

# The Spirit of Life

by Art Katz

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living by the life of God, divesting ourselves of our own human wisdom, and living in the kingdom way to demonstrate God's glory and achieve perfection.*

**Duration:** 51:25

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:13

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a personal experience where they shared their testimony and were met with scorn and anger from their former friends. They highlight the contrast between the technical perfection of a preacher's words and the lack of power and impact in their message. The speaker emphasizes the need for believers to demonstrate the glory of God in their lives through transparency, devotion to truth, and genuine living. They call for a demonstration of the Spirit's power in the speaking of believers, so that others may be truly changed and impacted by the message of God.

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## Transcript

Last week I prophesied that this class was going to decline in attendance, week by week, and so now that we all know what my credentials are, let's pray for the mercy of God. Let's bow our heads and hearts and ask God really richly to redeem the very brief time that we have. Precious God, Lord, thank you that prayer is not mere ceremony, Lord, that you are listening, God, that we acknowledge with all our hearts, Lord, that we're small potatoes in the kingdom, pathetic pieces of dust, Lord, in and of ourselves.

But we ask, Lord God, because this is in the heart of your will, that we might be clothed upon by you, Lord, that we might have the expression of your own wisdom, your own heart, your own truths, your own glory. Give us hearts, great God, to receive the things that I shall please you, Lord, to express this morning. Bless these dear ones who have come, who are thirsty, Lord, for the knowledge of your kingdom and the kingdom way.

May they enter in more deeply as the result of this speaking and this hearing. Altogether bless us, Lord. We'll thank you and praise you for your mercies and goodness toward us, because we've asked it in Jesus' holy name.

And everyone said amen. Well, sorry about the situation with the tapes. Last week's opening session was something like the turning over of the fallow ground.

It was the Lord putting in a sharp plow and turning up deep furrows. We started in the book of Genesis, which is a good place to begin, it's the book of beginnings, about the two trees in the garden and how that these are still to this day the two choices available to men and that the great pity is that though we call ourselves Christians and assume that we are new covenant believers, our lives are almost essentially old covenant lives, that we're still living from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I try to suggest that there are reasons why men prefer that to the tree of life, that the tree of life is not in itself comely, it's not attractive to the natural eye, whereas the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is very attractive.

Remember that it's said in the third chapter of Genesis, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat and gave also unto her husband with her and he did eat. And in that beautiful verse, we see the same things that are recorded for us in the book of 1 John, where God says that all that is in the world is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. No accident also that the three things upon which Jesus was tested in the 40 days in the wilderness were exactly these three things.

And so I can tell you from my own experience how you can know you're converted, that when you're an atheist as I was for 35 years, everything seems to be filled with multitudinous choices, nuances, shades of grey, your mind is continually harassed by the varieties of choice and decision, the complexity, and we love that, don't we? And the incoming of the Ruach HaKodesh was a great simplification of my life. As a matter of fact, I became very quiet. All of the rancor and the noise and the clamor was out.

All the necessity to speak or to be heard was out. As a matter of fact, when I returned to California my first night back, at the home where I was a guest, also Jewish friends who were, as I had been, atheists, radicals, worldly, and they invited a whole household of people of the same kind, I found myself completely out of the discussion. And by midnight the fur was flying, the spittle was flying, and I sat there like a silent lump.

And someone turned to me and said, Oh, she said, you're strangely silent. She said, you're usually in the thick of these discussions. And I remember what the esoteric question was, something about the definition of Jewishness and intellect, some kazarai.

I'm throwing a little Jewish word to you. Kazarai means garbage. She said, you're strangely silent.

You're usually in the thick of these things. I said, I can't help it. I said, I just find this conversation completely irrelevant to life.

Oh, she said, what do you think is relevant to life? And then it was I heard the first of that sound, which I was to hear through the years, dum-da-dum-dum. And I was on the spot, and I gave my first testimony, and all conversation ceased. And they turned to look upon the phenomenon who had been the leading faculty radical and who is now a little lamb of God with a book under his arm, saying Jesus is the answer.

I lost all my friends that night. You can't believe it that the same men who applauded you as a communist or Marxist or seducer or whatever your attribute was in the world are the same men who turn upon you with great scorn and anger and bitterness and vexation. It got so bad the next day with the woman whose guest I was that I had to get out of her moving car in the midst of traffic in the street because her language had become so violent.

That's how offended she was because I had changed eating from one tree, and I had turned to another. Dear children, I want to speak in the most fundamental way, if I can use such a word, to give you a perception of kingdoms in conflict, that you might understand what is the call of God and have with me something of a woundedness over the fact that though God has made available to his life, we still persist in living from a much lesser source. It's the source, by the way, that contains the vexations, the bitterness, the ulcers, the frenzies of mind, because it has to do with choice, with volition, with thinking, the knowledge of the tree of good and evil.

It makes one to be wise or to appear wise, but the end thereof is death. Now, with that resume of last week, I want to turn now to New Testament text this morning and the book of 1 Corinthians, the second chapter. Isn't it wonderful that we can talk about Paul? Because if there was ever anyone eminently qualified to walk in the way of the world, it was he.

He had a towering Jewish intellect. He was skilled in the wisdom of the world. He was multilingual and sophisticated.

And all the things which men would pride themselves as adornments, he counted as dung. So in the second chapter, we read, And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Can I just pause there for a moment and say, knowing the nature of the mind and how it loves to have an independent existence, and if you'll not feed it the kinds of things that it has been accustomed to in the world, it'll even be satisfied with things religious, things theological, so long as that it can continue to have some kind of independent existence and rule and be at the center of your life. And I hope by these remarks that you don't think that I dismiss mind or its operation altogether, and that I'm suggesting that God intends for us to be some kind of stupefied saint. I'm only trying to establish the centrality of spirit over mind, the centrality of the tree of life over the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, trying to establish the priorities of God, and trying to suggest that there's a way to live by which the spirit can be at the center of our life and the mind be only its handmaiden and its tool, rather than it should call all the shots.

And I want to say that if you have tampered your mind, as most of us have for 30, 40 or more years, and it has been accustomed to this independent existence, that it's going to take an exertion of will on your part to teach it and to instruct it to take the place in the life that God intends. So this is not just a chance verse where it says that Paul determined not to know anything but Christ and Him crucified. I think all of us are familiar with the phenomenon that by our bedside, when it comes to pick up something to read before we go to sleep at night, and we have the Bible and two or three other books, almost invariably we'll choose some other book.

The Bible almost always comes to us as a last choice, less attractive than some commentary on the Bible, or some novel, or some biography, or some religious literature. And I'm not decrying religious literature, I'm an avid reader of it, but again, wanting to stress the priorities. There are so many things that can be said here, of what it means not to come in the excellency of speech or wisdom, and to determine not to know anything but Christ and Him crucified.

In a word, that's humiliating. When Paul has to divest himself of the things in which he has long trusted, the things that are familiar and dear, when he knows that he can wow an audience on the basis of the excellency of his own speech, and to come, as it were, naked and trembling, you come in quite another

way. There's a reason why we persist in eating from the wrong tree.

There's a reason why we rather act from our own religious wisdom and knowledge than trust ourselves to the life of God. And no accident, therefore, that the third verse says, I was with you in weakness and fear and in much trembling. As my wife, Inger, says, how do you like them apples? How willing are we to suffer weakness, fear, and trembling that the life of God might have opportunity through us to be expressed if we get out of the way the obstacle of our own human wisdom, our own eloquence, and our own speaking.

I don't know how to persuade you that there is such an option, and that few of us have tasted of it, and for that very reason the world has not opportunity to see the glory of God. There's a difference between clever religion and well-meaning religion, and ethical and moral posturing under religion, and the glory of God. And if you want, Judaism is par excellence, the religion of the world brought to its finest pitch, and carried on by human prowess, independent of God.

And the fact that you have not discerned it, and seen the emptiness and shame that it is, is because it bears too great a correspondence to your own religious walk. You might say that Presbyterianism, or Methodism, or any of the other isms, is Judaism, lacking the qualification of the knowledge of Hebrew, and the other Yiddishisms that are available to Jews. Maybe you'll understand why I have a tape that's called The Two Judaisms, by which I contrast the singular Judaism of God, the tree of life, the radical call of God for the fullness of life in Christ, the cross as the place of absolute separation from the world and its spirit, as against the Judaisms of men, by whatever name you call them, attractive, commendable, polite, respectable, and I would say that if there were no God, there would be much to be desired.

But the fact that there is a God, and that he has made available to us his life, that this is the love of God taught us, that he has given us his only begotten son, that we might live through him, that makes all of the other Judaisms a travesty and a shame. I haven't heard a single amen yet this morning. Do you read me? Do you understand what God is trying to say? So I praise God for Paul because he has entered into the mysteries and the glories of God in so spectacular a way that by it he has given us half the New Testament.

By it he went into synagogues and contended with Jews. And if you haven't of late contended with Jews, you'll realize that however sharp your own natural endowments, they are wholly inadequate. The courage, the boldness, all of the things to which we compliment him, do not belong to him.

They belong to the resurrected one, the holy one of Israel, the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of the people of Israel. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is filled with his glory.

And if I were to describe myself in a word, I would say I'm a glory monger. Not that I seek glory for myself, but I am jealous for the glory of God and absolutely persuaded that nothing less than the demonstration of it shall persuade my people to set aside their shabby religious alternative and to embrace the way of God. Nothing less shall bring them to repentance.

And that's why the cry that began 2,000 years ago needs again to be sounded, and you are the key to it. When again God shall raise up an apostolic band moving in the power of God by the Spirit, a little-perceived island of faith who knows the fullness of God because they live by it shall again sound to an unbelieving world, largely Jewish, in all of its configuration, in all of its wisdom, in all of its values and rewards and no accident that about five out of the seven of the most recent Nobel Prize winners were Jewish. We are living an essential Jewish lifestyle.

It needs to be challenged and to be contested by the kingdom of God for there is a clash of kingdoms. And they need again to hear, repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. And it will not be at hand until it can be demonstrated, made manifest, set forth for their view and for their consideration.

They need to see it so clearly. They need to see the glory of God in the brilliance of the lives of God's people, in the transparency of God's people, in the lucid quality of their lives, in their unspeakable devotion to truth, in true speaking, in true living, in their faces, their gestures, their mannerisms, their tones of voice. Oh, I can go on.

I can't tell you the revelations that God has given me of the duplicity and the deception and the lies that corrupt our entire religious world by sincere, well-meaning men who operate by reason. When I was taken by a dear Jewish brother to hear his pastor in Canada, a Baptist minister who had the baptism in the Holy Spirit of whom he was so proud. And I had a free Sunday morning, a rare experience for me, and I sat up in the balcony and looked around me, avid people-watcher that I am, and studied the Baptist faces and despaired.

It could have been a church by any denomination and I would have despaired equally as much. Religion is horrendous. Can you see it? It is opposed to the life of God in so many instances, however well-meaning its intentions.

And if Satan can't snare us on the things that are patently evil, because we're just too basically decent to be corrupted in such a manner, then he'll get us on the things that are ethical or moral, and we Jews know that game. And I played it for 35 years. And if that will not suffice, then he'll get us on the things that are religious.

And I've even seen Satan trap men on the things that are spiritual, because they seek into self-conscious a way to be it. We're the first in our neighborhoods to learn about submission or discipleship. And we titter about the tapes that we've bought or the ones that we can quote.

Self-conscious spirituality, still being ruled by mind rather than the effortless and spontaneous flow of the life of God. There's a great naturalness that God is seeking upon his people, and another word for it is true spirituality. May God grant us the grace to taste it and have a vision for it and to enter into it.

So picture me in this situation, sitting up there in the balcony of this vast church, looking at these sticks of wood. And I don't know whether it's because I'm Jewish or strange or peculiar or it's the operation of God's spirit, but as I looked at their faces, I saw the overwhelming grayness, the terrible deadness. And I looked at the married couple sitting side by side and I saw that that wasn't the glory, it was a truce.

And I suppose if there's a great charge that can be leveled against God's people, it's this. They're satisfied with too little. Where is your divine discontent? Why are you willing to satisfy yourself with something good when God has called you to a thing which is perfect? And He's not goading us.

It's not an idle provocation. He means it, that we might be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect and holy as He is holy. By that standard, isn't everything else made pale and eclipsed? So I looked around at these faces and I despaired.

And I looked up at the top row and there were their children, wearing mod clothes and hip-hugging fashions and nudging each other in the ribs and giggling and tickling and they were holy out of it. It was an hour that they were required to put in every much of their diligent religious parents below. The whole thing

was a mock and a travesty and a put-on.

And the worst actor of all, would you believe it, was the man below preaching. And as I looked upon him and I heard the words pouring out of his mouth, I said to myself, there's not a word that can be faulted that issues from his lips. He was speaking about praise and worship and it was technically perfect.

How many of us would have nodded approval and have left and felt that we had fulfilled our religious requirement for the day? And yet something in my spirit was gnawing at me. That not only was it wrong, it was terribly wrong. All the more because it was technically true and scripturally correct and doctrinally not to be faulted.

And here's what was wrong, children. Though the words were correct, the spirit of it was wrong. Though he was saying the right things, you know what his spirit was saying? Hey, don't take me too seriously.

Don't get excited. Don't get frightened. Don't get flustered.

I don't intend this to be taken to heart and that you're going to live by this. This is a sermon, remember? Listen, didn't we work this out? You take care of my parsonage and see to my security, well-being and prestige and I'll see to it that you don't get your feathers ruffled. That's what his spirit was saying.

And everybody was nodding and saying in the spirit, Amen. Dear children, the kingdom of God has to do with truth in life and in speech. And the way we look and the intonation of our voices and the whole panoply of our coming and going and doing and being.

And if my Jewish people could once glimpse this, what true living is, what true relationships are, what true love is, free of schmaltzy sentimentality, of gooey little kindnesses and sentimental things that clod and corrupt and choke the way. If they knew what true love was, they would have heard the gospel long ago from your lips. But you didn't want to hurt their feelings, right? Because you're nice.

And Satan is just loving it all. Because it's not the kingdom way. Well, I didn't intend to say any of these things, but that's a perfect illustration of what I'm talking about.

What has this to do with my puny and pathetic intentions? It's glorious to hear what it will please God to express at any given time. The taste of His originality, His spontaneity, the things that are in His heart for a given moment. I'll tell you, such a life is unspeakably exciting.

There's not a child in the kingdom who should ever know what the word boredom means. I don't know what boredom means. I've never seen life so full.

If you're living in the kingdom way and eating from the tree of life. So, I think that this determination is required. Not to know anything.

And I can say this, in times when I have striven to pick up a book, or to augment my meager knowledge, or to take care of some of the terrible gaps in my religious understanding, it has availed nothing. But what has pleased God to bring to my attention a certain book at the propitious moment, it has been life. And I'll tell you, there's a world of difference in parroting religious clichés, however appropriate for the hour, about discipleship and commitment and submission, or knowing them as life.

And we shall not enter into that until we exercise the same determination not to know. And be willing also, and here's where the cross comes in, to suffer the weakness and fear and much trembling. Would you be

willing to stand before a people, or a Jewish person, or a colleague, or members of your own family, and to feel yourself utterly naked, helpless, weak, vain, uninspired, without imagination, your mouth filled with sawdust, your mind clogged, and to realize that what makes the situation all the more dramatic, laden, weighted, is that it's life and death? Do you realize that the encounters into which God brings us are always life and death? And that every time that I stand before God's people, or any place where he brings me, I realize always it's a life and death situation.

That the greatest of issues are being propounded, and that I have to say again and again, Lord, who is sufficient for these things? That's exactly the point. Not one of us is, if we understand the magnitude of the things to which God calls us, life and death issues. Who has the wisdom, then, to speak to a Jewish person, and to persuade them of the foolishness of the gospel? And if you think that I'm the one who has labeled the gospel foolish, not so.

God himself tells us that he has intentionally made the gospel foolishness to confound the things of the wise and mighty. And you're going to address a sophisticated Jew, eminently rational, and tell him that the God of his fathers lay aside his deity, and condescended to take upon himself the form of a man? What utter humiliation. And to come into the world as a babe, utterly helpless and dependent, and to live a life of obscurity for 30 years, and then to suffer three years of total rejection from his people in the most ignominious kind of suffering and pain and death.

That if you believe these things, and somehow by an act of faith appropriate to yourself, the blood which we shed 2,000 years ago, that somehow your sins are forgiven? Oh, come on, get off it. How many Presbyterians actually believe it? Let alone Jews. And as a matter of fact, it cannot be conveyed or communicated except by the Spirit of God that has a wonderful facility to take the foolishness of God and make it utterly profound for men.

We're going to see that in just a moment. So Paul said that he came with much trembling in my speech and preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. I don't think that that meant necessarily that there were fireworks, or that there were miracles on the spot.

But there was something in his voice and speaking that was a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Have you had the opportunity of seeing that? Of hearing that and noting the contrast? Through how many respectable and correct sermons have you sat? All of us in our religious lives have not been given assent and been unchanged. But where have been the occasions that we have experienced the demonstration of power by the Spirit in the speakings of men? And I think that those occasions would be more frequent if men would enter into their pulpits with fear and with trembling, willing to put aside their own wisdom and their own eloquence, trusting to the life of God to bring forth the appropriateness of His burden that day for that people.

That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that comes to naught. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Isn't it a staggering phenomenon that this brilliant Jewish people, and religiously astute, and so well versed, yet missed the Holy One of Israel and were not only unable to discern who He is, but accused Him

of obtaining His power from the Azeldub, and that they equated Him with Satan rather than with the Father. And you want to know something children? Nothing has changed in two thousand years. Nothing.

Because God's wisdom is different from men's wisdom. And the wisdom of God is a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. And can I say this? May I say this? That except that we understand this wisdom, and move and live and have our being in this wisdom, we shall perish.

I want to sound a warning that we are at the end of the age, and maybe you've heard the phrase, the end times. And I believe with all my heart that we are in it. And the phrase, the clash of kingdoms is not some fanciful phrase just to titillate the sensibilities of Presbyterians and to induce them to come into a room on Sunday morning.

It's a warning and a sounding of God that we are at the end of the age. And the age that began a great conflict between light and darkness, between two trees, is going to conclude and climax in the same conflict. There's going to be great sparks struck, great cries, great shrieks as these two grinding kingdoms come into ultimate conflict at the end of this age.

It's a fight to the finish. Are you prepared for it? By which wisdom shall we live? How shall we be sustained in such an hour? In shortages and failures, in a very earth that shall be shaken. For God promised in the last days that everything that can be shaken will be shaken.

And only that which can remain will remain. And by that he means those things which are founded in the rock Christ Jesus. How many of us already are beginning to be shaken in our own marriages? In our own careers? In things in which we have long trusted? I'll tell you children, you were fortunate, you had a lovely marriage, you had the accident of temperamental compatibility, don't count on it.

You're going to cry out in truth, where is my God? What's happening? We've had this lovely marriage all these years and all of a sudden this is going wrong and that's going wrong. It's not that God is absent, it's that he's very present. And he knows far better than you the things that shall soon be upon us all.

And he's preparing us for these eventualities. And teaching us that we have no basis for trust in anything except in him. Temperament, compatibility, human wisdom, expertise, all these things shall fail.

But the wisdom which is given of God never fails. And we're going to find ourselves increasingly in the kinds of predicament that can be resolved only by that kind of wisdom. Have you learned to operate in that and to move in that? Another illustration comes to mind once.

I've given this in some messages at one place. When we had breakfast at a certain cafe outside of a town where I was visiting some precious friends in the faith. There were about eight of us around the table and after the breakfast had concluded, the check for the entire meal was laid right in the middle.

Any one of us could have rightly picked it up and paid it. But a woman to the left of me picked it up. And without thinking, which is when I'm usually at my best, I turned to her and I said, did God have you to do that? How many people ever dream to ask such a question? Because after all, it was a good ask.

But I want you to know there's something better than good. It's the best. There's something better than human good.

It's the wisdom of God. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God because we have too long habitually acted out of the things which are good and the things for which no one has ever taken us to task because the whole world applauds the things that are good. And therefore have we been kept from the things which are perfect.

Did God have you to do that, I asked? Oh yes, she said with a kind of a tittering giggle, thinking that I would turn to something else, but forgetting how Jewish I was. So I repeated again, did God have you to do that? This time she choked and slurred a little bit and mumbled a little and yes, she said and I asked her again the third time. Did God have you to do that? Oh, she said, not really, but I thought it would be a good thing.

And you say, Art, what's so wrong about picking up a check? Nothing, children, in itself, except this, that if we make a lifetime of such practices, by what wisdom then shall we act in the ultimate predicaments and crises to which God shall bring us if all along we have been schooled in doing the things that are good and have no knowledge of what it means to operate by the Spirit. We are called to the Kingdom of God, which is the realm of the Spirit and of His life. And we're not going to, in a moment of crisis, begin to learn to shift gears and to adjust to that dimension.

It's now that we've got to know what it means to move and live and have our being in Him. And we shall not switch from the one kingdom to the other without much fear and without much trembling. Are you willing? Are you willing to be something more than correct Presbyterians, than people with ripe moral and ethical and religious sensibilities? Are you willing to be radically gods? And I'll tell you, He'll bring you into humiliation that you'll not believe in instructing you in the way of the Kingdom.

But the end thereof is glory. Now, I want to give an illustration in the Scriptures of what I'm talking about in Matthew, the 16th chapter, where a well-meaning Jewish guy, full of religious juices, full of the wisdom of the world, sought to do something good and was reprimanded by the Lord Himself. It begins in the 16th chapter of Matthew in the 13th verse, when Jesus came into the coast of Caesarea Philippi, and He asked His disciples, saying, Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? You know what? I've never before noticed that it was at this particular location that Jesus raised this particular question.

And I want to say in the same breath, there's not a thing in this book, a syllable, a jot, a tittle, a piece of punctuation out of place. The enormous genius of God in everything that is in this book. It's a glory that He chose a celebrated Roman resort replete with statuary and all of the physical rudiments of Roman civilization that is effusive with all the things that pertain to mind and the things that men celebrate.

Roman virtues and valor and all of these things, to ask a foolish question, Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? Can you see the conjunction of the setting and the question? It couldn't be more perfect. And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, some Jeremiah, one of the prophets, and they say it unto them, but whom say ye that I am? Who do you say that I am? It's not enough just to raise the abstract or the general academic question, but I love the propensity of the Lord to put His finger directly into our chest and say, Who do you say that I am? Children, when have you been asked that last? Who do you say that He is? Could you give an answer? I mean an answer that is more than pert or correct or doctrinally right. Can you give an answer that abounds in life because of your knowledge of Him by experience? That one of the greatest laments that God has directed to the Jewish people and prophets was that the knowledge of Me is taught by the precept of men.

And every nine out of ten of us would say, What's wrong with that? Isn't it for that very reason that we come to Sunday school? God says that's the worst and the least means by which the knowledge of Me should be obtained. That the knowledge of Me is taught by the precept of men? When the knowledge of Me should be obtained by the things which are intimate, by sharing the fellowship of my sufferings, by being brought to places where there is fear and trembling, where except that I am God, you shall perish. Have you ever been in such places? Be willing to be brought in boats that are familiar and secure and all of a sudden to suffer tumultuous storms and boisterous seas and to see some kind of a phantom figure that says, Come.

But that's not the Lord. At least not the Lord that I've known. The Lord that I know has every blonde hair nicely in place and aquiline nose and chin and milky blue eyes.

Oh, yes. Don't you just want to stamp that under your heel? All those sappy portraits and sentimental hogwash of the things that pertain to God. I think the truer picture of Him is that one that we shall find in the storm.

And you know what they said? They said it was a ghost. Are you willing to get out of the boat of security and well-being, religious familiarity, on the basis of one word spoken by the Lord who appeared to you in an unfamiliar way? And if He be not God, you perish? If I have any credential for standing before you on these Sunday mornings, it's that I've gotten out of such boats at the bidding of God over these 12 years again and again and again. And I have no other qualifications but that, that the knowledge of God and the intimacy comes in such experience.

And how many of us would be willing to pray at the conclusion of this hour, Lord, whatever it takes to enter into that knowledge, I want it. You order my steps aright and bring me to boisterous seas and tumultuous storms. Bring me out of the boat of familiarity and religious security.

That if you be not God, I perish. Would you pray such a prayer? Because I'll tell you, God will honor it. So the question is very great.

Then and now, who do men say that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And by the way, Christ derives from the word, the Greek word Christos, is the translation of the Hebrew word Moshiach. Thou art the Messiah.

How many of us even know that? I didn't know it when I was a university graduate. As a Jew, I never knew any Jewish family by the name of Christ. Not knowing that Christ was his title and not his name.

And that it was the Greek derivation of the Hebrew word Moshiach. If I had so much as been told that, as a Jewish kid in Brooklyn, how much of my life would have been altered? Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

You want to know something, children? You're not offended if I call you children, are you? You realize it's not me calling you children. It's not some Jewish squirt 12 years old in the Lord calling you children. It's the life.

It's the Father looking with his great eye of compassion. Children. You want to know something, children? That my second great burden or equal to my own burden for my Jewish people are the countless numbers of Christians to whom this revelation has not come.

Flesh and blood cannot reveal that Jesus is the Christ. It cannot. And how many brainwashed members are there sitting like sticks of wooden pews Sunday after Sunday doing the dutiful and expected things who have never had this revelation and never will have so long as they are willing to accept the thing which is good rather than that which is perfect.

God is only waiting to hear one cry to say, Lord, I'll not have this anymore except that the knowledge of you becomes real for me by revelation from heaven, I'm giving up this crap truck. I refuse to go through the motions. It makes my life a travesty and a lie.

And if it's a lie at that foundational place, what then shall the rest of it be? God has called us to more than just Sunday religion. It's more than just a thing afforded us to take the rough edges of our personalities and give us an alternative to an increasingly corrupt world. He's called us to the kingdom and it's a kingdom of truth and it's not truth known to men by the operations of their minds because it has not to do with human wisdom or the princes of this world would have known who was crucified.

But it's the hidden, it's the deep wisdom of God which is revealed by his spirit and freely given to those who will receive it. The whole thing from beginning to end is an operation of God by the spirit given to those who receive it. Flesh and blood has not revealed to some people.

This isn't because you're an astute Jew or because you're religious or any other such qualification but my father in heaven has revealed it. And also we should note, blessed ourself. You want to know something? Until the recognition comes of who Jesus is, there's no blessing because blessing has eminently to do with the kingdom just as curse, which is the opposite has to do with eating from the wrong tree.

Does that sound like a gross simplification? And does that offend our sophisticated sensibilities who love to believe that there are multitudinous and varieties of choices? God says there's only two, blessing or curse. How do you like them apples? And if we're not living in blessing we are most assuredly living in curse. And as I mentioned last week, what we call calamity, God calls curse.

And how many of us would understand that the things which are now coming on the earth, which we call unseasonal weather patterns or fuel shortages or political crisis or financial difficulty or whatever, is the calamity of God, the curse of God for a world that has persistently refused to know him and continues to choose to eat from the tree of death. Blessed ourself. I'm waiting for my Jewish people to be blessed and if you're impressed with their moral attainments and their intellectual attainments and their respectability and their politeness and all of these other wonderful human trappings, I am not.

And are you seeing by the natural eye or are you seeing by the spirit? Are you impressed with the outward man or do you see the inner man? If we're going to be the people of the kingdom and are moving by the spirit of God, we have to see as God sees by the spirit. And he sees through those things as so many filthy rags. He sees the putrid sores that need to be mollified and bound up.

The corruption from head to toe. He's not impressed with the politeness of speech and the other kinds of affectations and worldly things that's so impressive. And until you see as God sees, your heart is not going to groan, your spirit burdens.

To speak to this people to repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. And this is why they've not been touched. They need to be blessed.

And blessing begins with the true recognition of who Jesus is. And who is there in this room who has not heard some Jewish lips? The compliment that Jesus was a wonderful man and an excellent teacher. And you might find the Jew more liberal than that.

Willing even to say that Jesus was a great prophet. You know what I say to such Jews when I meet them? For you, I tremble the more that you shall acknowledge all these things and yet come short of acknowledging that he is the Christ, the son of the living God. Far better that you accused him of having his power from Satan.

Then you should pay him these kinds of good compliments and fail to see who it is who uttered the Sermon on the Mount and gave sight to the blind and raised the dead. Can you see that? Why haven't you said those things then? Because you've been nice and good and been accustomed to picking up the check from the table. But the Lord never directed you to do that.

Eating from the wrong tree habitually. Is he so great a simpleton that he sees only two sources for everything? Either above or below? Is he trying to suggest that that which does not have its origin from heaven has its origin from below? That every good and perfect gift cometh from above, from the Father of light in whom is no shadow, no variableness of turning? And that everything else comes from below? But Lord, we acknowledge that the drug menace came from below, and orgies came from below, and sinister and vicious evils came from below. But are you trying to suggest also that the things which we have called good, and that we have equated with men, also come from below? Jesus rebuked him and said, Thou art an offense unto me.

Get thee behind me safely. For you savor, you smell, of the things which be of men and not... Let that sink deeply into your hearing. Who move by the things which be of men, which are applauded of men, and acknowledged of men, and honored of men, but have not their origin.

There is that which comes from above, which is pure and holy, and that which comes from below, which can take on the appearance of good, and even be respectably religious, and can even not only offend God, but be the impediment of the fulfillment of the things which he desires. And which one of us sitting in this room today, who knows the salvation of God, this servant included, would have known it, if Jesus had responded to the well-meaning intentions of Peter, and had not gone to Jerusalem to be tried by men, and to be crucified, and to be raised again on the third day. Can you see that the good is the enemy of the perfect? And that God is trying to school us in kingdom living? And that when Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden, God established cherubim with flaming swords, to keep them from returning, lest they eat from the tree of life, and live forever in that filthy condition? But I want to tell you children, that the cherubim have put their sword down, and that the return to Eden is open for those who are in Christ Jesus, to eat and to live again from the tree of life.

This one life is both eternal and it's abundant. They're not different things. I've come to bring you life, and that more abundant.

He who hath the son hath life, and he who hath not the son hath not life. But what is the virtue of it, if we're not living by it? And that's why in 1 Corinthians, in that same chapter where we were, just before Paul speaks about determining not to know anything but Christ and Him crucified, Paul says in the 30th verse of the first chapter, But of Him are ye in Christ, Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, that according as it is written, He that glorious let him glory in the Lord. I don't know of anything more radical than what God has made available to men in the

sending of His Son.

And those of us who have stopped only at the level of atonement, who have received Jesus as substitution, have stopped grievously short of God's full intention. There is a full gospel, and it's a lot more than back slaps and bear hugs. It's got to do with this, that of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom.

Not the wisdom of men, but the deep, the hidden wisdom of God, revealed by God and freely given to those who receive it, and righteousness. Righteousness has got nothing to do with being nice. It's got to do with fulfilling the acts of God, which sometime may seem cruel.

Remember what Hamlet said to his mother in that confrontation with Gertrude in her bedroom when he came back from school to find that his mother had married the very man who had slain his father? Some wicked oaf, filled with political ambition, and his mother was such a mindless, sensate being, thinking only of her gratification, that she married even the murderer of this Hyperion and saint that Hamlet had to open the locket around her neck and shove it in her purse and say, look here! Look at these two men! Look at this Hyperion, the saint, this giant, now dead. And look at this oaf whom you've married. Filthy, ruled by passion, and ruled by ambition.

And all of a sudden it broke upon her soul. Oh Hamlet, she said, no more. And as the world would say to us, is that a way to talk to your mother? Is that nice? You know what Hamlet said, and I believe Shakespeare was inspired by God, sometimes one must be cruel in order to be kind.

Dear Presbyterian saint, are you capable of that kind of cruelty? Isn't it beyond your temperament? And I want you to know that kingdom living is always beyond your temperament. God is not going to be limited by our temperament, our nationality, our culture, our habits, the things that are polite. He wants to have the full range of the expression of his life, which is rich, powerful, spontaneous, unique, and is always perfectly fitted to the circumstances to which he brings us.

And the end thereof is always glorious. Are you willing to put aside the things that are nice, the things that are good, for the thing that is perfect? You can't do it without much fear and much trembling. And I want to encourage you to begin to enter into that life by faith.

There's glory there. And until that glory shall be demonstrated to a dying world, how shall we call them to repent for the kingdom of God is at hand? I want you to bow your heads with me this morning. This is not Sunday school class as we have familiarly known it, but I believe that is the deepest calling of God.

That this isn't just mild instruction, but a God-calling for people themselves to repent, to leave the kingdom of this world, however superficially gilded it is with religious respectability, and to enter radically into the kingdom of God and trust Him for all of life, for your wisdom, for your speaking, for your relationships, for your witness, to be true mother, true wife, true father, true husband, who can be it except by His wisdom, His righteousness, His sanctification, His redemption. Precious God, Lord, let Your word be like a hammer upon the rock. And we acknowledge, gracious God, that we have spent decades in being crucified and established in certain mind and mentality and attitude for which no one has ever taken us to task, Lord, and for which indeed we have been complimented.

But You're raising up a standard much higher, the standard of the kingdom. And I ask precious God that You shall have from this room of people, people for that kingdom who shall demonstrate the way of the

tree of life, that You shall give them opportunities this week, in the places where their life is, to come out of the boats of religious familiarity and convenience and security, in the midst of storms which You Yourself shall brew, that they might see You in a way that they have never thought ever to see You, and to hear Your voice calling in one word to obedience, come. And may they, in the hearing of that call, have the courage to respond, trusting You that yea, though You slay them, yet will they trust You, that they may learn, precious God, out of fear and trembling, where Your glory is.

Bless these dear ones, Lord. Let every word of Your speaking be sealed up in their hearts, and be the hammer to beat incessantly upon that which is human and worldly, that needs to be broken to smithereens and be dismissed from their lives, that they might be a kingdom people for Your glory in the earth. In Jesus' holy name, we ask it.

Amen.

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