to go

- i. These groups of two disciples were to go into these towns

1. They were to heal the sick

2. They were to proclaim the Kingdom

3. And they were to make preparations for Jesus’ arrival

- b. We’re reminded here that, even though the time of Jesus’ ascension into heaven was drawing near, he still had – AT THE MINIMUM – 36 more villages left to cast out demons, heal the sick, and proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom

- i. There was still MUCH work left to do!

3. So, in keeping with his standard practices, Jesus sends messengers into a village in Samaria to make preparations for his arrival

- a. But it didn’t go well for him there, did it?

4. Luke 9:53 says,

- a. ⁵³*But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.*

- i. Now, there are certainly cultural and historical reasons for the Samaritans’ rejection of Jesus

1. The Jews and the Samaritans had been at odds since the days of the Israelites' return from Exile in the latter part of the Old Testament...
 - a. But the reality is, they weren't the only towns who did not receive him
2. Back in Luke 9:1-6, and in Luke 10:1-12, Jesus is clear with his disciples...
 - a. This will be a common theme as you go out
 - i. Some towns and villages will receive you, and therefore they will receive me
 - ii. But some towns and villages WILL NOT receive you, and therefore, they WILL NOT receive me
 1. And to those towns and villages that do not receive you, shake the dust of that town off your feet, and move on
 - ii. Jesus' days were drawing near, so he simply did not have time to dwell in one place for long
 1. These were pretty simple instructions, weren't they?
 - a. Go into the village
 - b. Prepare the people for my arrival
 - c. And if they don't accept you, move on
 - i. And yet, in light of the simplicity of Jesus' instructions, James and John decide to escalate things to quite an extreme
 1. We read in verse 54...

5. Luke 9:54

- a. ⁵⁴And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"
 - i. Wow.
 1. Do you think that James and John might have been a little ramped up at this point?
 - a. We aren't given any details that might be helpful here in figuring out what was going on with these two brothers
 - i. It's possible that these two maybe had a deeper racial bias against the Samaritans than the other Apostles did, so that might account for the harshness of their words
 - ii. If we again look ahead to chapter 10, we might even give them the benefit of the doubt
 1. Jesus does tell the seventy-two that, for those villages that reject them, it will be more bearable on the Day of Judgment for Sodom than for that village
 - a. So MAYBE, this was something that Jesus had already talked about with the twelve as well
 - b. And MAYBE, James and John were simply looking back to when God reigned down fire from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah
 2. But, regardless of what the brothers were thinking, they were WAY off base, weren't they?
 - a. Yes, we have the example of God reigning fire down from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19
 - b. Yes, we have the example of Elijah calling down fire from heaven upon King Ahaziah's soldiers in 2 Kings 1
 - c. But WHERE has Jesus taught anything close to this idea during HIS ministry??
 - i. When the people of his own hometown tried to throw him off of a cliff, did Jesus call down fire from heaven to consume them?

- ii. When the Scribes and Pharisees repeatedly berated him and mocked him and sought out ways to have him killed, did Jesus call down fire from heaven to consume them?
- iii. In ANY of Jesus' teachings or actions, was there anything remotely resembling what James and John were suggesting here in verse 54?
 - 1. Not at all
 - a. And so we read in verse 55...

6. Luke 9:55-56

a. ⁵⁵*But he turned and rebuked them.* ⁵⁶*And they went on to another village.*

- i. In Luke 4:41, Jesus rebuked many demons, as they cried out before him, "You are the Son of God!"
- ii. In Luke 8:24, Jesus rebuked the winds and the waves on the Sea of Galilee, as his disciples trembled in fear before him
- iii. And now, here in verse 55, Jesus rebukes James and John for even making the suggestion that these pagan Samaritans be burned up by the fires of heaven
 - 1. In Mark chapter 3, as Mark gives us the names of the twelve Apostles, the first on the list is Simon
 - a. And Mark tells us that Jesus gave Simon the name, Peter... the rock
 - 2. But in verse 17, Mark then lists James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James
 - a. And he notes...
 - i. "To whom Jesus gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder"
 - 1. This is an Aramaic word, that can either be translated, "Sons of Thunder," or "Sons of Tumult"
 - a. Webster's dictionary defines "tumult" in this way...
 - i. It is a "disorderly agitation or milling about of a crowd, usually with uproar and a confusion of voices"
 - 3. Some have suggested that Jesus named James and John the "Sons of Thunder," because they would become zealous and dynamic defenders of the faith after Jesus would be taken up into heaven
 - a. Maybe
 - i. But in this instance, I don't think James and John would have been proud of their nickname
 - 1. In this instance, these two brothers raised their voices in tumultuous uproar and confusion
 - a. And Jesus rebuked them for what they had said
 - i. And then verse 56 tells us that they then went on to another village... just as Jesus had commanded them to do

7. So, in light of this passage of Scripture, what is our application today?

- a. Although the context for us looks VASTLY different than it did for the Apostles back in those days, the principles still remain, don't they?
 - i. The disciples were commanded to go into the towns and villages to cast out demons
 - 1. WE are commanded to go out into all the world, as WE wage war against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places
 - ii. The disciples were commanded to go into the towns and villages to heal the sick
 - 1. WE are commanded to go out into all the world proclaiming the spiritual healing that comes ONLY through the blood of Jesus

iii. The disciples were commanded to go into the towns and villages to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God

1. WE are commanded to go into all the world, as we preach this very same message:
a. Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!

- i. In doing all of these things throughout the towns and villages, the disciples were preparing the people for Jesus' arrival in their midst
- ii. And as we carry out the very same Commission from Jesus, we also are preparing the people for Jesus to come again

2. But the reality is, as we proclaim the coming Kingdom and the coming return of our King, not all will receive our message, will they?

a. In fact, going back to Jesus' words in John 15:18-19, MANY will choose to REJECT our message

i. Again...

- 1. ¹⁸If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

iv. So how then should we respond to those who reject our message, as we attempt to prepare them for Jesus' arrival?

1. Well, we have three options to choose from...

8. The first is to choose to respond as James and John did

a. As we look at all the lost and fallen heathens around us, who are actively CHOOSING to reject the message of Christ, we COULD choose to call down fire from heaven upon their heads, couldn't we?

i. They've become a bit of an outdated cliché by now, but the example that comes to mind when we think of this choice is the members of Westboro Baptist Church, out of Topeka, Kansas

1. The members of Westboro Baptist have been known for STRONGLY protesting the LGBTQ movement out in the public square,

a. Including holding protests at sporting events, concerts, and sadly... even funerals

- i. I can't even repeat from the pulpit some of the things these supposed followers of Christ proclaim during their protests
- ii. But it is safe to say, they most assuredly DO NOT align with the teachings of Jesus

- 1. Their signs don't specifically say that they are calling down fire from heaven upon their enemies, but that might as well be what they are saying

2. But, like I said, Westboro has become somewhat of an outdated example in our day today

a. They've been clearly denounced by almost every Baptist denomination, including the Southern Baptist Convention

i. And their membership has dropped significantly over recent years

- 1. So does that mean we don't have to worry about any more "Sons of Thunder" in the church today?

a. Sadly, I don't think we are free from this concern

b. You see, Jesus raised the bar when it came to our words, and even our thoughts, didn't he?

i. In his Sermon on the Mount, specifically in Matthew chapter 5, Jesus goes through a series of "You have heard it said..." statements

1. You have heard it said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
 2. You have heard it said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.
- ii. And in verses 21 and 22, Jesus says,
1. ²¹*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'* ²²*But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.*
 - a. My friends, Jesus rebuked James and John because their words betrayed what was in their hearts
 - i. In the anger of their hearts, they had no problem at all with God bringing about the death of their enemies
 1. They had not only pronounced judgment upon the people of this Samaritan town...
 - a. But they had also pronounced their condemnation and their execution
 - b. Jesus KNEW what was in their hearts, and he sternly rebuked them for it
- iii. Brothers and sisters in Christ, we must honestly ask ourselves this question...
1. What is in OUR hearts when we are faced with our enemies?
 2. What is in OUR hearts when those around us forcefully reject Christ and the Kingdom?
 3. What is in OUR hearts as we turn on the news and see certain individuals or certain groups, or even whole political parties...
 - a. Rejecting Christ and speaking hateful things against us, his followers?
 - i. Friends, if there is hatred or anger or bitterness in our hearts towards them, then we are no better off than James and John were with the Samaritans
 1. We may not SAY, "Lord, bring down fire from heaven to consume them"
 - a. But that is certainly what resides in the deeper places of our hearts, isn't it?
 4. If that is what you find when you are faced with the enemies of our faith, then you must repent
 - a. For as Jesus said, if this is what is in your heart, then it is YOU who are liable to the hell of fire
 - i. So examine your hearts, my friends
 1. Do not choose the path that James and John chose in this passage
 - a. That is option number one
9. Option two is equally as bad... rather than choosing anger towards those who are lost, we instead choose apathy
- a. We don't see this example in our passage here in Luke, but we do see it in Matthew 24, verses 36-51
 - i. Go ahead and turn their in your Bibles, and we will look at Jesus' words together

- ii. In Matthew 24, Jesus is speaking to his disciples about the coming of the end of the age, and the coming of his return, and he says this to them... starting in verse 36
 - 1. *³⁶But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ³⁷For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴²Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*
 - a. Now I want to pause here and point out a really important detail
 - i. This passage is often associated with the rapture, as it is taught that, when the Son of Man comes, one man in the field will be raptured and the other will be left behind...
 - 1. Or one woman at the mill will be raptured, but the other will be left behind
 - ii. But that's actually NOT what Jesus is saying here
 - 1. Look at the language in verses 37-39...
 - a. Jesus is pointing back to the days of Noah, when everyone was just living life as normal
 - b. Only Noah and his family entered into the safety of the Ark
 - 2. But when the floods came, it was those under God's wrath who were swept away
 - a. It was those under God's judgment who were taken
 - b. My friends, this passage is not pointing to the rapture of the church – it is pointing to the judgment of the world!
 - 2. We have to see this, because this helps us in properly interpreting the rest of the passage... Jesus goes on in verse 45,
 - a. *⁴⁵Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸BUT if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' ⁴⁹and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*
- iii. Brothers and sisters, these are the dire consequences of being apathetic toward the lost in this world
 - 1. The Son of Man is coming again to judge the world
 - a. All those who have rejected him and rejected the Gospel of the Kingdom will be swept away
 - i. But what about US?

1. What about US who have been set over his household until his return?
 - ii. Jesus isn't just talking about pastors and shepherds here – he is talking about ALL who profess to follow him
 - b. So what will he find IN US upon his return?
 - i. Will he find us angry at our enemies, calling down fire upon them in the anger of our hearts?
 - ii. Or, just as bad, will he find us apathetic towards their lostness, as we say to ourselves, "Our master is delayed... let us eat, drink, and be merry..."
 1. We gave all those people out there in the floods a chance to get on the boat...
 - a. They made their bed, now let them sleep in it
 - iv. My friends, if we become apathetic towards our enemies, how do you think Jesus will respond?
 1. There is a very real danger that he might look at US and say, "Cut him to pieces, and put him with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
 - a. I know these are harsh words, but this is the picture that Jesus gives us
 - i. If we choose to be angry toward those who are heading toward destruction, then Jesus says we are liable to the hell of fire
 - ii. If we choose to be apathetic toward those who are heading toward destruction, then Jesus says he will place us with the hypocrites
 - v. So the ONLY choice left for us, my friends, is this:
10. We must LOVE our enemies!
- a. Period. Full stop. THERE. IS. NO. OTHER. WAY.
 - i. Turn to Matthew 5, verses 37-48, as we again look to the Sermon on the Mount for our guidance in our days
 1. Again, Jesus starts in verse 38 with another, "You have heard it said" statement...
 - a. *³⁸You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'* ³⁹*BUT I SAY TO YOU, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. ⁴³You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'* ⁴⁴*BUT I SAY TO YOU, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*
 - ii. Friends, the world is going to continue to grow in their hatred of the name of Jesus
 1. And, as a result, they will grow in their hatred toward you
 - a. So, as you are faithful in proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, and the world answers by slapping you on the cheek, how will YOU respond?
 - i. Will you slap back in anger and retaliation, calling down the fires of heaven upon them?

- ii. Will you turn and walk away in apathy, saying in your heart, “Well forget you, then!”
 - iii. Or, IN LOVE, will you follow the command of Christ, and turn to your enemy the other cheek as well?
 - b. As you are faithful in fighting against the evil powers of this world, and proclaiming the healing that comes in Jesus’ name alone, and the world answers by taking you to court or treating you in some unjust manner, how will you respond?
 - i. Will you angrily take to social media, decrying the wickedness of this world?
 - ii. Will you apathetically retreat into your nice, safe, Christian bubble where no one can harm you again?
 - iii. Or, IN LOVE, will you give to those who steal from you?
 - 1. IN LOVE, will you go the extra mile with those who are unjust toward you?
 - 2. IN LOVE, will you love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you?
 - a. Brothers and sisters, this is the command that is given to us by our Lord, for this is exactly what he did for us!
 - iv. As Paul wrote in Romans 5:8,
 - 1. ⁸But God shows his love for us in that WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS, Christ died for us.
 - a. While we were still dead in our trespasses, Christ made us alive in him
 - b. While we were still enemies of God our Creator, Christ reconciled us to be sons and daughters
 - 2. In light of this incredible reality, we have ZERO ground upon which to stand if we choose to be angry toward those who reject us
 - 3. In light of God’s amazing grace toward us, we have ZERO ground upon which to stand if we choose to be apathetic toward those who persecute us
 - 4. In light of God’s inexplicable LOVE toward us, the ONLY right response we should have toward those who hate us...
 - a. Is to love them in return!
 - i. My friends, the Gospel of the Kingdom will not advance through our anger, or through our bitterness, or through our retaliation
 - ii. The Gospel of the Kingdom certainly will not advance if we choose to retreat in apathy in the face of rejection or persecution
 - iii. The Gospel of the Kingdom advances in one way and one way only...
 - 1. As the followers of Jesus CHOOSE to love our enemies, just as Christ loved us
- b. I want to close this morning with these words from pastor Wang Yi, of the Early Rain Covenant Church in China
 - i. In 2018, Pastor Yi was imprisoned by the Chinese government for his preaching that the true church of Jesus ought to separate itself from the state run, so-called church of the Communist party
 - 1. Pastor Yi did not preach a watered-down gospel, or a gospel that sought to appease the masses
 - a. He preached a gospel that Christ’s Kingdom reigned supreme above all – and he was arrested for this message

- ii. But, after he was arrested, Pastor Yi wrote a letter to his congregation, and towards the end, he wrote these words...
 - 1. “The gospel requires that the religious resistance must be non-violent. The mystery of the gospel is to replace the physical resistance with positive suffering, [a suffering that] is willing to bear the punishment of unrighteousness. The result of love and forgiveness is the resilience of peace. The cross means being willing to suffer where you don’t have to suffer. Because Christ has unlimited resistance, he has endured all humiliation and hurt. Christ’s way of resisting this world against him is to extend a peaceful olive branch on the cross to a world that crucified him. I firmly believe that Christ calls me to practice this religious disobedience in this life-long service under this regime that resists the gospel and persecutes the church. This is the way I preach the gospel, and this is the mystery of my evangelism.”
 - a. My friends, the world is used to angry Christians, yelling and ranting in protests and on social media, calling down fire from heaven like James and John
 - b. The world is used to apathetic Christians, who don’t ever seem to really act on the things they proclaim – eating, drinking, and living comfortably as the Day of Judgment comes swiftly and quietly
 - i. But what if, like Pastor Yi, there was a mystery to our evangelism?
 - 1. What if, in the midst of our steadfast proclamation of the Kingdom of God, we chose to show LOVE towards those who reject our message?
 - a. Christ calls us to an impossible standard at the end of Matthew 5...
 - i. “Be PERFECT, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
 - b. May the Lord help us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to strive for this lofty and noble goal!