

Art's Testimony - Part 3

by Art Katz

Art Katz shares his transformative journey of faith through encounters with humility and the love of God.

Duration: 9:22

Scripture: Philippians 2:3

Topics: "Humility And Love", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the transformative power of humility in changing the world and impacting lives, contrasting it with ideologies that lead to destruction. It recounts powerful encounters with individuals led by the Spirit of God, demonstrating humility and love that pierces through barriers of religion and culture. The narrative highlights the profound impact of genuine kindness and transparency rooted in the love of God, challenging preconceived notions and leading to personal transformation and revelation.

Transcript

I saw that by a spirit of humility the world could be changed without a single drop of blood being shed. We didn't need socialistic programs. We didn't need Marxist cliches.

We don't need the kinds of things that have resulted in rivers of blood. What we need is a spirit of humility. But the word spirit was totally alien to my secular modern mindset and the humility equally alien.

I saw men like myself, arrogant, presuming hotshots, saving the world, incapable of living with their wives, opposed to their administrators, and full of tension, incapable of anything in their own relational life. What an act of humility to wash another one's feet would mean for Palestinians with Jews, black with white, male with female, children with their parents, who would change the world. And before I could recover, I was overwhelmed.

This man went on to tell me the gospel of Jesus Christ in German, and I wanted to complain and say, hey, that's not for me. Don't you know I'm a Jew? That's for the goyim. I'm Jewish.

Do you have your God, your book? But I had no voice. My voice was completely diminished by the power of that one statement. And when that man finished sharing with me, had you seen me that evening, you would have said, this man's drunk.

I didn't walk away from that table. I lurched. I staggered under the impact of that confrontation coming out of a man whose face gave no evidence of anything more significant than an ordinary Gentile.

It was an encounter with God. And I've tried to find that man for many years, but I've been back in Switzerland in that same area and have been unable to do so. Everything that I knew about him, he was a bookkeeper.

He worked for an automobile agency. He sang in the choir. He knew about philosophy and architecture and art.

He was abroad. I can't find a man that I have to consider 37 years later, was it a man or was it an angel? And I think that when the church will be of such a stature and kind, led by the Spirit as this man was, then we Jews will have to say, was it a man, was it an angel? Because if this man had said, are you saved, brother? Do you know Jesus? I'd be dead today. All I needed was one more cliché, whether it was religious or secular, I would have been dead.

But he didn't speak to me in any clichéd way. He didn't even use John 3.16 in a clichéd way. He spoke to me in that one statement, calculated to break my heart, that only God alone knew.

Art, what the world needs, what you've been questing for all these years from your adolescence on, from your merchant semen days, from your Marxist institutes, from all of your reading, is answered in this, a spirit of humility. And so I would say that that was the most memorable and significant experience and that it came through a Gentile, made it all the more powerful, because if he was not an angel, he was a man who was led by the Spirit of God, not to speak a in the Lord and love the people Israel, is to know him and to have a walk and a relationship with him of such a sensitive kind that they can speak themselves, that one word that issues from the throne of heaven to pierce the heart of that unbelieving and resistant Jew, because when he hears it, he knows that he knows, man did not conceive this. This is the very heart of God that knows me.

So I bumped into this young American girl on vacation, had her graduated high school, who was the epitome of what we Jews dismiss as a WASP, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant, and yet instead of being repelled, I was strangely drawn to the innocency of this girl and her transparency, willing to walk with me around the woods surrounding the city, and as we're walking, I'm probing her motives. How come that you're not afraid of me? Oh, she would answer, it's the love of God. How come you've been kind to me? It's the love of God.

You see, I had embraced radical ideologies, but I had never seen kindness. Isn't that a remarkable paradox? Even among those who purported to be concerned for the underprivileged of the world and the working classes, between ourselves, we're incapable of kindness. Here was a girl demonstrating very clearly a very real kindness that was unfamed, and so I'm probing her motives, and she was answering me every question, it's the love of God, it's the love of God, and with that answer, my exasperation would grow.

I thought, if this girl mentions God one more time, she's finished. I can't stand this God talk, and I'm sorry, but I'll just have to lower the boom. My favorite hobby was engaging Christians in debate and wiping them out.

So what's this little girl to me? Sure enough, she mentioned God. I stopped. I said, look, you're a sweet girl and all that, but I can't stand this God talk.

Can you answer for me one question that no Christian has ever successfully been able to answer? She said, what's that on? I said, you've been talking about God. How do you know that he is? I said, I got him out. There'll be a long silence, and she'll think of some brittle thing she remembers from Sunday school, and I'll just roll over her with my steamroller and crush her.

To my astonishment, without a moment's hesitation, she had tilted up that snub-nosed, freckled face, sandy head, blue-eyed face at me, and said with complete innocence, I know that God lives. I know that God is. He lives in me, and when she said that, down I went.

I was like an ox that had been felled by a blow or a boxer knocked to the deck, and as I'm trying to recover, I think, what hit me? What was the power of that statement? It wasn't theological. It wasn't even intellectual. What is it? It finally adorned on me.

What gave that statement its power to bring me down was its truth, and the truth was visible in her face. God indeed lived in her because the radiance of God shone through her. I didn't know the Scripture about the light that lightens the Gentiles is the glory of the people Israel, and there's no more profound demonstration of that reality and that glory than when it shall shine out of a face where we least expect to see it.

I never recovered from that impact, and the remarkable thing is I was made instantly jealous for what this girl had in her transparency and innocency. I'd been to universities, Marxist institutes. I was the intellectual.

I was a world traveler. Here's a kid half my age, but she had something that I knew I would never find in any institution. She had God, and I was jealous for the radiance of the light of it, and never will I forget that remarkable encounter.

When I believe of God's last day's dealings with Jews where he says in Ezekiel 20, I will meet with you in the wilderness of the nations face to face. It will be this revelation, this shining forth, this radiance of the glory of God as the light that lightens Gentiles that will reveal to Jews in their ultimate distress in the time of Jacob's trouble the reality of the God that we have too long avoided and whom we shall not be able from that moment again to avoid, for it says, then I will bring you into the bond of my covenant and under the right of my authority. It's the revelation of our God through the face of Gentiles that will be the turning point in the redemption of Israel in the ultimate distress for which we are presently heading in these last days.

My testimony and my experience is a foreshadowing of the great saga of the last day's redemption of Israel through the testimony of unfamed witness, unselfconscious, the radiance of the light of God in Gentile faces, which is the clear demonstrations of God that we can no longer avoid. Well, I was trapped a second, perhaps not even third class. I was a hitchhiker for 14 months.

It's the only way that I could have economically spent an entire year abroad, and that offers you a vista, a window on the world and on reality that traveling in a more conventional tourist mode would never reveal. It's something to stand by the side of the road and watch cars whiz by and feel like a piece of rejected humanity, which in fact I was. It offers a whole new way of perceiving reality and meaning, and so I was picked up from place to place and received the testimony of those who did pick me up and be prepared for the revelation that came in the first reading of the New Testament.

Strange to say I was a history teacher, a student of history, and yet I had never myself opened the primary source, but I was content with some secondary hearsay about Jesus, which was easy to discard as being irrelevant to my Jewish life. But on the trip from Italy to Greece, which was a significant trip because, as I've tried to express, Greece for me was not just another geographic destination. Athens and Greece for me was.

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