

“Then Jesus began to denounce the towns where he had done so many of his miracles, because they hadn’t repented of their sins and turned to God.” Matthew 11:20 NLT

## lectio // Matthew 11:20-24

Matthew, and Jesus, come out swinging on this point. Jesus himself says “Woe to you...” These words are words of grief and denunciation - the OPPOSITE of blessing! Jesus likely could look out from where he was speaking and see these towns in the distance. What about the pure motive of love and grace and not having any expectations of belief or reciprocal action at all? That’s what I’m asking. Here’s what I forget that Jesus obviously NEVER forgot. The grace, the love, goodness even kindness is meant to LEAD them not to just LEAVE them. I am challenged and admonished to remember that God always EXPECTS a response from his moving toward us or wooing us. So, God’s love is never PASSIVE! Yes, it’s given freely, paid for and everything, but it comes with an agreement to accept or reject. And ignoring is rejecting! Jesus did miracles and many of the religious leaders and maybe even just some common “good folk” took it with a attitude of entitlement, like they deserved healing. WHAT? Now that’s just crazy, and Jesus was not having it. What a dilemma this creates for me both in my own life and in serving others. First I must look at my own attitude of receiving God’s gifts and graces and not only remember to be responsive, obedient, and accountable. But, also to be grateful. Second, I have to see the moments that I do love and serve friends and neighbors and remember there is a CATCH. The catch is a decision for eternity, and not shunning, spurning or ignoring the Holy Spirit as God is working in their life. But, that’s on them, not on me! This verse rattled me today, maybe it rattles you as well.

## oratio

Dad,

I am challenged by the words of Jesus today. I will be thinking about this and asking questions from friends for a while about this. I know that when I love and serve folks I do want to do so out of a pure motive of giving. However, I never thought about the responsibility on their end to allow your Holy Spirit in to do the eternal work necessary for their redemption, their salvation. I’m always afraid of being the “bait-n-switch” used-car salesman type when it comes to just sharing about your grace. But I guess it can’t be bait-n-switch if what is received is BETTER than what was expected. The value exchange is far more valuable when they get you and not just some nice words from a neighbor.

## contemplatio

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root