

0 (0s):

Well, Good morning everyone. I'm so glad that you guys are here today. My name is Matt Wolf. I'm the lead pastor here to Rise Church Denver, and we're all about helping people follow Jesus. We wanna help you follow Jesus and for you in turn to help others follow Jesus. Because following Jesus is the path to the fullest life and the only path to eternal life. Before we jump in, I just wanna make an announcement again. I announced it last week. We are looking for interpreters, okay? We would love to have for our 10 45 service to be available in Espanol with a live Spanish interpreter, not a translator. I've been corrected, it's an interpreter. So if that's you and you're like, I think I could do it, maybe you've done that before or you could do that while it's live and help reach our neighbors who do not speak English.

0 (42s):

Follow Jesus. We would love to talk with you. So head to the back of the auditorium if you're here in person, or send us a message if you're online. And Pastor Sam will talk with you after the service today. Okay? Is that good? Okay, good. I'm excited about that opportunity to continue to be an every nation congregation, 'cause that's one of our core values here. But today we are gonna be in part two of our series, losing My Religion, and I'm called Today's Message. Don't Shut the Door. Okay? Don't shut the door. Don't shut the door. I was the, the third child in my family. So I had two older siblings Who in here has older siblings? Raise your hand. If.

0 (1m 22s):

you have some older siblings. So. if you have some older siblings, you know the feeling when they are doing something And, you don't get to be involved. You guys know that feeling. I remember vividly one experience where my sister, who was about four years older than me, had all her friends over and they were watching Mission Impossible one at the time. We didn't know there'd be 11 of 'em, but that, with that first one, and I was, I so wanted to watch it so bad. I was like, oh, I really wanna, and all of my sister and her friends were sitting there watching it and I couldn't watch. And I was in the other room just like listening to like, hear what's going on in this movie. And I had no idea. Maybe even you watch it And, you don't know what's going on in that one. But I, I felt left out, right?

0 (2m 2s):

Excluded. Ha has anybody had that feeling? Okay, may maybe you've had that with an older sibling, but, but it, but it happens even for us as adults too. You know, we see someone and they're having the party. We don't get the invitation that somebody else is hanging out and And, we didn't get invited on that ski trip. And there might be some legitimate reasons. There wasn't room in the car there. The wedding could only have so many people at it. You didn't quite make the cut, but, but it's not a feeling we like, is it to be excluded, to be left out feels pretty bad. And it's one of the feelings that a lot of people get when it comes to Religion. That they're left out, that they're excluded, that they're not part of the group.

0 (2m 44s):

And it's one of the worst things about Religion. And in this series, losing my Religion, we're talking about the

aspects of Religion that are actually bad that we want to lose and to get rid of. And are the things that Jesus actually came to confront. Like he, he didn't want to start this new Religion that would exclude people. In fact, that's what he came to confront in his own day. And we're gonna listen to Jesus' own words today, learn from his teaching today about what it means that we should not shut the door. So my big idea that the first part of it's gonna be a two-parter day is don't shut the door. Can you say to the person next to you, don't shut the door. Don't shut the door. If you're at home, I want you to yell it really loud so people are like, what's going on in there?

0 (3m 25s):

Don't shut the door. That's gonna be the first half of our big idea. And. we are going to again be in Matthew chapter 23, So. if you have a Bible open with me in Matthew 23 If. you just have a smartphone, use that. You can pull it out, use the U version, Bible app, downloaded If, you don't have it. And then on the bottom right hand corner of that app, there's a button that says more, click that and then find our Rice Church Denver event. You'll see the scripture we're covering today. And this Matthew 23 is, is a very famous sermons of Jesus. But we like the, like the Sermon on the mount. Like, oh, that's great, that's awesome. But this one is pretty intense as he's calling out the religious people. And, we saw last week him talk about the Pharisees and, and the scholars, the people who knew the Bible, the religious leaders, the pastors, the missionaries.

0 (4m 5s):

Like these were the, the, the cream of the crop, right? These were the deacons and elders in churches. And, and he called them out and he directly gave them these two woes that we looked at last week. And we're gonna look at two more today. In this chapter. There are seven woes. And these woes are basically him saying, Hey, woe to you. These are some bad things that you're doing. You need to stop. So we're gonna start in chapter 23, verse 13. And look at two of the woes that Jesus had for us religious people. And I'm gonna say this again, just like last week, If, you are a follower of Jesus. This message is particularly for you because we tend to become religious. It's what we do. I think it's part of our human hearts. We just naturally gravitate towards being more and more religious and So.

0 (4m 49s):

we need to be careful to listen to this and don't say, oh, I need to send this to my cousin. Or, you know, to that lady down the street who's rude. Like, no, this is for you first. And then the second thing I would say, if you're saying, Hey, I'm not a follower Jesus, or I'm not too sure if I am or not, just keep listening. 'cause you get to listen what Jesus is mad about with Religion and how to correct it. And then at the end, what we'll see, you know, I'll, I'll talk directly to you again. You just get to sit back today though. This is for us religious folk. Is that okay? Okay, so let's read verse 13 of Matthew 23 together. Jesus says, woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites, And, we learned last week that hypocrites meant like an actor in a Greek play.

0 (5m 31s):

They would literally wear masks and And, we learned in last week's message to lose the mask. Like we can't pretend to be better than we actually are. We're all messed up people on the inside, And, we need Jesus to clean us up on the inside. So we're gonna stop pretending here at a rice church. Denver, we all have mess up. I I heard there was some great discussion at community groups this week as people shared some, yeah, I got some problems, I got some issues. And guess what we all do? We need to lose the mask. That was last week's message. But he continues talking to these hypocritical leaders by saying, you shut the door in case you're wondering where I got my big idea from. Boom, there it is. You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces.

0 (6m 11s):

You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. So here are the religious leaders. A lot of people think of them like they're the ones that open the door, right? They're the ones who let people into the kingdom, into heaven, into this thing that we're all looking for. And, and what he's saying is not only do they not enter, but they shut the door so other people can't enter. Now, the religious leaders of Jesus' Day made a lot of different rules. We're gonna look specifically at rules Next week and, and how that can really mess up our idea of, of what true faith is. These religious rules get in the way. But what they would do is, is they would, they would have a door, okay? They symbolically, you see my door here?

1 (6m 55s):

Okay?

0 (6m 57s):

And, and they would say, Hey everybody, this is the way to get in. You have to be just like us. Last week we say, saw that they, they would wear these phylacteries, these boxes of scripture, and they would have tassels on the road because you gotta dress the part If, you wanna make it into the door. That's what they would say. Or they would say things like, you have to eat a certain way. You need to avoid certain types of people. Okay, don't eat that, don't smoke that. Or go with girls who do, right? It is something along those lines. And what they would do is say, Hey, you're not good enough. This is the way in. You're not good enough. Wait, you slept with that person shutting the door on you wait, you smoke what?

0 (7m 40s):

You're not in. You're from that family. Ooh, shut the door. They would shut the door in people's faces. And this is a big part about religious organizations. Maybe you've even felt this way in a church. Like all those are the good people. They act that way. They live that way. And I just can't fit in. Sometimes it's verbally. People will say that, or, or they won't invite you or they'll give you that look. And Jesus is saying here, that's one of the worst things that religious people do, is they shut the door of the kingdom in people's faces. So don't shut the door. Don't shut the door. Jesus saying, and the reason why is because even the door they're pointing to isn't the right one.

0 (8m 24s):

Keep reading with me in verse 15. Jesus says, woe to you teaches the law. And Pharisees, you hypocrites, you travel over land and sea to win a single convert. And when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

1 (8m 44s):

Jesus

0 (8m 44s):

Had some tough words, didn't he? I like this. Jesus, okay? He's not just this guy with a nice flowing robe and his nicely done hair and carrying a lamb. Like sometimes you see that picture of Jesus. Like Jesus also said, you're making people a child of hell like you. He was saying, the problem is isn't that they don't want people to go through the door. Religious people are like, yeah, come to the door, I want you in. But, but they make all these rules and it's harder and harder and harder and harder and harder to make it in to the kingdom of heaven, to be a good person. And the rules are so high that when somebody finally climbs up that ladder to make it to the top, they actually have missed it all together.

0 (9m 28s):

That's what Jesus is saying. All these rules that we put in place, these regulations, these expectations, they're actually keeping people out altogether. Jesus is saying, religious leaders often miss the entire door. In, in another harsh message that Jesus had in, in Matthew chapter 15, he said this, he said, the Pharisees are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit. Have you ever heard the phrase, the blind leading in the blind comes from Jesus. Okay? The blinder leading the blind into a pit, not through the door. They, they're shutting the door, say, hi, I'm keeping you out, but the whole time it's the wrong door.

0 (10m 9s):

And instead people are falling into a pit of destruction. Heard a story about a train conductor, and he was coming back to check the passenger's tickets. He pulled one person's ticket and he says, you're on the wrong train. The person was surprised, and they're like, okay. They started walking to get up, checks the next person ticket. Oh, you're on the wrong train too. Gets up, he goes to the third person. He said, I think think you're on the wrong train too. You, you need to go. And the guy said, wait, wait, wait. When I got on the sign, clearly said this was the train I was supposed to be in. The conductor walked out, looked at the sign, and he said, oh, I think I'm on the wrong train. That's what happens with religious people.

1 (10m 50s):

It's

0 (10m 50s):

The blind leading the blind trying to show where the door is. But it's the wrong door. It's the wrong door. And

they shut the door in people's faces. So what I'm gonna challenge you today is don't shut the

1 (11m 4s):

Door.

0 (11m 6s):

Don't shut the door. And the reason is, is because it's not the right time to do it, nor is it our job to shut the door. Okay? Jesus teaches another parable. And, and I'm gonna jump to it in Matthew chapter 13, in Matthew chapter 13. You can jump with me with to that chapter, If you want, or you can follow along on the screen. Matthew 13 is a bunch of different parables that Jesus tells these stories that have these deeper spiritual truths. And he tells this story starting in verse 24. It's often called the parable of the weeds. I want you to listen to what Jesus said. He said, Jesus told them another parable. He said, the kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away.

0 (11m 58s):

When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. Verse 27, the owner's servants came to him and said, sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from? And verse 28, the owner replies, an enemy did this. An enemy did this. So what he's saying is that if the world was a field that God is planting seeds, he has chosen people who he loves, who he's saving, that he's calling into the door, into the kingdom of heaven. And those are the wheat, the good people, but then also the enemy who we know of as Satan comes in and sows other seeds.

0 (12m 43s):

Weeds, maybe you've heard this as the wheat and the tares, If, you read some older versions. That's what it's talking about. Weeds. There's wheat and weeds. Now, growing up together, that's a problem. If you're a farmer, you want the wheat. You don't want the weeds. Weeds are even sometimes choking out the wheat. This is a, a big deal. So the servants asked the owner, Hey, hey, maybe we should do something about it. Listen to what they say. The servants asked him, do you want us to go and pull them up? Do you want us to go and take out all the bad people? So, we just have good people remaining. Are you guys tracking with me on this? This is what Jesus is teaching. Let, let's, let's do this. This is what religious people wanna do. Let's make sure we know who's in and who's out. Who believes the right way and who doesn't.

0 (13m 25s):

Who practices the right way and who doesn't? Let's make a clear dividing line. Religious people like to make it very clear. This is black, this is white, these are good, this is bad. And I get it. It's easier that way. It's way easier that way. We've been watching Star Wars with our kids, And, we've made it through the first six episodes. Okay, don, don't know if we're gonna keep going from there. I'm like, those are the good ones, right? But we're watching it. And the twins, every time there's a new spaceship or a new person on screen,

do you know what they ask? Every single time? I, I kid you not good guys are bad guys. Are those good guys are bad guys? Every time? Are those good guys are bad guys? And sometimes it's like very clear, like, I, I couldn't remember sometimes, but I'm like, yeah, yeah, okay, Luke, good guy, Han Solo.

0 (14m 9s):

Good guy. Okay, that weird alien guy, bad guy. Okay? Sometimes it's very clear, right? Who's good and who's bad. And even a movie like that. But, but not always. What about Anakin? He goes from good to bad and then from bad to good. Like it's, it's a little more complicated. And, and, and it had a great teaching opportunity to talk about that. How, how even good people can become bad and even bad people can be redeemed. Like we were teaching our kids from Star Wars, okay, some gospel in there. But it's complicated, isn't it? It was really complicated when like Boba FET came on, I'm like, well, he's kind of bad, but he's just getting paid to be bad. Maybe he isn't really bad, okay? But it's complicated, right?

0 (14m 50s):

It's not always like, good guys and bad guys. In or out, good or bad. Life is more complicated. And it's especially more complicated because sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between wheat and weeds. Like If, you, have you ever tried to, you know, work in your garden or, or maybe just in your grass you're like, wait, is, is, is that plant good? Is that one bad? Like I, I don't know. You really have to study and, and practice. And even then sometimes you'll pull up the roots and accidentally get something that's good and pull it out as well. So, so listen to what the owner of the field, who, who represents God in this story. Listen to what the owner says in verse the second and a half of verse, or I'm sorry, in verse 29, he says, no, that's a pretty good answer.

0 (15m 34s):

Don't separate the wheat from the weeds. No, because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. You're gonna accidentally get rid of some of the good ones. And in verse 30, in verse 30, Jesus says, let both grow together until the harvest. At that time, I will tell the harvesters first, collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned, then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn. So the first thing we see is it's not time yet to shut the door. It is not time for us to decide who's right for wrong, because we got a whole lifetime to figure it out.

0 (16m 14s):

We got a whole lifetime. And there are some people, and, and I, I feel the same way. I'm like, I'm glad God gave me till I was 18 So that I could have a chance to repent and turn to him. I, I know some people who are on their deathbeds have professed faith in God. Like why would we say, hey, right now I've gotta separate the good from the bad. Like it's not time yet. The, the great English writer Samuel Johnson once said, God himself, sir, does not propose to judge a man until his life is over. Why should you and I, it's too early. It's too early to tell.

0 (16m 55s):

Who knows what's gonna happen. Maybe Anakin is finally gonna turn good again. And Darth Vader will save the day. It can happen. You never know. It's too early right now. It's too early right now. So it, it's not time right now. And the second thing I would say, it's not our job either. It's not our time to shut the door. And it's not our job to shut the door on people. Jesus explains this parable. I love these parables in Matthew 13. 'cause he explains that sometimes they were a little confused, like what does that mean? But he actually tells us exactly what it means. So in case you're wondering, this is what he says in verses 40 and 41, he says, as the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it'll be at the end of the age, that's the time where it'll actually happen.

0 (17m 39s):

The son of man, Jesus will send out his angels and they will weed out of the kingdom. Everything that causes sin in all who do evil. It's not our job. It's the angels. We don't ever have to do it. And guess what? I'm really grateful. I don't have to be the judge of other human beings. I really am. If you think about it, if you had to decide who's in, who's out, who's gonna hell and who's gonna heaven. That's tricky. That's, that's way beyond my capacity. And I don't want to have that responsibility. And thank goodness we don't, it's not our job to shut the door. It's the angels.

0 (18m 20s):

It's the angel's job. And I get this a lot, a lot of people will come to me and they'll ask me questions like, Matt, you know, did so, so and so did this. Do you think they're going to heaven? Like, and there's some people doing some bad stuff. And I'm like, I don't know. I know they did bad things, but I've done bad things. Okay, that's lose the mask. Like I can't say I'm better than that person and I'm not saved because I'm good enough person. So, so I can't speak about them. I, I was speaking with one person and this, this young woman was making some choices in life that were pretty bad. And, and I, I told her that we had a conversation like, these is bad choices.

0 (18m 60s):

These are repercussions. This is what's gonna happen. This is what God's word said. We had that conversation. At the end of it, she was quiet and she said, matter you saying I'm going to hell. I said, I never said that. I never said that. And I never would. I have no idea. I can tell you what's right and what's wrong. I can tell you what the Bible says, but don't know if you're going to hell or not. It's not up for me to decide. It's not our job.

1 (19m 24s):

And

0 (19m 24s):

That was greatly encouraging to her. I was like, don't worry me and no one in our church is ever gonna

condemn you. 'cause it's not our job.

1 (19m 31s):

It's

0 (19m 31s):

Not our job to do that. So what is our job if we're not supposed to shut the door? Do you know what our job is?

1 (19m 43s):

Do

0 (19m 47s):

Don't shut the door. Show the way, show the way we don't open the door either. I I wish we could, I can wish we could let people into heaven or not, but we don't, we we, we show the way we can say, Hey, this is the door. I want you to come in. I want you to see the way. So, so our job is, is don't shut the door. Show the way. And, and there is a way. And Jesus actually came to show the way. So all we have to do is point to Jesus. Do you know what Jesus said in his life when he was talking about heaven? His disciples were like, Hey, how do we get there? I, I want to know.

0 (20m 28s):

And he said this, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. He was saying, he's the door. He's the way. Believe in him. He's saying, I'm the way. Jesus said, I'm the way to the Father in heaven. I'm the way into the kingdom of heaven. I'm the way to determine if you're good or not. I am the way Jesus said. He, he said elsewhere in another teaching in John chapter 10, verse nine, he said, I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved.

1 (21m 4s):

Jesus

0 (21m 4s):

Is the way. Jesus is the door. Jesus is the gate. It's clear as that it's not by doing good works. It's not by following more rules, being more religious, showing up and looking better. And none of that stuff is going to save you. It's Jesus. And he and he alone is the way. And our job is to show people that

1 (21m 23s):

It's

0 (21m 23s):



Never to shut the door.

1 (21m 25s):

It's

0 (21m 25s):

Just a point.

1 (21m 27s):

Jesus is the way.

0 (21m 28s):

You know, we talked about grace. I wanted to talk about it again this week. Grace is so important for us to understand because it means that God is giving us something we don't deserve. And that's how Jesus works. He saves us. He pulls us through the door. He's the one who saves us. And Ephesians chapter two verses eight nine, it says, for it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves. It's not in you. It's not by your good works, the good things you've done. It is a gift of God, not by works So that no one can boast. So none of us can say, look what I did. I made it through the door. I found the door. No you didn't. Jesus found you.

0 (22m 9s):

He saved you. He brought you through our job. Don't shut the door. Show

1 (22m 15s):

The way. Show the way

0 (22m 21s):

Some of you're like, well, Matt, does that mean I I can't tell people that there's sin or that there's hell. I didn't say that. There are times to talk about that there's right or wrong. 'cause there are decisions we make in our life that have consequences in this life. And the one to come and to talk about 'em is actually loving If. you do it in a kind way

1 (22m 37s):

To

0 (22m 38s):

Love someone and say, Hey, you're making bad decisions and it's gonna hurt you. I love you. Okay, So, we should say the truth. And I'm not saying that there isn't right belief and wrong belief. There are some beliefs in our world that If you believe in, we'll destroy you and and your life. But all the time we're not saying it to

condemn people, to judge people to say that you're out. We're always pointing the way. You're saying, I I I don't know the way I'm messed up. but I know who Jesus is and He's the

1 (23m 5s):

Way, he's

0 (23m 6s):

The truth. He's the life. And Jesus actually commands us to show the way this is what we're supposed to do. Don't shut the door. Those are the religious people that the bad people show the way in Acts one, eight, Jesus said one of the last things he said before he went up to heaven, he said, but the Holy Spirit will come on you. And he will give you power. The Holy Spirit will make your spirit strong. Then you will tell other people everywhere in the world about me. You'll do that in Jerusalem, in the city you live in, in Judea, your country that you live in. Samaria, the country next door and in places far away the ends of the earth. We just show the way. We're not saying we're better than other people, people, we have it all figured out.

0 (23m 47s):

'cause we don't, we take off the mask. That's step one. The second way, show the way. Second step And. we should always do this. And if some of you're thinking, well, Matt, that sounds kind of arrogant. No, it's not. I love what preacher DT Niles said. He said that Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread. Come see Jesus. He's the way he changed my life. He gave me new purpose. He loved me. And I want you to see who he is too. Don't shut the door. Show the way, show the way.

0 (24m 29s):

Now this is really important for us to understand. It's not our job to keep people out. It's not our time to keep people out. It's our job to just show people the way. And I can say this because when I read the Bible, there are some people in there. I'm like, that person's in. Seriously. You read about King David and this guy had committed adultery, slept with this woman. And then when he got her pregnant, when he knocked her up, he wanted to cover it up. So he had her husband whacked. This is what happened. Okay? And God says about David, he's a man after my own heart. What if I knew that guy today?

0 (25m 10s):

I'd be like, don't know if we should let him in. Right? But he's a man after all God's own heart. Or what about Paul? Paul who had a job literally to go from town to town hunting down Christians to have them arrested, beaten, and killed. When Stephen, the very first Christian who was killed was being killed. Paul, who was named Saul at the time, stood by and watched with approval. And then he became the leader of the early church and wrote half of our New Testament. Can you imagine, Stephen, when he gets up to heaven, you let him in. How, how did he get in? Like, what, what happened?

0 (25m 53s):

What about the man on the cross next to Jesus? Do you know that when Jesus got killed on a cross, there were two criminals, one on his right and one on his left, and they were being executed for their crimes? They admitted it. They're like, yeah, we did some bad stuff. They're getting killed. One of 'em starts taunting Jesus. Hey, if you're really the Savior, come down and save us. Come on making fun of Jesus as he's dying. Talk about evil. But the other criminal who's just as evil, had done just as much wrong deserving punishment by death. He says to Jesus, he says, remember me when you enter your kingdom. It was his profession of faith. At the last moment, he says something special about this dude, let me into your kingdom.

0 (26m 36s):

Do you know what Jesus said to him? He said, truly today you'll be with me in paradise. What? Who let him in? Pastor Alistair Beg had a Sermon about this guy, one of the greatest sermons, probably the last generation. And he talks about this, this man just imagining what it would be like for him to try to get into heaven. This criminal, when he finally breathed out his last on the cross next to Jesus, goes before the angel and the angel's like, okay, why should we let you in? The criminal's? Like,

1 (27m 11s):

Ugh,

0 (27m 13s):

Ugh. I don't know the angel's like, well, okay. Ha, have you been baptized? Have you been confirmed? How, how often did you go to church? Did you go to Sunday school? Did you volunteer your time? How much did you give? Have you been a tither? The guy's just eyes widely.

1 (27m 36s):

I

0 (27m 37s):

I I don't don't know about any of that. The angel's like, well, what about your doctrinal truth? Do you know about the doctrine of justification by faith alone?

1 (27m 46s):

He's like, what

0 (27m 47s):

Are you talking about? I don't know those words. The angel's like, well, why should we let you in? And the man just says,

1 (27m 56s):

The

0 (27m 57s):

The man on the middle cross said, I could come and that's enough. The man on the cross said, I could come. And if Jesus is the way, and he says, we can come, we can come. It's by him and him alone that we get entrance. It's not our job to shut the door, just simply to show the way

1 (28m 20s):

Jesus

0 (28m 21s):

Is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through him. Don't shut the door. Show the way. And that's the kind of church we need to be. We don't shun people, we don't look down our noses at those people because guess what? We're all messed up. Every single one of us in here, those online, you guys are messed up too. We can't be like, oh, I know what that person did. Yeah, well, God knows what you did. We're all sinners. We don't exclude people. We, we make sure people feel home and welcomed and loved here. That's the church we are building here.

0 (29m 1s):

And we've seen that here. I remember when one woman came who was raised Buddhist, and she came and she heard the gospel for their first time. And she's like, wow, I had never ever heard the story of Jesus' death before. And she was welcomed in our church and she kept coming back. She heard the story of the resurrection, the Next week. And she kept coming back and regularly and became a volunteer here. It doesn't matter whether you believe or not, whether you're good or not, whether you're in or not, that it's not for us. It's not the right time either. Don't shut the door. Show the way Or or about Lori Maybe. you got an email, If, you're on our email chain this week. A woman in our church, Lori Chesler, passed away a few weeks back and we're gonna have a little memorial for her this Thursday at 11 If, you knew, Lori, you should come.

0 (29m 48s):

And it's just gonna be a simple time. but I remember the first time Lori came to our church and she came in and, and And, you could tell she had gone through some hard stuff in her life. And she really had, she had a very difficult life. And she came in and said, Hey, I, I'm just coming in here because I live down the street. And I lost my license. Turns out she had had some substance issues, lost her license and the only place she could go was where she could walk to. So she came to our church. I talked with one of her cousins a couple weeks ago and, and just to find out more about Lori and the cousin was like, yeah, I remember the first time because she's like, where am I gonna go now that I can't drive? Where can I go to?

0 (30m 29s):

And this cousin was like, oh, just go to the church down the street. There's one right over there. And Lori

said, I can't, I'm Jewish. The cousin was like, God is God, who cares? Just go. And Lori came and do you know what happened? She was welcomed and loved. She always got a treat in the cafe. She always hung out. She would bring her dog sometimes before her dog died. And I prayed with her so many times and I know a lot of the other staff did as well. I'm sure the prayer team did that. We loved her. That she belonged here before she ever believed. And to be truthful, I don't know if she ever put her faith in Jesus Christ. I I just don't know personally. I never heard her give that profession. but I know she heard the gospel so many times.

0 (31m 10s):

She asked me to pray in Jesus' name. So, but it's my not my job to say whether she's in heaven or not. I, I don't know about anybody. But what we did, we didn't shut the door on on someone like Lori. We welcomed her And. we loved her. She was a part of our community. She was in a community group. And, we showed her the way. And that's what we're all supposed to do here. And just imagine a church like that, that's not religious, kicking people out, shutting the door in people's faces, but instead welcoming everyone. I don't care what, what your lifestyles, don. Don't care who you're living with that you shouldn't be. don. Don't care what you're doing. I don't care what substance you're using. Come on in. You belong here.

0 (31m 50s):

We don't shut the door on anyone. We show the way. So if you're here And, you are a follower of Jesus right now. I hope I was clear enough on what we're supposed to do. Don't shut the door show the way. But the showing the way isn't just verbally telling people, it's also with our life. And for some people what that means is you need to get baptized. Did you know that's the first thing that we're commanded to do? You believe you get baptized. It's our public declaration. It's publicly showing who we think the way is. So if you're here and you've never gone public with your faith through baptism, meaning you made the decision, not your parents, but you made the decision, we're gonna have a baptism Sunday coming up on April 28th.

0 (32m 34s):

I'm so excited about this baptism Sundays you the best you can go to rise Denver dot com slash baptism. We have a, a quick little form, fill that out and we'll talk with you even if you're a little unsure. I'm telling you, this is a step to show people that Jesus is the way. Others of you in here, maybe you're not sure where you are with Jesus. Maybe you've been relying on Religion or, or your parents' faith or or who knows what. But I'm here to tell you, Jesus is the way. Jesus loved you. He cared about you. He died on the cross to show you the way. And then he rose three days later to show that he knows what he's talking about. So believe in Jesus. And I'm gonna give you an opportunity today that just like that, that criminal on the cross next to Jesus, that you can make your profession of faith because those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

0 (33m 24s):

That's what the scriptures teach us. So, if you could bow your heads with me and close your eyes. I'm gonna

give a simple prayer that you can pray If, you wanna make a first time decision to follow Jesus. And if you're already a follower, Jesus, say this prayer out loud to give courage to somebody around you who needs to pray this for the first time. So please repeat after me. Dear God, I'm a sinner. I need a savior. Save me. Forgive me in faith. I declare Jesus' Lord, fill me with your spirit. Give me the gift of eternal life.

0 (34m 6s):

Help me to follow you and show others the way. Now with eyes closed, If, you said that prayer for the first time, it meant that if Jesus today is your Lord and Savior, we want to encourage you, celebrate with you, and give you a little book to encourage you with your next steps of faith. So, if you made that decision today for the first time, put your hand in the air on the count of 3, 1, 2, 3. Put your hand in the air and hold it up there. If, you made that decision today. And if you're online, you can go to rise Denver dot com slash follow and let us know, And, we would love to follow up as well. Lord God, we're coming to you. We don't pretend that we are, are the people who can determine who's in and out. We're all messed up. We're all sinners here.

0 (34m 46s):

We're all here because we need you the way, the truth and the life. And Lord God, help us to follow you and and follow in that way with our lives. And help us to be bold, to show others the way that we could follow you and help others follow you. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

3 (35m 10s):

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 wanna 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 dot com slash new. And if this message has impacted you at all, please go to rise Denver dot com slash give So that you can give back and help more people find out the message of Jesus Christ.