

0 (0s):

Good morning everybody. I'm so glad to see you. My name is Matt Wolf. I'm the lead pastor here at Rise Church. Denver And. we are all about helping people follow Jesus. We wanna help you follow Jesus and for you in turn to help others follow Jesus. 'cause following Jesus is the path to the fullest life and the only path to eternal life. And that's what we want for you. So we're so glad that you are here today. We're about to kick off our, our new series Losing My Religion. But before we jump into that, I do just want to have one little plug. Okay? We are in every nation congregation. That's one of our core values here, that we wanna reflect heaven by cultivating a community of diversity here and now. Like we wanna have a taste of heaven now. And part of that is we've got a lot of Spanish speakers in our church. Okay? One cool thing about that is that since the fall we've had one of our community groups that's in, in Espanol, right?

0 (44s):

And they meet after the service a lot of weeks and they have the best food of course. And if you're, if you're a Spanish speaker, And, you wanna be in that group, you should join it. but I, I'm saying that because we also want to make available and possible a Spanish translation in real time for the service. We think that would be really cool. So, we just bought the technology, but we're looking for some volunteers. We know there's a lot of Spanish speakers already in our church. But if you're like, Hey, I wanna help other people who only speak Spanish, be able to hear the word of Jesus, and you're like, I think I could translate, come talk with Pastor Sam after this service. He'll be in the back of the auditorium, talk with Pastor Sam, see if he could even do it once a month for this 10 45 service. That's our goal is to, to launch that as soon as possible. So talk with Pastor Sam, after the service, if you're online, leave a comment if you'd be willing to do that as well.

0 (1m 27s):

Or shoot us a message and we'll reach back out to you. So that's, that's gonna be pretty cool, right? Every nation congregation, how many people can we help follow Jesus that are our neighbors who only speak Spanish, right? Isn't, wouldn't that be cool? Yeah. Okay. But you guys are here to start our, our new series Losing My Religion You, guys ready for this. Today's message is called Bad Religion Bad Religion. You saw that quote in the video right before my message from Gandhi. Maybe you've heard that before when he said, I like your Christ, I don't like your Christians. Maybe you've thought that or felt that. Or maybe you've seen the bumper sticker, you've been driving behind it that says, Lord, save me from your followers. You guys seen that? Okay? There's a lot of people who are like, yeah, maybe Jesus and what he stood for is good, but man, I do not like all those religious Christian people.

0 (2m 13s):

Well, guess what? That's okay. 'cause that's how we feel too. Okay? There's a lot of Bad Religion out there and there has been for a long time. Think about it in history. When you go back to the Crusades, when people in the name of Jesus slaughtered women and children, or, or, or the Spanish Inquisition or the, the Salem witch trials in our country or, or people in our country who promoted racism and slavery with the Bible. And, and it's not just in history. We all know in the news we hear those stories as well about the priests who

are abusing children or pastors who are abusing their power, or preachers who are stealing from their flock.

0 (2m 56s):

Even here in Denver, did you guys hear this news story this year about a pastor here in Denver who set up his own cryptocurrency so people would donate money and then he and his wife stole it all, some \$3.2 million from their own congregants and they used it to, to buy a Range Rover renovate their house and go on lavish vacations. When you hear stories like that, no wonder why people are fed up with religion. It sickens us, all of us. And I could stand up here and defend all the things. Well, in crusades If, you look at it historically like, I could try to do that, but I'm not going to because there actually is a lot of Bad Religion out there.

0 (3m 38s):

And Jesus actually came to confront it and that's what he did in our day, in his day. So we're gonna do the same in ours. Is that okay? And that's what this series is about. So, if you are here today or listening to this, maybe someone sent it to you. 'cause that's you, you, you hate religion, right? And And, you, you're almost in the majority, 49% of people that were poll in a recent poll said that they think religion causes more harm than good. And if in our country Christianity is the most popular religion, it's like, well, that's who they're talking about us So. if you're brand new or you've listened a bunch of times, I want you to commit to this four week series for four weeks. We're gonna talk about how Jesus actually came to confront religion and there are some things we should lose about religion and it's good 'cause there's some bad stuff out there.

0 (4m 25s):

So what I want you to do is commit to this series, even if it's your first time. And if you're like, no, I'm traveling, Matt, that's okay. You can subscribe on YouTube, you can subscribe on your podcast app And. you don't miss a single message in this series. And even If, you are like, no, I hate Christians. Please subscribe to this series. Please subscribe to this series. And what I would say, if that's you and you're like, I'm not a Christian, somebody dragged me here, someone sent this to me, what I would say is you get to overhear this message because Jesus came to confront religious people. And guess what? We're the religious people We are. So this message is for us. So if you're not a follower, Jesus, you get to just listen and lay back and, and, and see what Jesus actually came to confront about Bad, Religion.

0 (5m 5s):

And then at the end come back And, you know, you'll listen to the whole message. And then at the end I'll have something just for you. If you're not a follower of Jesus yet, but If, you are a follower. Jesus, you get to listen to this. It's for you, it's for me. And I don't want you to think, oh, my cousin needs to hear this or that church down the street. They really need to hear this. No, this is for you. This is for you. You guys understand. So let's dive into Matthew chapter 23. If, you have your Bible open with me to Matthew chapter 23, If. you have a smartphone, use the U version, Bible app If. you download that in the bottom right hand corner, there's a button that says more. And then in the center it'll say events. You can find our rise. Church

Denver event And. you can save the notes, see all the scripture that we're gonna be covering today and just save it on your phone.

0 (5m 47s):

And we're gonna be in Matthew chapter 23 today because Jesus had a lot of famous messages. But this one might be the infamous one. We, you know, you hear the sermon on the mountain and we're like, oh, that's so great. It's beautiful. But Matthew 23 is maybe his harshest sermon. He had some hard things to say to us religious folks. And that's what we're going to listen to today. So we're gonna start in Matthew 23 verse one. It says, then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, and that's our audience today. Disciples are already followers. Jesus, the crowds of the other people just overhearing get to listen in. And in verse two he says, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

0 (6m 28s):

So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do for, they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders. But they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. So here he starts this message. And though the in the crowds were probably some of these religious leaders and the Pharisees, he's talking to his disciples in the crowds, he's actually going to confront directly those religious people in just a minute. But you're gonna see here that he, he's talking to the about the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, the teachers of the law were the people who knew the scriptures.

0 (7m 10s):

They knew them well. They had studied them. They were experts in 'em. They had their PhD in the Bible. These are the Bible scholars, the pastors, the preachers. And it also says the Pharisees. This was a group of religious people. Now some of them would've been religious leaders. They would've been the elders and deacons of their days. But some of them were just like, Hey, we're part of this group of the Pharisees. But these were people who were like, we're strict, we're religious. We got it right. And those religious people were the ones Jesus was talking about. And notice what he says. He says, be careful to do everything they tell you. Okay? They say the right things, but do not do what they do for they do not practice what they preach. Have you ever heard that phrase before?

0 (7m 50s):

Don't practice What she preach came from Jesus. Okay? Because he was sick of these people saying one thing and living another way. Doesn't that sicken all of us? Doesn't that sicken all of us? We, we don't wanna see people like that because when people are religious in this way, it is Bad, Religion people saying, I'm a good person. I believe in God. I'm doing what's right. I'm a leader in the church. I'm an elder, I'm a deacon, I'm a bishop, whatever it is. And yet their lifestyle and what they're doing is actually harmful. Jesus was sick of it and he's confronting it. I think Brennan Manning was right when he said that the greatest single cause of atheism today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, then walk out the door and deny it with

their lifestyle.

0 (8m 40s):

I think it is. It is Christians religious people who have driven so many people away from God. It sicken Jesus. And it should sicken us as well because these are people whose actions their words, I'm sorry, their words don't match their lifestyle. They say one thing, but they don't live it out. We, we know these people, don't we? We know these people because they hang, hang around and they're like, brother, brother I Jesus is just so good. Hallelujah. God is good all the time. All the time God is good. They talk a big game, right? But then they go home and abuse their wives.

0 (9m 21s):

They'll even say stuff like, oh my bride, she's beautiful, she's to help me from God. But for years they've been sleeping in separate bedrooms and haven't had sex, had a terrible relationship. They pretend one thing but live another. And it is so easy to do nowadays with social media, it's easier than ever before. You've probably seen these posts, Maybe, you even made them, you get your nice leather Bible, And, you put it down there and get a nice cup of coffee. And, you get to sunset in the background And, you take that photo from just the right angle. Spending time with Jo God, right? Isn't that the caption? But we all know that that person spent way more time picking a filter than they ever did with Jesus, right?

0 (10m 6s):

It's easy to look religious but not match it with what's on the inside. And that's Bad Religion. That's what Jesus came to confront. He goes on in verse five. He says, everything they do is done for people to see. They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long. They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues. They love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called rabbi by others. See, everything is to be seen, to be approved by other people, even though their life does not match it. It talks about phylacteries here. Do you guys know what those are?

0 (10m 47s):

FIEs were actually these little tiny boxes. And inside of them, people would've written down scripture. They would've written down the Bible in these and put it in, rolled it up a little bit and put it in these little boxes. And these religious people would take them and they would tie one to their arm and one to their forehead. Because actually in the Old Testament, what we call the Old Testament, it says, God says Tie God's word, tie it as symbols on your wrists and on your forehead. But that's metaphorical, guys, I, I'm telling you, God like wants it to be in our minds and he wants it to live it out with our hands. And these people are like, Nope, we're gonna take it. Literally, they're gonna put it on their arms and on their forehead. And then it says they made their phylacteries wide so everyone could see it.

0 (11m 28s):

Look how much scripture I got. And it would have their tassels long because that was a sign that they were observing all the religious rules. And they wanna show everybody how religious and upright they are by their clothing. And there's people that do that today. I mean, we all know there's a lot of religious leaders who wear robes and collars, but even if you're not a religious leader, you might wear that perfect Christian t-shirt, right? My boss is a carpenter, right? Have you guys seen that one? Or, or you get the, the really nice cross necklace to tell everybody that you're a Christian or you get that nice tattoo, a Bible verse. But it's nicely placed so you could cover it up if, you need to, right?

0 (12m 11s):

Isn't this what we do? Because we want everyone to see that we're Christian. It's a big problem. You know, I don't like robes. If you haven't noticed before, I was a pastor here in Denver. I was a pastor in Nebraska for five years and it was an older church. It had been there 125 years and it was part of a, a more old religious denomination. And when I got there they had some robes and they're like, you don't have to wear 'em on Sundays, but we still part of tradition make you wear them for baptisms. And I was young, I was 24. So the first baptism, I wore a robe and I was like, I'm never wearing this again. Not only do I look ridiculous, but I, I just like such a separation from everybody else.

0 (12m 51s):

Like why do I need to look different? Why do I need to look different? And, and I will tell you at a rise church, we have no dress code. Do you know that? Come as you are. You don't need to dress up. You don't need to impress people. You don't need to show people how religious you are by your clothing. Please don't. Please don't. When I was in Nebraska, when I got to this church with slight exaggeration, there were 60 people over 60 in this church, okay? You know an older church, right? We had one high schooler in our entire church, one high schooler. And I won't forget because when I got installed, that's like this fancy religious ceremony when they bring in a new pastor, I got installed, they brought in one of the denominational leaders, he came into my installation service and he walked straight up to this high school girl, only high school girl room.

0 (13m 39s):

And he said, why do you have holes in your jeans? You should never wear those into the house of God. And I pulled her aside and said, you can wear whatever you want here. And I never invited that man back. Okay? Because we don't need to get dressed up. That's the exact kind of Bad Religion that Jesus came to confront. We don't need to show off for everybody. Jesus continues in verse eight. He says, but you are not to be called Rabbi. For you have one teacher, And, you are all brothers and do not call anyone on earth, father, for you have one father and he's in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors for you have one instructor, the Messiah.

0 (14m 22s):

See, it's not about titles 'cause titles, people love titles. I gotta have the right title. I gotta have the right letters after My name, right? Then people will respect me. But who gives a rip? Who gives a rip? Okay, did you

guys know? Technically I am Reverend Dr. Wolf don't ever call me that. Okay? Please, please don't ever call me that. I don't need a title. And and and even as I was studying for my doctorate, I love my father-in-Law for this. He's like, Matt, it'll be a cold day in hell before I call you Dr. Wolf. And I'm like, thank you, thank you. Because it's not about the titles, right? It's not. But we do this just to be known by others, to be seen by others and and what we put on the outside, we want people to respect us. And that is Bad Religion.

0 (15m 4s):

'cause it doesn't match the inside. It doesn't match the inside. And I know every single one of us has been driving in traffic And. we have got cut off by a car with an nice church bumper sticker, right? Haven't we? And it better not say a Arise Church Denver, okay, I'm watching you. But you know what I'm talking about, right? We've all been cut off hurt personally by people who claim to be Christian on the outside. They looked respectful, they have a position of power, but their life on the inside doesn't match it. That is Bad Religion. And Jesus directly confronts it. Next, in the second half of this chapter, Jesus goes through a series of seven woes when he directly talks to these Pharisees, these religious leaders.

0 (15m 47s):

And a woe doesn't mean whoa. Although you might say that from some of the harsh things Jesus says. But what he is, he's saying, these are the things you're doing wrong. He's calling them out. Right? So I wanna look at two of these seven woes today. Jump with me down to Matthew 23, verse 25. Jesus says this, woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites, you clean the outside of the cup and dish. But inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence, blind Pharisee first clean the inside of the cup and dish and then the outside will also be clean.

0 (16m 29s):

Jesus didn't hold back any punches, did he? He says, on the outside, you guys try to clean up and look good by your clothing, by your words, by your flowery prayers. But on the inside it's messed up. It's dirty, it's filthy and If, you go into your cabinet And, you pull out a bowl. It doesn't matter how clean the outside is. But if there is rotten food stuck to the inside of that bowl, are you gonna use it? No. 'cause it's what's on the inside that matters. That's what Jesus is saying. The inside doesn't match the outside. It's a big problem. He continues in verse 27, he says, woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites, you are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean in the same way.

0 (17m 15s):

On the outside you appear to people as righteous. But on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. Whitewash, tombs. You paint your tombs. You guys been to a cemetery. There's some really nice mausoleums, got white pillars, they look great. But inside there's a corpse, a gross dead body. And Jesus says, if you're just religious on the outside, that's what you are. Do you notice how he's been calling these people hypocrites? Seven different times. He uses that word in this passage, hypocrites. And what

he's actually using is a technical word because Jesus grew up in the Greco-Roman world and in the Greek theater they were actors called hypocrites.

0 (17m 59s):

Because a hypocrite in those days was an actor who would put on a mask and they would put on the mask so that they could pretend to be somebody else in the theater, right? They're a person, but they go and they can act whoever they want to be because they're wearing a mask. You guys understand that. So when he's saying, Hey, you guys are hypocrites, what he's saying is you are wearing masks and acting one way, but inside you are a different person. The outside doesn't match the inside. It doesn't matter how whitewashed it is on the outside. What matters is how clean you are on the inside. And they are unclean, they have problems, they have sin, they're a mess. That's what Jesus is coming to confront that is Bad Religion.

0 (18m 39s):

And it's not okay because the outside looks great, but the inside, but the heart is sinful. It's going to destroy you. Do you guys know who Pistol Pete Marovich is? Yep. Pistol Pete, one of the great basketball players of all time. And not only was he a great basketball player, he still holds the record even though it's 40 years later. He still holds the record for the shots per game that he made. And the most points he made in college when he was playing at LSU 44.5 points a game. That's incredible. But not only could he shoot well, but he was a performer. This guy played well, maybe you've seen some old videos of him. He would do behind the back passes, no look passes. And he was even asked like, why do you always pass like that?

0 (19m 20s):

He's like, ah, that's how you get paid the big bucks. Okay, you gotta look. Anybody can pass like this. But if you do the no look fancy behind the back passes. Everybody loves it. He looked great. He was athletic, great scorer. He five time all star. But within a few years of him retiring from the NBA in on January 5th, 1988, he collapsed and dropped dead of a heart attack. This guy was athletic, but at 40 he died. When they did the autopsy, they found that he had an undiagnosed heart condition. It didn't matter how athletic and healthy he looked. If his heart was broken, if his heart was messed up.

0 (20m 1s):

It's the same thing with us spiritually. It doesn't matter how good you look on the outside, how well you can pray, how much money you give away, the position you have, the religious clothes you wear if your heart is full of sin and wickedness. That's what Jesus is confronting. I think Josh Howerton, a pastor down in Texas is right when he says that sin can't keep you from Jesus. But self-righteousness, looking right can. So Satan's masterpiece, he says, is the Pharisee not the prostitute. That's the problem with our world.

0 (20m 42s):

So many people pretending to be good, but inside they're sick. Sick. But Jesus told us the solution. Did you see what it is? Look back with me at verse 26. He said, blind Pharisee first clean the inside of the cup and

dish and then the outside also will be clean. Clean the inside. The heart is what matters. And If, you get the heart right then naturally flowing outta that will be the right life. If the inside gets cleaned, the outside will also become clean. Don't focus on the outside, focus on the inside. So there's the solution. Just go home and figure it out right Now.

0 (21m 25s):

Here's the thing, have you ever tried to do this? Have you ever tried to fix your heart? 'cause I can tell you from personal experience that it's impossible. It's hard enough to change our outward behavior, right? Some of you tried to quit smoking like 43 times, still haven't figured it out. It's hard to change bad habits that we have. It's even harder to change our hearts. We know we have some problems in our heart. And to change our very character, our nature is impossible. It really is. And If, you don't go believe me. Go try it and then come back and we'll talk in a few months. You can't clean the inside of your heart on your own. You need someone to come and clean it for you to take out your old sinful heart and put in a new clean one.

0 (22m 6s):

That's what we need. Heart change. And Jesus tells us how to do that. I want you to look back with me. Chapter 23, verse 11, right after Jesus talks about the Pharisees and the religious people, the Bad Religion, he says this, the greatest among you won't be the one who's saying, look at me. I'm the rabbi, I'm the teacher. I'm great. He will be your servant. The lowly person for those who exalt themselves will be humbled. And those who humble themselves will be exalted. This is what Jesus says, If, you lift yourself up to look good for others. You're gonna be brought low, you're gonna be humiliated at some point in this life or the one to come.

0 (22m 50s):

You're Bad, Religion, but If, you lower yourself. Humble yourself. You will be exalted. What Jesus is saying, we need to be humble And. we need to come before him and admit that we have a messed up heart, that we have sinned and gone against what God has told us to do. That even when we could choose God, we choose other things instead. And, we want everything about ourselves and everything for ourselves. What Jesus is telling us is that we have a mask on And. we need to lose the mask. This is what he's telling us. Humble yourself. Lose the mask. You don't need it If you try to fix it up yourself.

0 (23m 32s):

What you're gonna do is you're gonna try to be, be good and you're gonna fix some of those problems in your life. And then you're gonna be like, look at me. I've done some things good, I've figured some stuff out. And, you know what? You've just replaced one mask with another one and now you're a mean religious jerk. The key is to lose the mask, to take it off and to be humble and say, I have a sinful heart and I need a savior. This is what Jesus is telling us. This is the key to true faith, to lose the mask. Now this is hard to do, but I can tell you that I am the lead pastor of this church and I am the lead sinner.

0 (24m 13s):

I mean it. I can tell you that every single time without fail, when I do premarital counseling or marriage counseling, I teach them exactly what they should be doing. I'm very good at teaching the Bible, okay? But then I go home because I have to confess to Melissa that I have done something wrong. 'cause in the middle of my teaching I realize I'm not doing this every time I have to go home and say, Melissa, I'm so sorry. I know what I'm supposed to be doing and I'm not doing it. It's even worse than that. I'm a part of this group of pastors from here in the Denver area and one of the churches is larger and they have like this access to this really fancy personality test. They use it for all their hiring and all this stuff.

0 (24m 53s):

And I've done the Enneagram, I've done the, you know, Myers-Briggs, all this different stuff. But they had one I'd never heard of and they're like, oh, this is super accurate. It's 90% accurate, you've gotta try it. So So, we took this test and they bring in this expert trained person to tell us about the per our personalities. And there's like four different personality types that could be positive or negative. And that's like your most thing about you. Well, my results came back that I was extremely low in patience. That was my number one thing about my personality. I was like, I know why nobody's heard of this test before. 'cause I don't like it, right? My number one personality trait is that I lack patience. I, I was like, I'm done with this.

0 (25m 35s):

I go, I and ask Melissa and she's like, yeah, I might be right. This woman is just train expert. She tries to spin it and she's like, oh, this just means like that's why you're a good leader. 'cause you drive things forward, you're always moving ahead. but it also means I'm a really bad listener. 'cause I'm like, come on, hurry up, get to the point. And when I listen to some of you or when I listen to Melissa, I let people down and it's even worse because it, it means that I get angry easier. And my wife and kids are the ones who experience that the most. I'm telling you this and I could keep going on and on and on, but my timer's running down And. you guys want to get out to lunch, but I'm telling you I got way more sins than that that I could tell you about my actions.

0 (26m 19s):

My heart is sinful. The heart is deceitful above all things who can understand it? And I have one of those deceitful hearts and so do you. We're all sinners, we're all messed up. And what we have to do is take off the mask, lose it, stop pretending to be great religious people. None of us are. We're all messed up. We're all in progress. So lose the mask. This is why you should be in a, in a community group here in our church. Community groups are a great way And. we encourage people to be real with each other. 'cause when we're real with each other, we grow together. You have to take off the mask and stop pretending to let someone in. Now, I'm not saying you need to confess all your sins today on social media or go to your boss tomorrow and tell 'em all the things that you're, you've done wrong, okay?

0 (27m 2s):

You don't need to tell everything to everyone, but you do need to tell everything, at least to someone. We have to be open and honest about who we are. Especially with God. He knows everything anyways. Like why are you hiding it from him? But we should be open with each other, with our spouses. You can be with me, but not because I'm your father. Okay? I'm just a brother. Just like you. If you confess to me. I'll be like, I got some stuff too. Let's go. Okay? You can come up front for prayer at the end of the service because you need someone that you can take off your mask with and say, look, I messed up. I have some sins. I have some bad habits. Things that I even did last night before I came to church that I'm not proud of. And we need to be the first people to lose the mask.

0 (27m 44s):

Because the amazing news is that when we do, what did Jesus say? Those who humble themselves will be exalted. See, God loves sinners at our worst when we take off our mask and when we show everything we are laid bare. That's when God loves us the most. See, the biggest lie about Christianity is that you have to clean yourself up in order for God to love you. It's the exact opposite. God loves you first while you're a sinner, while you're messed up, while you're turning away from him. And therefore he's going to clean you up from the inside out. That's the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, that God sent his own son while we were sinners to die on the cross for us to forgive us in our worst moments.

0 (28m 27s):

And that love transforms us from the inside out, not the other way around. And we've got to understand that we, we have a word for that. We call it grace. This good stuff that God gives us that we don't deserve. That's what he wants to give to us. And I think theologian, Gerhard Ford was right when he said that Christianity is not the move from vice to virtue, but rather the move from virtue to grace. We gotta stop pretending like we got it all figured out. We need to rely on God's grace at every single moment we need it 'cause we're sinners. And, and let me tell you, I saw on social media there are some good things on social media.

0 (29m 9s):

I saw on social media this picture the other day because a kid was riding his bikes without breaks and he rode it straight into someone's car and dented it. So the next day that man came back and had bought a new bike for this kid to give it, to give it to him. That's grace. The kid who messed up gets the gift. It's the same thing with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We who are sinners, who have done wrong, get the, get the gift forgiveness, eternal life, new life now and a relationship with God. That's what we believe in the heart of what Jesus has. So church, lose the mask. Stop pretending, 'cause if you keep it on.

0 (29m 49s):

That's Bad Religion. That's what everybody hates. Lose the mask and God will lift you up and do dying. Now I said at the beginning of my message that I was gonna have something to say for those who aren't followers of Jesus. Okay, You guys ready for that. You've heard now the good news, what we actually believe and what Jesus came to confront. And I'm telling you that is the most beautiful, powerful thing you've ever heard.

Because Jesus actually tells what Christians should be known for. Do you know what it is? I'm gonna show you in John 13, this is what Jesus said. He said, A new command I give you love one another as I have loved you. So you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples.

0 (30m 32s):

If, you love one another. He says, as I have loved you, so love one another. That means Jesus, this was on the night He was going to be betrayed. He knew it was coming. As I have loved you, willing to give my life for you. And because I have loved you first, go and love others. That's how people should know that you're a Christian. Not because of what you wear or what you say or you're flowery prayers, but because you love, because of the love that has come inside you and is flowing out. Now that is a beautiful, powerful thing. And I'm telling you, it was the most powerful force the world has ever and will ever know. It's beautiful even if Christians mess it up. And to show you this, I I, I want to show you guys something special.

0 (31m 13s):

So for the last month, I have been learning how to play the cello You. guys ready for this? Alright?

1 (31m 24s):

Yeah.

0 (31m 25s):

For the last month, I have been learning how to play the cello because this song that I'm about to play is one of the greatest songs of all time Box Cello Suite. Okay? You'll recognize it pretty quickly, If, you don't know it already. And it is one of the most beautiful songs you have ever heard. You guys ready for this?

0 (32m 14s):

Wow, you guys are really polite because that was terrible. Okay? I have been playing for one month and I have never played the cello before that. And I only know like four measures. Okay? That's it. Okay? It was squeaky, it was outta tune. And nobody 300 years from now is gonna be listening to that recording, I promise you. But they will probably still be listening to that song 'cause it is beautiful. And now I want you to hear someone who actually knows how to play the cello. So would you welcome Becca to the stage?

0 (33m 3s):

Isn't that beautiful? The song just moves us because the melody is so precise, it's almost mathematical in how beautiful that that Bach wrote it. And let me tell you, that's how our faith is. There's a lot of bad Christians who play it wrong, but that doesn't mean the song is bad. In fact, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the most beautiful, powerful thing because God loves us while we're sinners. He doesn't ask us to clean ourselves up, but he's willing to come down in human form, to serve us, to love us, and to die on a cross for us, So, that we can be saved and be given new life, to be clean from the inside out.

0 (33m 47s):

And then we can go out to love others and change the world. Isn't that beautiful? That's worth believing in. So don't give up on our faith just 'cause there's a bunch of bad Christians. Believe in Jesus. Lord God, we're just so grateful for the gospel, the good news that God loves us while we're sinners, while we're messed up, while we're unclean on the inside, And, we come to you humbly saying that we have messed up.

0 (34m 28s):

And in fact, most of us, if not all of us, have worn masks to hide those broken parts of us. Lord Jesus, we come to you, we confess, we repent. We're losing the mask saying we need you to clean us from the inside out, to forgive us, from the inside out. And help us to go outta here, humbly, honestly, and in your power. Now with eyes closed, I know there are some people in here who maybe have not decided to follow Jesus and receive that gift of forgiveness and eternal life. But maybe something spoke to your heart today and you've realized how beautiful and powerful it is. And, you still might not like all the stuff about Christians and religion good.

0 (35m 10s):

Neither do we. Neither did Jesus. But maybe it's time to follow him and be moved by that power in your life. So if you're ready to make Jesus your Lord and Savior, I'm gonna give you a simple prayer that you can repeat after me to receive that gift of forgiveness and eternal life. So if you're already a follower of Jesus, say this prayer out loud to give courage to somebody around you who needs to pray this for the first time. And please repeat after me. Dear God, I'm a sinner. I need a savior. Save me. Forgive me in faith I declare. I declare Jesus'. Lord, fill me with your spirit.

0 (35m 52s):

Clean me from the inside. Help me to follow you and be transformed for the rest of my life. Now with eyes closed, If, you said that prayer for the first time and meant it. We actually wanna celebrate with you and give you the gift of a book to help you on your spiritual journey. So, if you said that prayer for the first time and meant if Jesus today for the first time is your Lord and Savior, put your hand in the air on the count of three. 1, 2, 3. Put your hand high in the air So, we can see it. Put your hand in the air. If, you made that decision today. If you're online, go to rise Denver dot com slash follow. Lord God, we are just so grateful that you love us. We're grateful for the two people at the 9:00 AM who made first time decisions to follow you.

0 (36m 33s):

We're grateful that you do save sinners like us, people that are messed up like me, like all of us, and we're grateful for your love and your kindness and your forgiveness. Help us go outta here without the mask on anymore. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

3 (36m 53s):

Thank you so much for listening to the message today. I'm Matt Wolf, lead pastor at Arise Church Denver,

and we're all about helping people follow Jesus And. we want to help you follow Jesus Because of that. If you're newish, even if you're just checking us out online, go down below in the description and fill out that form at arise-denver.com/new. And if this message has impacted you at all, please go to arise-denver.com/give So that you can give back and help more people find out the message of Jesus Christ.