



## Heaven on Earth (Part 9) – An Inadequate Faith

Matt Chandler – October 14, 2018

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Well, good morning. It's good to see you. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in John 2. Every once in a while, I can, as a living illustration, bring your attention to something that can help us maybe be really grateful for the grace of God here at The Village Church.

If you pay attention to the propaganda about the church of Jesus Christ, specifically in the West, you'll hear a lot of things about how it's dying or it's aging out. Although I think those numbers are legitimate in some ways, our worship team this morning has a median age of 25, and five of the eight were actually singles. That's a pretty cool thing in an environment which the church seems to be losing young people that the majority of people that are this stage today are in their 20s.

So now I am skewing that number terribly as the old man up here, but I was encouraged as I watched this group lead worship to just go, "Oh my gosh...24, 23, 22. Charlie just turned, I think, 26 today. Most aren't married, which apparently means you don't have to wait to get married to be profoundly used by God. That sounds crazy, right? There's much to rejoice in and celebrate about God's good graces on our church. You don't have to. You can just awkwardly make this silent, but that doesn't faze me.

I want to warn you right out of the gate that the text today has some weight to it. If you've been here a while, I tend to lean into that weight and let it be what it is, but I don't want to do that without letting you know this is a hard text. It's a text that can discombobulate us, yet I think it's a text that's necessary for us to see rightly the glory of God in our salvation.

When I became the pastor of The Village Church...which will be 16 years ago now, which is hard to believe...there were two books that I read that significantly started to shape how I was watching the gospel play out here at TVC, which is in the buckle of the Bible Belt, if you will. Both books were by the same author, Christian Smith, who's a sociologist at Notre Dame.

He wrote two books that were based on one of the largest research initiatives trying to pin down the spirituality of young people. The first book that came out was called *Soul Searching*. It followed this group of teenagers around for five or six years trying to pin down where they landed on religion and faith and spirituality. The second book was called *Souls in Transition*, which then looked at that same group of teenagers as they became what is called an *emerging adult*, which is now 18 to 28.

The research in that was profound, and Christian Smith argued that there was a new way of thinking about Jesus, thinking about the Bible, and thinking about the gospel that was different than how it had been considered for the previous 2,000 years. He actually went on to name it. He named what many of us have embraced as Christianity, not as biblical Christianity but actually what he called *Christian Moralistic Therapeutic Deism*.

He said, really, the idea that, "Christ is my King. I will surrender everything I have to him, and he will be enough regardless of life's circumstances," has been driven out and been replaced instead by a belief system that has Jesus's name on it (so, Christian), but the intent and purpose behind it is therapeutic. "You want to feel good about yourself. You're a great person. The ails and difficulties of your life have to do with people doing bad things. You're amazing." That's therapeutic, but *moralistic* is like, "You'd better behave yourself." Why? Because there's a God.

That had replaced the idea of the gospel, as the Scriptures have revealed it and as the church has understood it, for two millennia. The way you see this play out most frequently is around the ideas of felt needs as opposed to ultimate needs. God cares about felt needs. I never want to talk about felt needs as though he does not care about them.

So if you talk about felt needs, I think the two broadest categories of felt needs would be money and relationships. Those are where our felt needs actually play out. Relationship might be a significant other or a spouse. Relationship could be our friends. Relationship could be our children. Money could be everything from our jobs to our careers to our debt load to our aspirations of ownership. All of those things are felt needs.

The church has, by and large, left behind the gospel message of old, and it's honed in on felt needs and tried to provide therapeutic answers to felt needs rather than getting *under* the felt needs at what the actual problem is. If our message is, "Your marriage can be amazing," but we don't get

underneath why your marriage might not be or that maybe marriage is difficult but Jesus will be with you in that difficult marriage... If we can't get to that, then we get all jammed up.

When the church focuses all its energy on felt needs rather than the gospel of Jesus Christ, she gets thin and weak and her joy is sapped because she's trying to use God, not love him. We're trying to use God to get what we actually want, not worshiping Jesus for who he is. I thought JT did such a great job last week talking about this idea about spiritual consumerism, and I thought he did especially a great job since he didn't even find out he was preaching until Thursday at about 3:00.

I got sick last week. It has happened 3 times in my 16 years here. I called JT, and I said, "Look over Jesus clearing the temple. I'm probably not going to make it. I might, but just read and jot down some notes. We'll see what happens. By 5:00 that day, or 7:00 his time, I was like, "You're up. I'm out." So considering the fact he did not have all week to study, but he had about 10 hours to study, I thought he did a tremendous job.

*Felt needs are good gifts of God's grace.* They just make terrible gods. The lie you and I tend to believe is that if I could right all my relationships and if I could with my money (hear under money: career, stuff, aspirations. All of that.)... If I could get all of that where I want it to be, then the internal angst I feel will give way to a full life of joy and fulfillment.

That's a great idea if it wasn't complete and utter hogwash. Let me quote David Powlison. He dials into this, and it might expose that we've actually started believing some of this too. This is why I picked this quote in particular. This is David Powlison addressing this Moralistic Therapeutic Deism that has Jesus's name on it.

"In this new gospel, the great "evils" to be redressed do not call for any fundamental change of direction in the human heart. Instead, the problem lies in my sense of rejection from others; in my corrosive experience of life's vanity; in my nervous sense of self-condemnation and diffidence; in the imminent threat of boredom if my music is turned off; in my fussy complaints when a long, hard road lies ahead.

These are today's significant felt needs that the gospel is bent to serve. Jesus and the church exist to make you feel loved, significant, validated, entertained, and charged up. This gospel ameliorates distressing symptoms. It makes you feel better. The logic of this therapeutic gospel is a Jesus-for-Me who meets individual desires and assuages psychic aches."

So maybe you read that and you're like, "Yes, please. That sounds awesome." In reality it, on the surface, does sound awesome. I read that. I want that. I want my angst to be relieved. I want that fear of boredom, that relentless wondering if I am enough to vanish. This doesn't sound bad other than the fact that it cannot deliver upon its promises. Let's look at the text for today. Just a couple of verses, but they're disturbing verses. Verse 23:

**"Now when [Jesus] was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man."**

Now, here's why I'm saying this text is difficult. This text just said there were men and women who believed in Jesus, but Jesus, in turn, did not entrust himself to them. That word *entrust* is the same word we read in regard to belief. So the text literally says these men and women believed in Jesus when they saw the signs, but Jesus, because he knew everything, in turn, did not believe in them. "

There is a kind of belief that Jesus does not accept as saving belief. It's awful. It's discombobulating. It's scary. There's a kind of belief that Jesus does not accept as belief. So he unpacks what that is in the text. Thank God. We're not just all like, "Oh my gosh. Is my belief valid? Am I in? Am I beloved? Am I...?"

You can see it right out of the gate. Let's look at this. **"Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the..."** What? **"...the signs that he was doing."** This is a theme in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus does a miracle. He does a sign. He provides for felt needs. He creates food out of nothing for everyone to eat. He heals diseases. He restructures bad relationships. He's always meeting these felt needs and, in turn, rather than the people worshipping who the sign was pointing to they, instead, just loved the sign.

One of the things that's unique about the gospel of John is it never uses the word *miracle*. It always uses the word *sign*. Why? Because a sign points to something other than itself. The point isn't the sign at all. The sign is meant to point at something. *The kind of belief that is not saving belief is when we believe that we can make God our errand boy to get us what we really want rather than to be our Lord and Savior.*

That's what's happening in this text. They loved the signs. They didn't love Jesus. They wanted their felt needs met because they thought Jesus, in and of himself, wasn't enough. With Jesus' omniscience in view, he knows this about their hearts, so he does not entrust himself to them. This is why over and over and over again I want to point every miraculous thing and even every ordinary thing in our lives back up to what they're ultimately pointing to: the goodness and grace of God in Jesus.

On our Encounter nights, we've been asking God to miraculously heal people, and he has done that. I can't wait to begin to share some testimonies. We're still hearing them all the time. In fact, this morning I was right up here praying with our staff. As it was over, a woman came and found me and said, "Hey, I need you to know when we prayed for bad backs at the last Encounter, while somebody on staff was praying for me it felt like someone stabbed me with an ice-cold knife in the middle of my back. I almost yelled out loud. Then the pain was gone, and I actually cancelled my surgery for next Tuesday."

Yeah. That's a pretty cool testimony of God's healing power. That happened to point to the beauty and grandeur of Jesus Christ. Not for the glory of the staff person who prayed, who's going to go unnamed because she didn't name him or her to me. Not even for the healing of the sister, who God loves deeply. He loved her deeply even in her pain. It wasn't like his love was made manifest in her healing because his love was made manifest in his presence in her difficulty. Then it's a sign.

The reason why I say both the miraculous and then the everyday is because if we go back to these felt needs, these felt needs when a heart is gladly surrendered to Jesus being enough, become a sign of the power of Jesus in the life of a believer that commends his glory to the lost world.

So let's talk about this. If Jesus is enough, I've surrendered my life, I've said yes to Jesus, and I'm following after him... If you've been here in our study of John, that means that I've been created by Jesus and for Jesus, which means I see my job a specific way. Right? I've not been made *by* my job for my job. I haven't been made *by* my wife for my wife or *by* my kids for my kids. I've been made *by* God for God.

So if I say yes to Jesus, now I'm standing in what I was actually created to do, which isn't preach or be a husband and dad but to be a son of God who then plays out in those spaces. I'm not defined by those spaces, and I'm free to not need other people to validate me. I'm not asking you to do for me what you cannot do for me. If you come into relationships, whether that's friendship... And God help

you on marriage, needing the other to make you feel like you're significant. You will put a weight on them that they cannot bear. It cannot bear it.

Wives, if the expectation is that your husband makes all your internal angst go away, you will be disappointed, frustrated and angry all the days of your life. He will be confused and not knowing what he said or what he was supposed to do and super-confused of what you're even mad about. Brothers, if that bride was going to take away all your "daddy" wounds, all those ways that Dad didn't speak life into you, encourage you, and build you up, all those places you feel insignificant and ugly, you will constantly put on her the weight of healing, which she has no power to heal.

In glad surrender to Jesus, "You are my King. You are my Lord. You will be enough regardless," I'm able to step into money and relationships and go, "I know who I am. I know how I've been defined. I know God's call on my life, and I'm going to walk in freedom." Then I can just love my bride and she can love me back. Then I can just cheer on my kids and encourage them in the Lord and trust that the Lord's at work.

Then I can live a life of what the Bible would call *hilarious generosity*. Right? "**...God loves a cheerful giver.**" Do you know that text? "Don't give under compulsion but give out of a cheerful heart." The Greek word is *hilaros*. It's where we get hilarious. I've joked about this. God loves a cheerful giver. Ha ha ha ha. Like a crazy person with their money.

Think about how that marks us in a world that's cynical, in a world that's greedy, in a world that's leveraged to the hilt with debt, so that they can project some image of success to just be free. To be free to love. To be free to give. To be free to live lives marked by generosity. They are a sign of a greater reality and a more beautiful life found in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

I want to say it to you again. The good news of the gospel is not that if you give your life to Jesus everything goes the way you want it. *The good news of the gospel is that if you surrender your life to Jesus, you get Jesus regardless of life's circumstances, and he's going to be enough.* That's the good news. That's the gospel.

In fact, look at how painful this is. You've got them worshiping the signs, but look at the second part of the text. "**But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.**" So again, John is making the argument that you can't put on a projection of godliness and trick God.

You just can't do it. You can't show up at church on the weekend like, "Hey, everybody!" and have God go, "Well, apparently they're doing amazing. They are really into me, and I love that. Hey, Spirit. Did you see how they raised their hand on that song?"

"Yeah. They like us. They like us a lot."

"Jesus, did you see him? I told you, man."

"Yeah."

You can't trick him. You get that? You can't trick him. I want you to feel the weight of it because the weight of it is right and good. In the middle of that weight, I want to lay before you Psalm 51 where the Bible says, "The broken and contrite in spirit I will never despise." So the thing that God will never despise is the honest prayers of a man or a woman who might not be where they know they should be but are crying out, "Help me! I want more." He never despises that, and he never responds with, "Get to work then." Ever.

In fact, we see not only were these brothers and sisters worshipping the signs, but this is a hinge text between this and the story of Nicodemus. If you grew up in church and grew up in Sunday school, you know about Nicodemus. He snuck out. He's a Pharisee, so he couldn't let it be known that he was captivated by Jesus. He snuck out in the middle of the night and snuck up to Jesus, and what he says to Jesus reveals... It's a collision of both worshipping signs, but also something else that we can be guilty of if we're not careful.

Although I'll preach from this text in a couple of weeks, let's look at just the first couple of verses of chapter 3. **"Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from god, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.'"** Now there's all sorts of right in Nicodemus's questions while simultaneously being all kinds of wrong. Here are the two ways Nicodemus is believing that's a kind of belief that Jesus will not entrust himself too.

"You're a good teacher. It's a religious platitude with no plan of actually surrendering to it. We know that you're a good teacher. We don't plan on obeying anything you say, but these signs are really cool." Right, do you see it? He's coming, and he's saying, "You're a good teacher. I have no

intention of listening to anything you say because I think ultimately I know what's best for me more than you do." This is a kind of belief Jesus will not entrust himself to.

Think of how devastating this is if it's true that we have been made by God and for God and we can only know who we are and who we are not by seeing him rightly than to falsely believe in Jesus because we think he can make our lives easier and because of some kind of weak bumper-sticker theology rather than glad submission to his reign and rule in our lives is to not know who we are and not be able to stay in the middle of God's good design for us.

This, in turn, usually tends to make us lonely, angry and or frustrated or a bunch of other things that don't lead to good, right relationships or good, right handling of job, money, or stuff and instead makes us look much more like the world and much less like the people of God. If anyone should understand what it's like to know about but not know, it's us in 2018.

Can we play a quick game? Just a game of confession? I mean, I'm going to. I don't know if you'll participate. Here we go. Safe place. You're loved by God. How many of you have ever Facebooked or online social media stalked somebody? You didn't do it on purpose. You're not a weirdo creep. You're just on Facebook and you're like "Oh, who's that? Oh yeah, they know a cousin of mine. Who's that? That's a cousin's friend." Then next thing you know it's been 30 minutes and you're scrolling through people's pictures. Right? How many of you have done it?

Okay. You guys make me sick. No, I'm kidding. We've all done it. Here's what's crazy. We live in an environment where the very way we live life has a tendency to make us feel like we know people we do not know. We don't know them. We have whole magazines like *People* and *Us Weekly* that are all about other people's lives. We don't know any of them, but the way that the world is built is we can actually start to believe that we do know them. You don't know them. You know *about* them.

To behave like you know them when you only know about them can, often times, get you arrested. I think this concept has made its way into the church. We're like, "Oh yeah, Jesus. He was born in Bethlehem. The manger, right? Yeah. I love that guy. Yeah, mom was Mary. A little scandalous early on. I think something happened when he was a teenager. You stop reading about..." Joseph just completely vanishes from the Facebook page right around the time Jesus is 12.

We have these facts and these stats about Jesus, but that doesn't mean we know him. Years ago (in fact, probably year four or five here) I was in this conversation. I was at a conference in New York

City called Dwell. I'm sitting there and there were a couple of pastors from Manhattan, and there were a couple of guys from Seattle and a guy from inner city Philly. We were talking about pastoral ministry, and we got into this conversation about what they were experiencing versus what I was experiencing.

Of course, guys in that context, I think, rightly lament the state of those really harsh, secularized environments where Jesus is a ridiculous joke. That whole concept is so yester-year, nonsense, oppressive, people-hating bigotry. They were lamenting how difficult ministry was in that place and were looking at me like I had it easy. I just remember telling the story that I've told here before.

The man that I met here, at our church, who thought he was a Christian because he was born in San Antonio. Don't get me wrong, I love the River Walk. I just don't think it can really do anything against sin and death. So my argument that day around the table is the same argument I would make today, which is in the Bible Belt, Christian ministry is far more difficult because everybody already thinks they're saved.

A lot of people have no relationship with Jesus Christ and have no intent of ever following him. They just know some facts about him. They've got this moment in their past where some sort of emotive event made them (out of fear or out of whatever) say, "I'm going to follow Jesus," and then zero fruit from that decision for 30 years but are continually looking back at that event as though it validated surrendering their lives to Jesus.

Most often in our context, you were at a children's camp and there was some sketch about hell that was pretty scary when you're a fourth grader. So in the middle of that, you're like, "Well, I don't want that. I'm going to give my life to the Lord." Then from that moment on you have no desire to follow him, no surrendering to his will or his Word, and nothing in your heart that loves him. You have just this quaint old memory of being baptized.

Or, well-meaning moms and dads who don't frame it exactly like this, but throw out the old, "Do you want to come to heaven with us or would you like to burn in hell forever? Oh, heaven with us? Great. Let's go talk with pastor." We're giggling right now, but it's really scary, not funny. A lot of people in churches, in this church, know enough about Jesus to actually be inoculated to knowing Jesus.

The reason the weight of this text is necessary is because the weight of this text says there's a thin, faux way of being that Jesus will not entrust himself to. He sees it, and he knows it, and he will not give himself, his full life, and the power of his regenerating work to those who simply want to use him rather than love him. It's a weighty passage and yet a necessary passage.

Years ago, I was asked to speak at this thing in the Bible Belt, and they asked me to preach on the subject of *dechurched*. The idea of *dechurched* is someone who grew up in church the majority of their lives and then probably got out of high school, got into those first two years of college and then punted on the faith. So I dove head long into the research around that. What you can pull from the research on the *dechurched* is a lot of them tried this Moralistic Deism thing, but very few of them actually tried Jesus.

What came out in the data is a lot of testimonies from young 20-somethings that were like, "Tried to wait for true love. Tried to stay away from *this*. Tried to walk *this*. Tried to do *this*. I failed. I figured in my failure there's no way God, in the frequency of my failure, could love me like the Bible says he loved me." So without ever receiving the grace and mercy of God that cheers us on as we stumble in the dirt and the mud, forward in progressive sanctification, they thought, "I'm not good enough. I'm out."

They never tried Jesus. They tried themselves. They found themselves wanting. That shouldn't surprise us. The Bible is clear that you're not enough. You're amazing in that you've been made in the image of God. You've been wired according to the purposes of God for your life. You're unique among the creative order, beautiful and stunning, made in his image, and you are powerless to fix what's broken in you.

If you're disciplined enough to live a morally upright life that tends to lean towards self-righteousness... You're going to see in the weeks to come, Jesus has a special wrath towards that. Like the woman caught in adultery. "Just compassion, sister. Get up. I don't condemn you. Nobody's going to condemn you here. Go and sin no more," versus, "You brood of vipers. You whitewashed tombs. You go. You make a convert. You make them twice the son of hell that you are."

So what does it look like to have the kind of belief that Jesus entrusts himself to? That's a great question. I'm glad you asked it, because it's my conclusion. We said a couple of weeks ago that all God has asked is simple belief...just simple belief...that Jesus is the Son of God. Not a good teacher,

not a miracle worker, but that he is Lamb of God who is taking taking away the sins of the world. That's what we simply believe.

Historically this has been called *conversion*, and conversion is a regenerating of our hearts or a reordering of our being from the inside out, not the outside in. That requires these two pieces that God incites in us by his holy spirit.

1. *Faith*. If I could make faith really, really simple it would just be the turning to Christ for our justification and away from ourselves. So again, think about the freedom found in that. I don't need to justify myself anymore. Not to you. Not to anybody. I am justified by Christ alone. I'm going to turn and face him. I'm going to turn away from myself. I am not going to try to earn what is freely given. I am going to rest in what he has provided.

There is a kind of striving I can let go of because I am secure in his love. That does not mean that there's not grace-driven effort in my life. It is a love relationship with Jesus that is transforming me, if we could be honest, more slowly than any of us would like. Anybody else in here wish that God would speed some things up in your life?

Anybody think, "Hey, I've already learned this lesson"? Anybody been in the desert long enough to go, "Okay. I got it." That's the thing I want you to know about this faith piece, this turning to Christ as our justification and then on into the second piece, which is...

2. *Repentance*. I would just say that repentance is turning to God as the chief end of our existence. So faith and repentance that I'm not going to justify myself and the chief end to my existence is not that I'm a great husband, not that I'm a successful pastor, not that I'm a great daddy, but that I am resting and abiding in Christ as my Savior. Then by the grace of God...maybe...that inner transformation will serve as a sign in my felt needs.

I never want to lay before you things that are inconsistent with reality, so let me be real honest about felt needs versus ultimate needs. Just because you both love Jesus doesn't mean your marriage is going to be a 10 on a scale of 1 to 10. You can both love Jesus and be a good, solid 6. Just because you love Jesus doesn't mean you won't get sick. Just because you love Jesus doesn't mean you're going to get the promotion and have all kinds of capital that you don't know what to do with.

I'll say it again: The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is not that if you give your life to Jesus everything goes the way you want it. It's that regardless of what comes, Jesus will be there and you will find him to be enough. We have not been promised lives of ease. If so, wouldn't all of us already have some questions? If the promise of the gospel is that insidious prosperity nonsense, and if God is my errand boy, he is doing a terrible job.

If he's not and instead he's the Lord and Savior of the universe, then in the first seven years of my marriage that were extremely difficult, he was kind and near and held us together. When they found a golf ball-sized tumor in my right frontal lobe and had to cut it out and then poison me for 18 months, I found him near and kind and dear.

When they put my little boy in the back of an ambulance after febrile seizure and rushed him to Children's and I was following behind in tears trying to keep up with them I found the Lord to be near and kind. His nearness in the difficulty, his being with us in the sorrow... That is our joy and his glory, the kind of joy that doesn't make sense to a world that needs everything to go its way in order to rejoice.

That's why I'm constantly trying to tease out for you the difference between joy and happiness. Happiness is fragile. It can break in an instant. You can move from happy to frustrated in a matter of seconds and not even know why. Anybody ever experience that? It's a magic day, and all of a sudden, it's *not*, and you're not even sure what happened.

That's the fragility of happiness. Not only do we not even understand it, but then on top of that everybody else has a say in it. That's one of the few things that everybody else has a say in. I'm happy. It just takes one person to go, "No, you're not," and they can just crush it like this really thin crystal in our hand.

Joy doesn't work that way. In fact, the people of God who have surrendered to God have this kind of joy that transcends their circumstances in the way that it drives the enemies of God crazy. I always like to highlight the apostle Paul, because what could you do to that man? Have you ever thought about that? "We're going to kill you."

"To die is gain. Go ahead. If we could do it quick that would be awesome."

"You know what? Never mind. You want that. We're not going to let you do that. We're going to, in fact, torture you."

"Great. I do not consider the sufferings of this present age worthy to be compared to future glory. Do your worst."

"Well, never mind. We're not going to do that then. We're just going to put you in prison for the rest of your life."

"Great, because I'm going to convert everybody down there and we're going to be singing and worshipping Jesus before you know it."

"Never mind. I'm going to roll you up and make you talk to Caesar."

"Good. I've been wanting to talk to him. I've been wanting to lay before him the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

What do you do to a man like that? You can't touch his joy. Do you remember that story where Paul is shipwrecked? They climbed up on shore, they build a fire, he goes to get some wood, and gets bitten by a snake? While he was on a mission trip? Do you know how angry I would be? I got shipwrecked, and I survived it only to get bitten by a venomous snake on this island? Not Paul. Paul just shook off the serpent and just kept sharing the gospel with people.

You're untouchable if Jesus is your joy, but if you're trying to use him he will not entrust himself. So really, the invitation is simple, I think. It's simple belief, it's conversion, it's repentance and faith. Turning from yourself to him as the means of your justification. Repentance. Turning to him as the chief end of your life.

It in this space that we clearly understand who we are and who we are not and step in to what God has designed us to be. This is the invitation that's laying there for you, even if you've been in church your whole life. I know you can be in church your whole life and not know this. You can know of religious platitudes, you can know crazy little sayings like, "The bread of life never gets stale," you can teach a Sunday school class, and you can lead a Home Group and not know Jesus.

When Jesus says, "**Come to me, all who** [are weary] **and heavy laden, and I will give you rest,**" he certainly is talking to those who are stuck in a broken religious system that's empty and devoid of life. I would just plead with you if you find yourself in that space today to not stay there. You don't have to. Let's pray.

Father, I think you for my brothers and sisters. I pray where there is little faith that you would provide the kind of faith that turns them to you as the ground of their justification. I ask, Father, where there is a belief in you as a teacher but no intent of ever following you as Lord, that you would reveal and convict us of that deeply so that we might possess the simple belief that you entrust yourself to for our joy and your glory. We love you. It's for your beautiful name I pray. Amen.