

Iain Macritchie: Matthew 23

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[0 : 0 0] I'd like us if we would to turn back to God's word now as we find it in the chapter that we read Matthew 23. I'd like us to take for our text this morning the words that we find in verse 37. Matthew 23 verse 37.

Would Jerusalem Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it? How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathered her brood under her wings and you would not? Well friends we come this morning to our fifth and second last encounter with Christ our last will be next Lord's Day God willing. The encounter that we have before us this morning is different from those that have we've had in the weeks gone by. We've looked at an encounter with Zaccheus and Mary Magdalene and the woman at the well and Saul of Tarsus last week. These were all encounters with individuals but what we have before us here this morning is an encounter with a group an encounter with the people of Jerusalem and this chapter takes us to the very end of the last week of Christ's ministry on earth and these words form his final public address to Jerusalem. Yes he would speak to the disciples later on but the words that we have before us form his last public address before his death and resurrection. Jerusalem Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathered her brood under her wings and you would not? I'd like us then to look together this morning just for a short time at this version I'd like us to think upon this verse under three headings a sorrowful reminder a loving offer and a foolish response a sorrowful reminder a loving offer and a foolish response firstly then a sorrowful reminder from the very outset of this verse we can detect a distinct sense of sorrow and grief in the words of the Savior. Oh Jerusalem Jerusalem the very repetition of these words show that there is a heightened sense of emotion here in the

Savior's in the Savior's thoughts they they allude to a solemn tenderness. Now very often in scripture we see repetition like this the remembering Luke 10:41 we find Jesus in the house of Mary and Martha. Mary chose to sit at the feet of Jesus and to listen to his every word while Martha was busy preparing doing things that were legitimate but not sitting at the feet of Christ. Now she saw that her sister was doing nothing as far as she was concerned and so she came to Christ and she complained. His response was one of tender rebuke not to Mary for not helping but to Martha. The Lord answered her Martha Martha you are anxious and troubled about many things but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken from her. Martha Martha the repetition here it emphasizes that she obviously read the situation wrong in her mind she was doing legitimate things but really she should have been sitting with God with Jesus as he was in her home. I don't know if any of you have ever been rebuked in this way before when your name is repeated twice

Martha Martha it can be quite pointed can't it it can show a real sense of disappointment in the voice of the person who's saying it to you. We saw something similar last week Saul Saul why are you persecuting me and so here in this verse Christ is truly lamenting over Jerusalem his his repetition is one of grief and concern for a city that is completely turned its back on the Savior. Now Jerusalem the word Jerusalem means city of peace this was a city that had been chosen long ago to have the temple of God built in it a city that was the center of the government of the people of God but now here in chapter 23 of Matthew we find that it is no longer a holy city it's a city that over the years has become a city full of violence and unholiness interestingly in Revelation 118 Jerusalem is referred to as the great city that is symbolically called Sodom and Egypt. Sodom because of the immorality no doubt that was taking place in this city at this time and Egypt because of the the worship of false gods the pagan worship how quickly things had changed generally speaking for this city of Jerusalem this city that was a holy city but now it's a city of Satan. Friends it's true to say that here in our islands we have enjoyed so many rich spiritual blessings in terms of our culture over the years we've known great times of revival and renewal times when the name of the Lord has been high and lifted up times where his people have been so close together and enjoyed sweet fellowship but is it not true that bit by bit by bit ever so subtly these things are going and you know we really need to be careful that we are on our guard that we are on that watchtower so that through the period of time that in one or two or three or four generations time that we don't become just like Jerusalem once known as a blessed place and now not knowing God at this stage in the history of Jerusalem the people did have a form of religion here Christ is addressing the scribes and the Pharisees they they kept every letter of the law as they should but they got it so wrong they simply could not accept that Christ was anything other than a fraud they couldn't see that this was King Jesus this lowly man and consequently they did everything in their power to obliterate anything that spoke of Christ anyone who taught of Christ we've touched on this in the weeks that went by Jerusalem

Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it and you know they weren't satisfied until they got rid of Christ himself he was stripped and beaten and dragged through that city he was nailed to that cross and Calvary and he was made to die that that slow and agonizing death but as a commentator put it the soul of his sufferings where the suffering of his soul being forsaken by his father being separated from that communion that he had once so much enjoyed led him to that place of darkness and agony all because sinners such as you and I nailed him to that cross and just like in the days of Jerusalem in many ways we are still crucifying him here in Carl away today can you not see the similarities between the the nation of Jerusalem that's represented here and and our communities and the world at large that we live in in many respects nothing has changed so often we see everyone trying to get rid of anything that is that is seeking to promote the gospel the name of Jesus the creator of the heavens and the earth the one who's responsible for you and I living and breathing surely he is worthy of so much more his day is being desecrated his word has been laughed at his people are hiding their light under a bushel friends evil is becoming good and good is becoming evil and this is all happening at a rate that is quite frightening I wonder if you are daily silencing the voice of Christ in your own life you may not be stoning him or persecuting him openly but are you silencing his voice is it so that his word is the Bible is in your home and it's a challenge to all of us and it's lying closed from one end of the week to the other gathering dust you're not really interested in what he has to say to you in it or perhaps someone comes and tries to share the gospel with you a family member or a neighbor you just don't want to know is that you whether consciously or subconsciously perhaps you think that ignorance is bliss if I don't have to think about these these things they won't actually be there maybe even as you sit here today you're saying what is this guy talking about you don't want to hear what I have to say or what God has to say to you through me you want to close your ears friends this is solemn and here we have kind sort of fully reminding the people of how they responded to all his goodness to them he's reminding us today oh carla way carla way he's reminding you that many times you have chosen to silence his voice perhaps you're doing that even here at this time but you know I'm not gonna leave it there that is

[12 : 35] such a challenge to all of us but the wonder of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that there is hope and even in this very verse this very verse with our second point we see that hope where we read of that loving offer which Jerusalem Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings in spite of all these people's persecution in spite of all their hatred in spite of all their evil in spite of the fact that they crucified Christ the Son of God we see here a loving kindness of loving kindness that reaches out to to sinners such as yourselves and myself also and what a picture is painted in these words when we see the simile of a hen gathering her brood what I thought the Son of God would humble himself to condescend to be cut compared to a hen that he would do this in order to paint this picture of his love for his people what a beautiful picture he paints here you see hen has nothing but love for her chicks it's our instinct her primary concern is to care for them and to ensure that they're safe and secure at all times when a hawk or a crow comes in the sky she senses this and she she knows that are young and in imminent danger and she calls them to herself they respond to this call and they they quickly make their way under her wings the hawk or the crow can't hurt them now they're safe Christ here uses this illustration to show us the safety that we can find in him even this morning under the shadow of his wings safety from the dangers of this world safety from the world and the flesh and the devil Sam 91 verse 4 tells us that he will cover you with his pinions or feathers and under his wings you will find refuge and converted friends you won't find refuge in the things of this world you won't find security and safety in fact quite the opposite because if you adhere this morning and you're without Christ you are completely and utterly exposed just like the little chicks without the protection of their mother you're exposed and you are a prime target for Satan to swoop down and to to snatch you and to take you to a lost eternity friends are you safe in the shadow of Christ's wings this morning as well as being a safe haven Christ's loving offer here speaks of the hen being a source of comfort to her chicks it's a bitterly

cold night and the hen calls her chicks to herself they make their way once again under her wings and the snow might fall and the rain might pelt down but but they're comfortable they're safe they're warm and what a what a lovely picture that is for those who are in Christ because yes we have the storms of life battling around us and we feel the draft of the sinful things of this world challenging us and and bringing us down but yet what comfort and warrant is to be found under the wings of our beloved savior if only we would find ourselves there he tells us come unto me all that labor and a heavy laden and I will give you rest in Christ you find rest under his wing you find this sense of comfort that you've never had before that possibly you're looking for even this morning and in the same way that the hen almost smothers her chicks in order to keep them safe Al Martin makes a point that God's mothers repenting sinners in forgiving and repenting love God's mothers repent God's mothers repenting sinners in forgiving and redemptive love what a picture because in Christ we're able to find a love that is beyond measure an unconditional love how often do we hear of families and friends so sadly falling out with one another perhaps they've fallen out over land or some family feud related to something that in the grand scheme of things is of really is of insignificance I often have heard that friends but not so with Christ he's not a fair weather friend his love for his people cost him by leading him to that cross on Calvary to that place where he would be brutally killed taking upon himself the punishment that was due to us so that he could gather his children to himself what love do you know this love what are you looking for this love this comfort this peace elsewhere it was RC Sproul that said people desperately search for the things that only God can give them while at the same time they are fleeing from him I wonder if that's you you know you need something you know you need your life to change but you're going in the wrong direction do you not long then to know this joy unspeakable and full of glory that can be found under the shadow of

Christ's wings and you know we read in the verse that he is so willing with his offer he says I would have done it I wanted to do it he's we was willing for Jerusalem to be saved no matter how sinful they were no matter what they had done to those who were proclaiming his name and even as he hung on that cross what a picture of his his love even to the last minute as he hung on that cross dying a slow and horrific death he demonstrated this willingness to the thief that hung beside him what mercy what love when even at the bitter end Christ so willingly promised this common criminal today you will be with me in paradise he is truly willing I wonder are you willing or are you like the thief that hung on the other side of Christ the one who didn't cry out for mercy but rather mocked and jeered and even as he took his last breath spat upon the name of Christ you know both criminals were only a breath away from eternity but how different the eternities are even now as we worship today the Puritan

Thomas Watson said that eternity to the godly is a day that has no sunset whereas eternity to the wicked is a night that has no sunrise we're all heading to that eternity whether we're those who despised him in Jerusalem or those who despise him in carlo way we are all heading to that eternity her verse also reminds us that although he's willing he gives this offer frequently how often would I have gathered that my children how often you know Christ often came to Jerusalem teaching and preaching the people would have seen him they would have heard the gospel and they would have been ample opportunities for them to to come to know him as their own personal Lord and

Savior and you know this is the same exactly the same for you here today that is the thing about scripture that is so wonderful it is timeless there is nothing new under the Sun the same problems that were happening back in Jerusalem are happening here today because Christ is given to you week after week after week you've probably some of you heard hung literally hundreds of sermons over the year sitting in the very seat that you're in today but what has your response been are you allowing that message to go in one ear and out the other we can week out how do you respond we read of a response this morning this brings us on to our final point we read of a foolish response

[24 : 36] Christ willingly and frequently offered the gospel to the people and they responded fearful was their response can read it in the verse there how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathered her brood under her wings and you were not willing the but few Bible here it says and you would not they would not in response to Christ's free offer of salvation in response to his mercy and grace in response to the comfort and the security that he was offering to us sinful people not only for time but for the endless ages of eternity they would not they didn't want it they didn't want him in fact we read in Luke 19:14 but his citizens hated him and sent a message after him saying we will not have this man to reign over us that you are the things of the here and now so much more important to you so that they drown out your very awareness of the fact that there is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned we read elsewhere in scripture of invitations that were rejected in Luke 14 we read of the parable of the great banquet this parable relates to how a great banquet was laid on a great feast no doubt the table was set with so many good things to eat and drink and the invitation was given but he said to him a man once gave a great banquet and invited many and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited come for everything is now ready come for everything is now ready put an appealing invitation what an invitation that you would expect people to to jump at the chance of of accepting but no they didn't and you know putting it quite bluntly the response was pathetic but they all I like began to make excuses the first said to him I've bought a field and I must go and see it please have me excused and another said I've bought five yoke of oxen and I go to examine them please have me excused and another said I have married a wife and therefore

I cannot come friends they would not no matter how appealing the offer was in their heart of hearts they didn't really want it in the same way that the folk in Jerusalem they didn't want this Christ for themselves and they all with one consent began to make excuse I wonder what your excuse is today no doubt you all if you're of the age of voting you voted in the referendum that is gone by in the passing days don't worry this isn't going to be a political statement in any way but I think what we notice about times such as these is that on both sides people are so passionate about what they believe to be the best outcome no doubt we all want the best thing for her for her country there's absolutely nothing wrong with that but friends let's think about how passionate we are about these things in the light of what we have before us here this morning because just like the referendum we have two options you can either stay as you are you can carry on being blinded by the things of this world in the same foolish way that Jerusalem did you can keep butting your head in the sand hoping that everything will be okay or you can seek the Lord while he's to be found you can call upon him while he is near even today where is our passion for our soul where is our passion for our never dying soul these things are also important the good of our country but there is something so much more important you know if you were told today friends that a tornado was going to hit Carl away tonight what would you do I can guarantee that as soon as you got out of this church you would do everything in your power to make sure you were as far away from that tornado as would be humanly possible you would take measures so that you would be safe you wouldn't say oh well

I'll take my chances I'll stay in my house and it might just pass me by I might just be safe to do so would be foolish of course the likelihood of a tornado hitting Carl away is virtually non-existent we know that but friends I am this morning warning you something far greater something that is far greater than any tornado or any referendum and that is the destination of your never dying soul where are you going today is it heaven or is it hell we're all more than happy to speak about heaven and it's wonderful to speak about heaven and the prospect of that new Jerusalem the Lord's people although we are blessed here in time they long for that day when they will see Christ face to face and be like him but when we start talking about hell people start squirming in their seats they become uncomfortable that's almost a word that we're not allowed to use but friends scripture tells us

John Blanchard who was here just a couple of weeks ago he quite rightly states that to believe in heaven but not in hell is to declare that there were times when Jesus was telling the truth and times when Jesus was lying God doesn't lie that is why he sent his only son into the world to seek and to save the lost friends he is not willing that any should perish scripture tells us this but that all should come to repentance but we are to find our place of safety and solitude not in the fleeting things of time and of sense but under the wings of Christ himself would Jerusalem Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathered her brood under her wings and you would not though Christ left his enemies here in Jerusalem in a state of unbelief and with this I close his words show that he pitied them right until the very end just like he did that thief on the cross but he had given them repeated warnings and now it was too late but as you sit here it's not too late for you you are here on mercy's ground and Christ is telling you in his word come on to me all you who labor are heavy laden and I will give you rest a sorrowful reminder a loving offer and a foolish response friends what is your response amen and we pray that the Lord would bless these few thoughts to us