Let me just start off by saying this. If there is one thing that I know about myself as a human being, and I also know about you as a human being, is people don’t like to be rejected. Isn’t that true? We do not like the feeling of rejection that can come into our lives. I mean how many of you woke up this morning and thought, you know, dude, it would be so cool if I could just go and get rejected by some people today. That just sounds great, yes, more people rejecting me.

No, we don’t think that way. We want to be received. We want people to appreciate us. We want people to like us. We want people to enjoy us. We don’t like the feelings of rejection. But rejection happens in this world, doesn’t it? It happens often. And those of you that are on the extra Golden Retriever scale of your personality, extra sweet, really, really friendly, what ends up happening is you could end up living your entire life running people’s agendas, because you don’t want to confront them on anything. And so you will just sort of be paralyzed in your life because you don’t want to be rejected. And so other people can just walk all over you. What a life, huh?

So no, we don’t want that. We don’t want that at all. But rejection is part of our lives. And I have experienced it my own life and so have you. I can remember when Heather and I, early on when I was developing as a young preacher and I was probably twenty-four years old, and what happened was we went to this little country church. And I will never forget when this little lady came up to me, and she was not a sweet little older lady. She was a bit of a curmudgeon and she said, ‘You are in my seat.’ And I thought, wow! I didn’t say anything because I was speaking that day so I had to look real spiritual. Just kidding. But I wanted to say to her you have to be kidding. And I sat there and I thought this was amazing that this lady is telling me I need to move. So I did the right thing, I stood up and God graciously allowed me to move, and He protected me because I did feel very frustrated in that moment.

I went up to the front and little did she know that I was the guest speaker of the church that day. So I got up and I shared my message and when I was finished this little lady came up to me at the end and she said, ‘I am so sorry. I had no idea that you were the guest speaker.’ Now you talk about the ultimate rejection, imagine showing up at church and having someone tell you that you are in their seat. Hopefully you did not have someone come up to you this morning and say ‘That chair has my name on it.’ If that happened, let us know and we will kick them out of the church, right? No, we wouldn’t go that far, but what a horrible statement of rejection showing up at church and having someone tell you that you have their seat.

And so I felt like I needed to be frank when this happened at this little country church. I felt like a rebuke was quite proper in that moment but I said it in a loving but very firm way. And when that lady told me she was sorry I said to her, ‘Mam, I accept
your apology, but if I were a non-believer coming to this church for the first time, I would never, ever come back again.’ And I just sort of let her sit in that.

So we know what those feelings are, those feelings of rejection. Maybe you have experienced them. Maybe you were hoping to get a certain job, and somebody else got it instead of you. Maybe you experienced it when you found out that your spouse had an affair and you were just crushed. ‘How could this happen? How could my love be rejected in such a way?’ Maybe you experienced rejection when you asked somebody out for a date and they said no. I don’t know when or how you have experienced rejection, but I know we all experience it. You could have experienced it trying out for American Idol and heard Simon Cowell say, ‘It sounds like I am on a cruise ship.’

But rejection is an inevitable part of life. And we have to be willing to face it. We have to be willing to know how to deal with it in a way that really, genuinely honors, and glorifies, and magnifies God. Because He will give us grace for that place when we do feel those feelings of rejection surfacing in our lives.

Here is what you need to understand. If you go through life and you are not willing to be rejected, you will never be all that God wants you to be. I understand that the fear of rejection can be paralyzing. And we must ask ourselves what is behind the fear of rejection. And it is one word – insecurity. We are insecure as people, desperately insecure. And so we get paralyzed and we don’t do things we should do. We don’t share the gospel with people that need Christ because we fear rejection. We don’t confront people that we feel like we need to reach out to because we fear rejection and because we want to be liked. And what ends up happening in our lives is we can never be all that God wants us to be if we are going to live our lives fearing rejection.

So what we need to know is that rejection is an inevitable part of living. And it is really an inevitable part of Christian living. And so we have to know, and we have to understand that it is going to come our way, but we must ask are we willing to face it. That is the question I want to ask you this morning. Are you willing to face rejection for Jesus, because Jesus was willing to face rejection for us?

We know that rejection is throughout the Scriptures. It is a systemic issue. Jesus experienced rejection all over the map. We know that the Apostle Paul experienced rejection. Daniel got stuck in a lion’s den and experienced rejection. We know that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego experienced rejection when they were thrown into the furnace. Job experienced rejection from his friends in the midst of his despair. Joseph experienced rejection from his brothers. David experienced rejection from his brothers and from King Saul. Rejection is a Biblical thing. It is part of our humanity.

And so if you try to figure out a way to go through life where you are liked by everybody, where nobody will reject you, then guess what? You will stand before the
Lord someday and you will find out that you lived everyone else’s will except God’s. And you do not want to do that. God has a will for you and His will for you will sometimes be just a little bit intense to test us. He may try this test out to see who you are living for. Have you ever had a ‘who are you living for’ kind of test come along your way?

Jesus has just preached His sermon in Capernaum from the synagogue. And what happened was He was rejected. All of these people who were using Him were coming out, checking Him out, and then the crowds begin to dwindle because they began rejecting His message. But Jesus was so secure that He could look at those remaining and say, “Do you want to leave as well?” Remember that last week? That takes a certain sense of internal security. It means that He was living for God’s glory and not for man’s approval. And living for people’s approval will destroy your life.

So I would ask you to turn in your Bibles to John Chapter 7 and let’s see how Jesus faced rejection. The disciples are now dwindling, He has His core team still with Him, and He is going to move forward in this passage of Scripture. And there is going to be more rejection. And we know it was prevalent in His ministry. Jesus experienced it from false disciples, He experienced it from his disciples, He experienced it from the thieves on the cross – both thieves at one point from one of the account’s perspective and then later one of the thieves gets saved. Jesus experienced it from the Romans. He experienced it from the Jews and the Pharisees. He even experienced rejection on the cross from the Father. Remember He cried out, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani - My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus felt rejected in that moment.

If anybody ever knew rejection, it was our King, Jesus Christ. Jesus understood it and we are going to see that it is going to happen more. And we must become comfortable with the idea that we are going to experience it. Those of you that are college students here, you need to go through college standing out for Jesus. You need to be careful that you don’t worry about being rejected from everyone else. It is not about fitting in, it is about standing out. It is about standing out in our neighborhoods and not fitting in. It is about standing out in our jobs and not about fitting in.

And what we want people to get when they get around us is to get Jesus. And I will ask you that right here. When people get you, do they get Jesus or do they get something else? Because if we are going to stand for Jesus and we are going to live for Him, people will get more than us when they come in contact with our lives. They will get Jesus.

And today you are going to see Jesus in this passage which R.C. Sproul describes this way, “It was a bit of a conundrum for me. I really didn’t know what to do when I came to this passage. The first thirteen verses basically felt like a travelogue. You know
Jesus is thinking about going from here to there, and He goes from there to here, and how am I supposed to inspire my students in this passage.” Because whenever R.C. Sproul teaches students who are preachers how to preach he says, “Look for the drama in the passage.” And that is what you go looking for. Where is the drama? Because there’s always something to communicate in God’s word. And what he discovered was there was a lot of drama. And you are going to see some drama in today’s passage that I think could leave you a changed person.

Would you like to leave here today a changed person? Would you like to quit living the same old, same old kind life? Would you like to break some routines in your life? Would you like to go out into the world and get rejected? No, not really. But it might mean that you get a little more gutsy for God if you are going to be all that God has called you to be.

So turn with me to John Chapter 7 and we are going to look in the very first verse. And we read, “After this,” (after Jesus was done preaching in the synagogue in Capernaum and after the false disciples rejected him). “After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.” Now Jesus knew that there were two separate jurisdictions here. You have Judea and you have Galilee. He had been in Galilee for about the last year, but He knew that He would be on Jerusalem’s most wanted list when He headed to Judea. As He thought about going there He had to really be certain it was the Father’s timing for Him to go.

Now why did they want Jesus dead? We can find the answer back in Chapter 5 and verse 18 if you want to do a little bit of rewinding. Isn’t it fun to know we are kind of moving through this book and we can rewind and kind of go back and revisit things and we can see how the text plays into context here? In John Chapter 5 and verse 18 it says, “This is why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.” So after the healing at the pool of Bethsaida, they wanted Him dead because He healed this person on the Sabbath, and because He basically claimed to be one with God.

And they said because He was claiming equality with God, they wanted Him dead. And then Jesus went up on the ten most wanted list. So Jesus is wanted dead or alive, but He is definitely wanted. He is aware of that and so because there are two separate jurisdictions He could stay in Galilee and the people who wanted Him dead in Judea can’t come in and take Him at this time. But the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him.

Have you ever had a death wish on your life? Have you ever had people who you found out that wanted you dead in a literal sense? I have. It is not a good feeling. When
I was in high school my parents got a call from a teacher at the school and he told my parents there had been a rumor going around that got back to him that ‘Your son owes some money to some people, and if he doesn’t pay, he is going to pay for it with his life. They want him dead.’ So thankfully my parents believed in ‘bail outs’ and they gave me money and I was able to get out of that situation which could have been drastic to say the least. So they thought they better take the teacher’s advice and it would be a good idea to pay my debt in that moment.

Verse 2, “Now the Jews’ Feast of Booths was at hand.” Well what is the Feast of Booths? The Feast of Booths is one of seven different feasts the Bible talks about. It is also known as the Feast of Ingathering, the Feast of Tabernacles, as well as the Feast of Booths. These are all just different names for the same exact event that took place. And in the Jewish culture they had these different feasts where the community would come together for an opportunity to connect with each other, to offer sacrifices, to bring sacrifices to God, to think about God, and to remember Him. And the Feast of Tabernacles, or the Feast of Booths, or the Feast of Ingathering was a time at the end of the harvest where they would come together. And what would take place at this time is they would live in literal tabernacles or little booths that they would make. They were just temporary housing. And it was a time to commemorate and remember what they used to live like when they were in the wilderness in the tabernacle days. And so they would come together and they would remember God’s faithfulness.

If we stop and park for a moment and remember the Jewish culture and their feasts, we just miss some stuff sometimes, don’t we? I mean usually our most faithful Christian can get to church three times a month. And if you go to church three times a month and you are there about an hour, then you have about three hours of a spiritual thing going on a month. But then we sit in front of television sets ten, fifteen or twenty hours a week. We hang out with people that don’t talk about God. We struggle to pick up our Bibles. And then we wonder why we don’t glow for God. We wonder why God is not empowering our lives.

God had these specific feasts in place where the Jewish community would come together to get re-centered, to remember the promises of God, to be able to focus on rich heritage and community, and to reflect on God’s faithfulness to them. And we have to realize the importance of time with God, of really taking that time. And so if we don’t have these same feasts going on today, that means all the more we need to be figuring out how to quiet our lives for a Holy pause so to speak, to get time with God. If not our lives are going to lose that vibrancy, that freshness, that zeal.

So the Feast of Booths was at hand and that was down in Judea in Jerusalem. And Jesus has been in Galilee and so He is required to go there by Jewish law. The Jewish males were expected to go to the Feast of Booths, or the Feast of Tabernacles, or
the Feast of Ingathering. I repeat that because I want it to lock in in your mind so that you remember that those are synonymous terms. So Jewish males are supposed to be at these feasts. And Jesus is going to get there, but not according to the timing that we are going to see that His brothers want. Verse 3, “So His brothers said to Him, Leave here and go to Judea that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if He seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” What is happening here is His brothers are skeptical of Jesus. They are chiding Him a little bit in this moment. ‘Come on, Jesus, you claim to be able to do all this stuff. Go show yourself off. There is no sense hiding.’

It is a lot easier when your name is not on the death list to be able to say go ahead and go, right? I mean, let’s face it, we can all say, ‘Hey, head on down to Judea.’ But when you are the one that is wanted dead, you are going to think a little bit more. The brothers are provoking Jesus, they are nice brothers in this moment, right? ‘Go on, Jesus, go on down. Why hide out. Show yourself. Don’t you remember Sunday school, Jesus? Don’t you remember the song, This Little Light of Mine; I’m going to let it shine. You’re not going to hide it under a bushel, right? Why hide it under a bushel, Jesus, didn’t you make a claim that you’re the light of the world? Why are you hiding your light? Why are you hiding out? Come on, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.’

So we see this going on here where they are trying to get Jesus to leave here and go to Judea. They do all this to try to get Him worked up and to go get it checked out. And verse 5 it says, “For not even His brothers believed in Him.” And that was sort of the motive behind this challenge; this provoking that is taking place because they don’t believe in Him. They are like the false disciples that just took off and left. The only reason they are remaining is because they are brothers. But they don’t believe in Him.

Now I love my brother and all. We have the whole flesh and blood thing going on, DNA likeness, we both have the same parents. I know that we are bros, and I have to dig for him, and I am all for him, no problem. But the day that Tim wakes up and starts saying ‘I’m God,’ and pulling out the divine card on me, we will run into some problems here. I would be thinking psychiatrist, counseling. I know some of them, Tim, I can even refer you to one.

And so the brothers knew that Jesus was making some large claims. He believed Himself to be the Messiah. He believed that He was the Savior. And they struggled with that a little bit you could say. And Jesus realized that His brothers did not even believe in Him. And we know that according to Scripture Jesus made it obvious that the family had problems by Mark’s account, “When His family heard it, they went out to seize Jesus for they were saying He is out of His mind.” Jesus was out doing some ministry one day, the family heard it, and they thought, ‘Oh, not this again. Let’s go get our brother. We have to bail Him out. He is starting to slip. Things are not working the best for Him.
He is losing the sense of heritage. He is out of His mind.’ His brothers think He is nuts, that He is crazy.

Listen to Matthew Chapter 13 and verse 57, “A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household.” So Jesus was aware that He was going to be rejected. He is being rejected even by His own brothers. I said earlier that no one knows rejection more than Jesus. He has experienced it from the false disciples, He experienced it from the true disciples when they abandoned Him on the night He was betrayed, and He experienced it from the Father on the cross. Now He is even experiencing it from His own brothers.

And some of you struggle with that, there are some family tensions going on in the home. Mom and dad are upset with you. There are some issues with your siblings. There are struggles with the kids. There is a lot of rejection going on. Well, Jesus knew that He would experience it as well.

Now you have to step back and go now what is going on here, why are His brothers rejecting Him. I mean they grew up with Him. But His first miracle was not until the wedding at Cana, so He was already 30 years old before His first miracle happened. So when they grew up with Jesus, sure they saw Him as moral. He probably never got put in time out. Mary probably never said ‘That’s it, Jesus. I’m going to count to three.’ No, she knew better than that. No counting to three with Jesus, He is God. ‘I am going to do my best to raise my son who is God. That’s what I am going to do.’

But you have to understand that with Jesus in the home it would have been awkward. Because Jesus wouldn’t have been hanging out with his little brothers and sisters. And if his little brothers had gone to their mom and asked for more Cheez-its and she said, ‘No, you have had all your snacks for the day.’ And Jesus overheard it He would not have said, ‘Hey, come here. Do you want a snack? Poof. Fruit Roll ups.’ No, that wasn’t the way it worked. He wasn’t a little kid and all of them going on a family vacation off to Mt. Sinai. And then a rain storm broke out and Jesus didn’t say, ‘Don’t worry about it, I’m eight, but I’m great. I have this covered.’

No, that is not how it worked. Jesus started His miracles and it took the relationship He had with His brothers to a whole new level. And that is what was taking place as we looked at these Scriptures. So obviously Mary and Joseph were into doing their family devotionals. They knew what Deuteronomy said about teaching their children the Bible and making sure they were well equipped and well in the loop. They understood that very clearly. The children grew up having devotions. And I am sure there were many nights when the children would say, ‘Mom, dad, what are we studying tonight?’ And Mary might say, ‘Well, we are going to be studying Isaiah Chapter 53’
tonight.’ And the children might ask, ‘Well, what’s it about?’ And Mary didn’t say, ‘It’s about your brother.’

So here is what I want you to understand. Mary and Joseph certainly would have told them the story about the virgin birth. Mary would have certainly told her children about the time when she showed up to see Elizabeth and Elizabeth was carrying John and John leapt inside Elizabeth’s womb. This would have been known to the kids. But when I step back and I think about it, I go ‘What an example for all of us.’ Even Mary and Joseph, who raised Jesus, who were very virtuous, had non-believing children for a little while.

And what a challenge to all of us who are raising our kids to realize that sometimes our kids can just look at us and think it makes sense, but they are really not getting it. They are just going through the motions. And someday their real motives will be revealed just like Jesus’ brothers were.

Let’s look at verse 6 and see how Jesus is going to respond now to their challenge, because they challenged Him to go, to get out in the public, to let His light shine. Jesus said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.” In other words, ‘Look, my time has not yet come; I’m looking to the Father for my next step. I listen to my Father for my next direction. But you are not doing it, so your time is always here because you are not under submission to God anyway, but I am.’

Verses 7 and 8, “The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the feast; I am not going up to the feast, for my time has not yet fully come.” So it says in verse 8, “You go up to the feast, I am not going up.” Some manuscripts say, “I am not yet going up to the feast.” And we know that He does go to the feast as we will see in a little bit.

And He says at the end of verse 8, “My time has not yet fully come.” It has not fully come; it is not the perfect time to go yet. And we see in verse 6 that He says, “My time is not yet come.” There are a couple of ways to deal with this phrase because there are certain contexts to the Bible where He talks about His hour has not yet come and He is referring to the hour when He needs to die.

D. A. Carson, who has written the finest commentary on John, doesn’t believe that is what is necessarily taking place at this moment. It is just that Jesus has not been directed by the Father to go at this time. But the contrast to His brothers is He is telling them it is their time now, but it was not His. They were not under the submission of the Father and He was. He gets His steps from God when He has to do things. And this idea of timing in the Bible is really interesting. The Bible says, “When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son.” It was no accident that Jesus was born when He was born. He was born when He was because of certain timing, as even back in Daniel there
were prophesies that needed to be fulfilled to meet certain timelines. And so God is providentially working through His sovereignty to make sure that everything is fulfilled.

And so, yes, in a larger sense Jesus’ time to die had certainly not come yet, but when He was going to go He knew that He was on the death list, and that soon He was going to die. So He needed to wait, He needed to sit still. And He shares why others rejected Him. We know His brothers are struggling with unbelief. But then we see in verse 7 He says, “The world cannot hate you, but it hates me.” Why? “Because I testify about it that its works are evil.”

Jesus told people that they were sinners. Jesus told people that they needed to recognize that they were wicked and evil. And I don’t know when the last time you tried telling someone they were wicked, evil or sinful, but it doesn’t always go over the best way. And those who can handle that are those who realize they are sinners, and those who are not trying to hang on to a sin. Those that don’t want to be told they are wicked, evil or sinners are those who don’t believe they really are, or they are trying to hang on to a certain sin and they don’t want you confronting them on that.

Jesus didn’t come into the world and say, ‘You know what, guys, you need to understand your main problem is you have a chemical imbalance.’ I’m not saying there is no such thing as chemical imbalances. But Jesus didn’t come into the world and say, ‘Your main problem is the environment that you grew up in, so poor you.’ Jesus didn’t come on the scene and say, ‘Your main problem is you have a self-esteem issue. You don’t think highly enough of yourself.’

Folks, we don’t struggle with self-esteem, we struggle with Christ-esteem. We struggle with esteeming God, with esteeming who He is. You may think well, what about those people who take their lives. They are not struggling with self-esteem, they are not thinking too highly of themselves. It is not a self-esteem issue. We struggle in this world because we are sinners. We struggle because we go to the wrong things for escape. We turn to drugs, we turn to alcohol, and we give up on this world because we believe our life should be better. We think we deserve better than this. And God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world and He challenges us on the level of our depravities, on the level of our sin. And we need to recognize what we are.

Now here is what is great about Jesus. He totally pointed out the problem. And He was the solution. People were rejecting Him because He was telling the world that they were evil, but He was also saying that He had come to die to be the Savior, to be the Messiah. And so Jesus came into this world to fix us, to help us. But we rejected Him. And he experienced ultimate rejection in His death as we know from Scripture. And so Jesus said He had testified about the world that it is evil and they don’t like Him.
So He tells them to go ahead, to go up to the feast. Verse 9 He says, “*After saying this, He remained in Galilee.*” Verse 10, “*But after His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He also went up.*” Wait a second, Jesus, what is the deal here? He said He wasn’t going to go, and now He is. Why? Was He contradicting Himself? I don’t believe He is. He just hadn’t received the word yet. Jesus was directed by His Father. Every moment was a submitted moment. And what we desperately need to learn from Jesus is how to make our plans counting on God to direct us. Jesus wasn’t like some who say, ‘Tomorrow we are going to go here, and the next day we are going to go there. And we are going to make plans about this and make plans about that.’ Jesus didn’t fill out His annual calendar without the Father in mind. He was on God’s timetable.

And so often we make up our plans to do this, and we are going to do that, and we are going to go here, and we are going to go there without taking God into consideration. We just think that time is ours, our gifts are ours, and our finances are ours. But God wired us to be submissive, to how we utilize our lives. And Jesus wanted to make sure that He had the word from His Father because He knew when He went it would be death. So that would be a lot bigger than going to Gatlinburg for a few days, right? This was serious stuff.

So Jesus gets the word, but not only that but in the second half of verse 10 we get some information, some wisdom that can also help us in understanding why He said He wouldn’t go but then He went. “*But after His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He also went up, not publicly, but in private.*” He went in private. He didn’t get the word to go yet because He wasn’t supposed to go with His brothers. His brothers were probably saying, ‘*Come on Jesus, like the old times when we were kids and we went in a caravan with mom and dad and we went to the feasts together. Let’s be like old times.*’ But that’s not how it worked. Jesus at this moment knew that His brothers were trying to get Him to do some stuff that He wasn’t ready to do. And so He felt it best to go in private. So He went on His own, and He didn’t go with His brothers.

We know that people were anticipating Him. Look at verse 11, “*The Jews were looking for Him at the feast and saying, Where is He? And there was much muttering about Him among the people. While some said, He is a good man, others said, No, He is leading the people astray. Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of Him.*” No one spoke openly of Him. And why didn’t people speak openly of Him? Because they feared rejection. And the people were divided over Jesus. Some said over here that He was a good man. Others over here said He was insane, He was dividing things up, and He is confusing people. And so Jesus knew what He was going into so He went in at first privately. You are going to see in the upcoming weeks that He shows Himself publicly and you will see what that causes when we get there.
As we step back from this passage, I want to answer the question of how can you face rejection. We see that Jesus was rejected, but how can we face it? I think the first thing that I would say is that if we are going to face rejection we will do so by submitting ourselves to the sovereignty of God in our lives. We need to submit ourselves to the sovereignty of God in our lives. Jesus was so submissive to His Father. He didn’t just make His plans and do what He wanted; He really waited on God’s timing before He did things. And I think when it comes to our life we have to have sort of that trust in God because when we are trusting in God’s sovereignty to lead us, when we understand who it is and that He has made us, when we understand what His calling is in our life, we will be better prepared to face rejection.

Another idea that I would want to bring out in this moment is this: We should rejoice when we are rejected for righteousness sake. We should rejoice when we are rejected for righteousness sake. In Matthew Chapter 5 and verse 11 Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are those who are persecuted and when things are falsely said against them because of me.” And God offers us this blessing when we are persecuted for the sake of the Kingdom. And when you really start living for God in a radical sold out way, people are going to question you. They are going to ridicule you when you start sharing the gospel as we ought. When you start telling your friends how God changed your life, when you tell them you give this much away to God’s Kingdom of your finances, or you go on fasts this often, or you’re going on a mission trip, they are going to ridicule you. When you think you might even become a missionary; people are going to ridicule that. When you confront somebody who is walking outside of God’s will, they are going to struggle with that. People rarely see that they have issues.

I have found that very seldom in all of the times I have had to confront people in my pastorate do people just go, ‘That’s exactly right, you’ve noticed something in my life and I just want to admit it that I am wrong.’ Most people want to defend themselves instead. I probably could count on one hand when I purposely had to go and confront someone where they would say, ‘You nailed me.’ No, most people just want to defend themselves. They just see what is wrong with everybody else.

But Jesus says you are blessed when you are persecuted and when things are falsely said against you because of Him. And God is going to do that, He is going to change your life. Some of you who read me on Facebook know that I was asked this past week basically the question of what is the evidence of a true Christian. I said you can kind of sort of tell a true Christian by this, because they will be people who will be changed in such a way that they will love the things they used to hate and they will hate the things they used to love. That they will love the things they used to hate and hate the things they used to love. And God changes us in that kind of a way. And when we start
loving things we used to hate that is when the people around you wonder what is going on, what is happening here. And they start giving you a hard time.

And maybe you have experienced that. It is okay. Jesus says there is a blessing for that. And Satan wants to do everything he can to quiet you from the gospel. There is no greater way you are going to feel rejection in your life than when you start sharing the gospel with people. Why do you think that is so hard for us? Satan has worked very hard to silence the church. And the church has gotten comfortable being silent. And you know what you call that? We are rejecting God when we stay silent. We are rejecting giving people the opportunity to hear the gospel when we stay silent.

And what we do a lot of times in our lives is we tend to think well, you know, it is a little bit radical, I’m not sure I really want to experience that kind of rejection so I will just share the faith if I really get an opportunity. If someone just sees sort of this Moses kind of light on me and they ask me what’s different about me, then I might share it. And I meet people all the time who kind of think like I have this nine to five window each week that I don’t have to share the gospel. They literally think the government says you are not allowed to talk about Jesus in the workplace. Or my boss says you can’t talk about Jesus in the workplace. ‘Oh great, I have a nine to five mission free window.’

No way! We are to be “wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove” and we are to be strategic in the way we do things, but God has never given us a window. Imagine that for Peter and John in Acts Chapter 4. They tried to silence them. They threw them in prison, and then they were let out. And they were asked what they were doing and they said, “We can’t help talking about the things that we have seen and heard.” In other words, we will follow the government as long as the government follows God. When the government quits following God, we will keep following God. And some of you business men need to quit being cowards about evangelism in your workplace because there are people there that need Jesus.

You may be thinking man, that’s so strong. Is it? Do you really want to challenge that, look at the book of Acts. Jesus called us to take up a cross and follow Him. And we need to get the gospel out there. We need to share Jesus. Be strategic, don’t go to work tomorrow and say on the intercom: ‘Attention, I was at church yesterday and my pastor said stand up on a bench and preach Christ. So here it goes. Are you ready? Buckle up.’ But I will tell you something. This is going to be a bold statement. Maybe if more people lost their jobs for the sake of the gospel, maybe the world would begin to believe that these people really believe what they are sharing. Right?

This is tough stuff right here, isn’t it? I can feel you out there just kind of going ouch. I am not saying to go get fired. But I am saying what are you going to do when
you are out there and God says ‘speak.’ And remember He says, “Blessed are those who are persecuted.” Blessed are you. It is like He holds a blessing out. It honors God when we are willing to face rejection for the sake of righteousness. Now only that, Jesus warned us that He was rejected, and if Jesus was rejected how much more should we expect to be, knowing that we are not God? Listen to this verse right here. “And this is the judgment though light has come into the world and people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.”

And listen to this next verse. “If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” Jesus warns us here. And so one way we face rejection is knowing Jesus is really clear that it is just a part of being a Christian, that rejection is going to come our way. People won’t always agree with you. And if we let everybody else package our Christianity for us, instead of living the Christian gospel that God has called us to live, we will never feel fulfilled.

So Jesus offers us a gospel where we can face rejection. And it is not always fun, is it? But did you know the Apostle Paul wanted to face it? And I want to become like him even in his death. I ultimately want on my tombstone, ‘He was a reject for Christ.’ Imagine that. It is so foreign to us in a culture that tells us the world is all about us. In a culture that says it is the American dream. The American dream runs contrary to God’s dream. The American dream is all about you and the Christian’s dream is all about God. The American dream is all about acquiring and God’s dream is all about letting go. The American dream is all about taking and the Christian’s dream is all about sacrifice. I don’t buy the American dream. I don’t want the American dream. I want God’s dream. If we chase America’s dream we will stand before God someday and we will have lived the wrong dream.

Now I am not saying that God doesn’t bless our lives. Don’t misunderstand me. But please understand we get our life from the gospel. That is where we get it. And the gospel is about being rejects for Christ. The gospel is about telling a world about His love. The gospel is about sacrifice. The gospel is about knowing God and getting our identity in the cross. The gospel is about recognizing that we are totally corrupt to the core and we desperately need God’s grace to live day in and day out. The gospel is about shared community. The gospel is about taking God’s love to the world around us. And oftentimes the American dream and our pursuit of it have created a church with a weak spine.

And finally I would say this. When it comes to this idea of rejection, we can either reject Jesus or we can receive Him. We need to know that Jesus was rejected for you so that you wouldn’t have to be rejected by Him. Jesus was rejected for us so that
we could receive Him. And there is one of two choices. You either right now are receiving Him or you are rejecting Him. And the gospel is an invitation to receive forgiveness of our sins, to have our guilt taken away, to have Heaven before us, to shine for Jesus, to live with a joy unspeakable as the Scripture talks about. That is what the gospel offers.

Jesus’ brothers came around. They did come around, thank God. They started off rejecting Him, but when Jesus eventually rose from the dead they saw in His life something different. They saw a glorified brother. James was Jesus’ half-brother and he would go on to write the book of James. He also became the leader of the Jerusalem church. He believed. And they believed.

And so I would ask you right now, what are you going to do with Jesus this morning? Are you willing to be a reject for Christ? How are you going to do it? You are going to have to find your security in God. You are going to have to trust in God’s sovereignty working in your life. You have to pursue God’s dream, the gospel dream. And you have to compare all this stuff that you learn about the American dream next to the gospel. We have just been raised in this system and we have just bought into it, hook, line and sinker.

The gospel is a call to deny yourself and to live for God. Will you make much of God with your life by responding and receiving the fact that He died on a cross for our sins and three days later arose from the grave? And if we will admit we are sinful, if we will call out to Him to forgive us, we can experience it. Will you do that? Let’s pray.

Lord, we thank you so much for the gospel. Jesus, you were rejected in a way that most of us could never even understand, and truthfully no one will ever understand the full depth of that. But you came to show us a better life. Help us to realize that we find life as you said when we lose it. The American dream says that you will find life when you find yourself. But we find life as Christians when we find God, when we know you. That is when we gain it. You said if you want to find your life, you must lose it. In other words lose all the things that you think life is all about and come discover a new kind of life, a life that you call the abundant life. You said you came that we might have life abundantly.

If you are here today and you want to give your life to Jesus Christ, the Bible says “That whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Have you called on the name of the Lord? Have you told the Lord that you know that you are sinful, I know you died for me, I have been rejecting you my entire life, but I am not going to do it any longer. I am going to surrender my life to you, Jesus. I am going to believe that you can offer me a better dream than the American dream. One that is fulfilling because I am forgiven, and I have no more guilt, and my sins have been taken away.
Would you just join me by praying in the quietness of your heart by just saying this: Jesus, I want you to be my Savior. I call on you. Forgive me for my sins. Cleanse me and help me to repent. And thank you for dying for me. Thank you for being a reject for me. Thank you for being rejected on my behalf. I receive you, even if it means being rejected. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.