

The Final Word

Five Days of Giving Jesus the Throne

Church, on Sunday we stood on Mount Carmel and heard Elijah ask a whole nation a question. How much longer will you hobble between two opinions? They had not walked away from God. They had just made room for something else too.

This week, let that question get personal. Bring the two sentences you wrote down on Sunday. If you did not write them, write them now.

- The thing that has been getting the final word in my life is_____.
- My next yes is_____.

Carry them with you through these five days and let the Word of God press on them.

Read slowly. Answer honestly. Take your next yes.

If Jesus is King, he gets the final word.

Pastor Daniel

DAY 1

Lord, Lord

READ SLOWLY

Luke 6:46 through 49 and John 14:6 through 15

Kim Philby really did love his friends at MI6. That is what makes his story so unsettling. The affection was real. It just was not in charge. When his loyalties collided, the other side overruled it.

Most of us who follow Jesus do not have an affection problem. We love him. We are grateful for the cross. We sing with our whole heart on Sunday. The question Sunday raised is not whether Jesus has our affection. It is whether he has our authority.

Jesus asks it himself. Why do you keep calling me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say? In that culture, Lord was not a word for worship songs. It was what you called the person you answered to. Jesus is saying, Do not give me the title and keep the throne.

Then he tells the story of two builders. Both heard his words. Both built a house. On a sunny day you could not tell them apart. The difference was what they did with what they heard. The storm did not create the difference. It revealed it.

In John 14 Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. He is not one way among many. He is not one voice among many. And if that is true about how we get to the Father, it is true about how we live once we belong to him. Jesus does not take a seat on the advisory board of your life. He is the King or he is not.

A few verses later he says, If you love me, obey my commands. Love and obedience are not two different tracks. Obedience is what love looks like when it collides with what I want.

Those collisions are usually small. The thing you were about to say to your spouse. The extra you were going to keep. The person you have decided not to forgive. The thing on your screen at night. Whatever wins those moments is what is actually leading you.

Jesus does not want a vote. He wants the throne.

ASK YOURSELF

- Where does Jesus have my affection but not my authority?
- What collided with his voice this week, and what won?
- What have I heard him say that I have not yet put into practice?
- If a storm hit tomorrow, what would it reveal about my foundation?

YOUR NEXT STEP

For the next twenty four hours, keep a collision log in your mind or in your phone. Every time what Jesus says runs into what you want, write one line. What did he say? What did I want? What won? Do not fix it yet. Just be honest about who keeps getting the final word.

PRAY

Jesus, you are the way, the truth, and the life. I have called you Lord. Show me where I have kept the right to overrule you. I do not want to give you my songs and keep my decisions. Teach me to hear your words and do them. Amen.

DAY 2

No More Limping

READ SLOWLY

1 Kings 18:21 and Hebrews 12:1 through 2 and 12 through 13

Elijah's word for the people was hobbling. Limping. They were trying to walk with God and Baal at the same time, and it had crippled them.

Limping is exhausting because you pay the price of both roads. You have enough of Jesus to feel convicted, and enough compromise to have no peace. You carry the weight of following him without the freedom of following him. Then you wonder why your faith feels so heavy.

Most of us would never say no to God. We say not yet. I will deal with that habit after this season. I will forgive them when they apologize. I will be generous when things settle down. But not yet is not neutral. It leaves whatever is already ruling us on the throne.

Hebrews 12 tells us to throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. You cannot run a race with your feet tangled up. Then it fixes our eyes in the right place. On Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. He endured the cross. He did not limp toward it. He set his face and went.

Then the writer gets very practical. Strengthen your weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that what is lame will not be put out of joint, but healed.

Read that again. The limp can heal. A divided heart does not have to be a life sentence. But healing comes when you stop walking in two directions. You cannot level the path while you keep one foot on the other road.

Maybe for you that means deleting the app. Ending the conversation that keeps pulling you back. Making the call to the counselor. Telling your small group what is really going on. That is not extreme. That is what it looks like to make a level path.

The limp can heal, but not while you keep walking in two directions.

ASK YOURSELF

- Where have I been saying not yet to Jesus?
- What is the price I am paying for keeping one foot on the other road?
- What hinders me or keeps entangling me?
- What would making a level path look like this week?

YOUR NEXT STEP

Finish this sentence in writing. Jesus, I have been saying not yet about _____. Then write one concrete thing that would level the path. Something you can do in the next forty eight hours. Do it before the week gets away from you.

PRAY

Jesus, I am tired of limping. I have tried to follow you and keep my options open, and it has worn me out. Fix my eyes on you. Give me courage to throw off what keeps tangling me up. Heal what is lame in me. Amen.

DAY 3

You Become What You Behold

READ SLOWLY

Psalm 115:4 through 8 and 2 Corinthians 3:16 through 18

On Mount Carmel the prophets of Baal danced, shouted, and cut themselves from morning until evening. There was no sound, no reply, no response. False gods always ask for more. And they never answer.

Psalm 115 describes idols with mouths that cannot speak, eyes that cannot see, and ears that cannot hear. Then it says something sobering. Those who make them will become like them.

Worship always shapes the worshiper. If approval is my god, I slowly lose my voice. I say whatever the room needs me to say. If comfort is my god, I lose my eyes. I stop seeing the people God has put in front of me. If control is my god, I lose my ears. I cannot hear anything that does not go my way.

Here is the good news Paul gives us. The same principle works in the other direction. In 2 Corinthians 3 he says that when anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. And all of us, with unveiled faces, are looking at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into his image.

You become like what you behold. That is why the question of who gets the final word is never just about one decision. It is about who you are becoming. Every time you give Jesus the throne, you are being shaped into the likeness of the One who gave himself for you.

So pay attention to what you look at most. What do you reach for first in the morning? What fills the quiet minutes of your day? What do you think about when you are alone? Those are not small questions. They are forming you.

This is not about trying harder to be like Jesus. It is about spending more time looking at him. Read the Gospels. Watch how he treats people. Listen to how he talks to his Father. The Spirit does the transforming. Our part is to keep our faces turned toward him.

You become like what you behold.

ASK YOURSELF

- What am I looking at most right now?
- Which of these has been shaping me most, approval, comfort, or control?
- What has it been making me into?
- What would it look like to spend more time beholding Jesus?

YOUR NEXT STEP

Tomorrow morning, before you touch your phone, read one chapter of a Gospel. Mark is a good place to start. As you read, ask one question. What does this show me about Jesus? Write down one thing you see. Do this every morning for the rest of the week.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, I have given my attention to things that cannot speak, see, or hear, and they have been shaping me. Turn my face toward you. Let me see your glory. Holy Spirit, make me more like Jesus. Amen.

Come Near

READ SLOWLY

1 Kings 18:30 through 32 and James 4:6 through 10

After a full day of shouting at a god who never answered, Elijah turns to the crowd. These are the people who stood silent when he asked them to choose. His first words are not a lecture. Come to me.

Then he repairs the altar of the Lord that had been torn down. He did not build something new. He rebuilt what used to be there. There was a time when that altar was a place people met with God. They had let it fall apart.

Some of us keep asking God for something new when he is asking us to return to what we already know. Jesus told the church in Ephesus they had abandoned the love they had at first. His instructions were simple. Remember where you have fallen from. Turn around. Do the things you did at first.

Elijah builds with twelve stones, one for each tribe. That nation had been split in two for generations. But God had not forgotten who they were. They still belonged to him. So do you.

James says it plainly. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. But read the verses around it. Wash your hands. Purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided. Let there be tears for what you have done. Coming near is not casual. It means taking our sin as seriously as God does.

Do not miss what comes right before that, though. He gives us more grace. The call to repent comes from a God who is already moving toward you. You are not crawling back to someone who is waiting to punish you. You are coming home to a Father who has been calling your name.

And remember the water. Elijah soaked that altar three times. Rebuilding the altar did not earn the fire. Your repentance does not earn God's love either. Jesus already paid for that. Repentance is simply saying, God, this is broken. I abandoned it. I am bringing it back to you.

You do not need something new. You need to come back.

ASK YOURSELF

- What altar in my life has been torn down?
- What did I do at first, when my love for Jesus was fresh, that I have stopped doing?
- What do I need to take more seriously than I have been?
- Do I really believe God is moving toward me?

YOUR NEXT STEP

Name one stone you will set back in place this week. Maybe it is time in the Word, worship, generosity, your small group, or honest prayer. Put it on your calendar. Then read James 5:16 and tell one trusted believer what you are coming back from. Ask them to pray for you.

PRAY

Father, I let the altar fall apart. I did not mean to drift, but I did. I am sorry. Thank you for calling me near instead of sending me away. I am bringing back what I abandoned. I am coming home. Amen.

Your Next Yes

READ SLOWLY

Luke 22:39 through 44 and Romans 12:1 through 2

Before the fire falls, Elijah prays one simple sentence. I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. The fire is the dramatic part. Underneath it is the same quiet obedience we saw at the brook. Elijah just kept doing what God told him to do.

The night before the cross, Jesus kneels in a garden. Luke tells us he was in such anguish that his sweat fell like drops of blood. He felt the full weight of what was coming. Then he prayed, Not my will, but yours be done.

Don't miss that. An undivided heart is not a heart that never feels the pull. Jesus felt it more than any of us ever will. An undivided heart is one that lets the Father have the final word while it still feels the pull.

On Mount Carmel, the prophets of Baal bled for a god who could never answer them. At the cross, Jesus bled for people who refused to answer God. False gods consume their worshipers. Jesus gave himself for us.

That is why Paul says what he says in Romans 12. In view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice. We do not cut ourselves to get God's attention. Jesus was the sacrifice. Our response is to put our whole lives on the altar, every day, because of what he already did.

Last Sunday you heard about a dad whose next yes was a phone call to his son. It went to voicemail. He left a message anyway. He sensed God asking him to call again the next week. That is audacious faith. Not fire from heaven. A phone call. And then another one.

Your next yes probably will not look impressive. It might be a hard conversation, an apology, a budget, a counselor, a boundary, or a text that says, Can we talk? It might feel small. Do it anyway. Then do it again next week.

Audacious faith is a yes you keep saying when nobody is clapping.

ASK YOURSELF

- What has been getting the final word in my life?
- What is the next yes Jesus has made clear?
- What outcome am I afraid of if I obey?
- What would it look like to say that yes again next week?

YOUR NEXT STEP

Finish two sentences in writing. The thing that has been getting the final word in my life is _____. My next yes is _____. Tell one trusted person and ask them to check on you. Then set a reminder in your phone for one week from today that says, Say yes again.

PRAY

Jesus, I have kept you close enough to help me but not close enough to lead me. I am coming near. You gave yourself for me. I give myself back to you. Here is my next yes. You get the final word. Amen.