

Wandering Jew Comes Home

by Art Katz

Art Katz shares his profound journey from atheism to faith, highlighting the hope for Jewish revival through personal transformation and divine grace.

Duration: 50:48

Scripture: Psalm 23:1, John 1:14, John 4:23-24, John 10:16, John 14:6, Ephesians 2:13-14, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Testimony"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal journey of acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God but struggling to receive the revelation that God had given him. He describes his efforts as a high school teacher to awaken moral and ethical sensibility in his students, but ultimately realizing that he himself was still an egotistical monster. The speaker then recounts a transformative experience where he witnessed the lack of compassion and courage in people passing by a broken man on the side of the road. However, he also shares a powerful encounter with a man in Switzerland who showed him unexpected kindness despite his own physical disabilities.

Transcript

We're soon to see one of the greatest spiritual revivals a nation has ever known, when literally the whole house of Israel will accept the Christ. The man who is my guest, and I've chosen him wisely. I've had a purpose in choosing him because he will be an example.

He is an example. Arthur Capps, I want you to come here if you will please. Probably one of the greatest Jewish conversions of the past several years.

Arthur Capps is here at my invitation. A Jewish gentleman who's found the Christ and accepted the great Messiah as his savior. As we sit here and listen, may we realize that this is just one, and in the future there will be thousands who will have the same glorious experience.

This is all a part of your great plan. Give our brother a marvelous anointing of the Holy Spirit as he deals his personal past six years. I find myself in situations like this, wondering how I got here, gasping and sucking for air.

But God has given me the whirlwind treatment, making up for the first 35 years, unproductive years of my life. I praise God for this marvelous opportunity, because I know that the children of God who are here

have that tender place in their heart for God's chosen people. I praise God for our Gentile people who are filled with his spirit, who have touched my life, brought me to the Messiah, to the knowledge of God, through whose ministry I received a baptism in the Holy Spirit, and whose prayers even now are sustaining my life and my ministry to my own people.

Seven years ago I was one of the most vehement, adamant atheists who ever walked. And as you hear this testimony today, I don't want you to consider it just the story of a single man or a single Jewish man, but it's really an expression of an entire people. I'm so utterly representative of my people.

Arrogant, head sure, confident, a rebel. And this is my confidence now, that if God could have met me and turned me to himself, there's hope for those people, my own people, to whom I'm ministering now. I'm a Brooklyn boy, a New Yorker.

I grew up in the Depression years. I was dismayed and vexed by the world. I couldn't understand it.

I was bewildered. I tried to make some sense. I knew that school was not the place to find the answers to the kinds of questions that I was asking.

Those questions were never asked. And everywhere about me, it seemed that people were only too ready to accept so little in life, if only they could sustain their bodies. And as I squinted my eyes a bit and had that intense Jewish perspective, I felt that the whole world had gone amuck, that somehow we had missed the way, that there was some deep design for life that somehow we had lost, and merely stuffing our faces or clothing our bodies or reproducing ourselves was somehow not enough.

There was a conventional wisdom always sucking at us to make us to compromise and to accept so little. Find a nice Jewish girl, get married, you know, settle down, get a job. My mother expressed this, and I suppose that there are many in this audience today who have heard the same kind of wisdom, even from Gentile mothers.

But I was seeking for an abundant life. I didn't know that expression. I had never opened the scriptures in my life.

I was an enemy of God and an enemy of religion, whether it be the Jewish kind or the Gentile kind, and I still am an enemy of that kind of religion. Because what God is about is more than Jewish and Gentile religion. He's more than about a Christian culture.

He's about life, and that abundantly. So I was not just a dropout from school, I was a dropout from the world. And I knew that what I was seeking could not be provided in the reward, the emoluments, the enticements, the blandishments, all of the things that the world has to offer.

But I didn't know where to look or where to turn. I was frenzied. And I stalked about for several years as a high school dropout, a hitchhiker, I was a merchant seaman.

I've tried my hand at countless occupations, seeking for that fulfillment that I could not name. I was looking for a city, and I thought in some naive way, if I went to San Francisco, if I went to Los Angeles, that somehow I would find a city in which my soul could be at ease. But I know now that I was looking for a city not built with hands.

And you know that we modern people are just, what can I say? We're setting ourselves up for our own disillusionment. We have such foolish expectancies. We think we're going to find a city.

We think we're going to find a special vocation. And with that other such tragedies, we think that we're going to find some person. And I believe that somewhere there was a female who would unlock the mystery of my being.

And oh, oh, oh, you have to read between the lines of the painful and tragic frustration and defeat when we demand more from a human relationship than it can ever give. I was seeking a relationship, but not with a mortal, and I did not know it. I never saw any evidence for God anywhere.

I was utterly convinced that anyone who believed in God was preposterous, that religion was a cop-out, that it was a deterrent to progress, and the quicker that we could do away with it, the more manly we would become in facing up to the realities of this world. And probably I was the most unrealistic man who walked, but confident that I was in reality. Naturally, I was angry at the world.

I was seeking for a radical solution to life. And don't you know that we need it? We desperately need a radical solution, far more radical than any radical or revolutionary in our time has ever conceived. And it's no accident, I think, that it was Karl Marx who's the architect of these radical philosophies, that it was a Jew who sought to find through the exercise of his own brain some kind of messianic world system in which men would be reconciled to each other.

And naturally, when I first came to that, it was intoxicating. I was a left-winger. I was a radical.

I thought that I had found myself. I thought, this is it. The world needs a revolution.

If only we could change the structure of things, that innate goodness which is in man would find its expression. And of course, there was no one more innately good than I. How patient our God is. Oh, how patient He is.

Because He saw me from the first, and He saw in my staggering and in my stumbling the whole history and the whole expression of a desperate Jewish people seeking somehow to find reconciliation, wholeness, abundance, and being gods unto themselves. Going through the forms of religion, whether we call it Marxism or Judaism, but without the knowledge of the living God. There came a time during the Korean War when I was this hot-headed radical that I was drafted into the service.

There was no question in my mind whatsoever that I was going to go to Korea and that I was going to die on a battlefield, and that my life was going to be as absurdly concluded as it had been lived. But that's not what happened. They didn't send me to Korea.

They sent me the other direction simply because I had the same happy initial for my last name as Miss Coleman. Names. I always despised my name, Kat.

It didn't mean a thing to me. It was an object of derision and joke. I didn't know what it meant to be a Jew, and yet I knew I was Jewish.

I was perplexed by so many things. But in this particular instance, because I had this initial for my name, those men whose names came from the middle of the alphabet, H-I-J-K, they went to Europe, and other and finer men went to Korea and died. I think you have to be Jewish to understand the combined emotions

of fury and joy that I experienced at the same time.

Joyous that my life was to be spared. Joyous that I was going to Europe where I felt that I had a greater affinity than ever I had had in America, because in this land I felt myself to be a man without a country. And furious that my life was to be spared for so stupid and so capricious a thing as a letter of the alphabet.

And I think God wants you to understand today the frenzy of young men who are ready to tear down university campuses, who are ready to destroy cities, who are ready to leave our whole civilization in smoldering ruins, because they are filled with the same frenzy, the same spirit of despair that so afflicted my life. And it must be so for men who are living in a disordered universe without a God. So I went to Europe, and of course, where would they send me but to Germany.

And I thought to myself, Kat, you'll never look one of those people straight in the face. You despise them. They're your enemy.

They took six million like you, and they made ashes of you. But you know that reality has a stubborn way of dealing with our prejudices. I think there are a lot of prejudices that are going to be met with in these last days by the reality of God.

And the more that I, the longer I lived in Germany in the bosom of this people, the more I felt drawn to them, even despite myself, why they were so Jewish. Their German was so like our Yiddish. And what they called the mutlishkeits, this Euro-German background, this love for good talk and zest for life and living.

Why, that's Jewish. I love their medieval towns and cities. I love the antiquity.

I love the cobblestones worn smooth by the passage of feet over centuries. I felt more at home there than ever I had felt in this brash, brittle, one-dimensional United States, where if a building is 50 years old, they tear it down. And so the more I came to be drawn to this German people, the more I could not understand how they did what they did to us Jews.

To me, this was, what can I say, the great burning question of the 20th century. And I want you to understand that this is still so for millions of Jewish people. God gave me an opportunity at the beginning of this summer to spend some weeks at the Jewish Theological Seminary as a summer student.

And I came to see that from the humblest student to the professor, to the directors of that institution, the great unanswered question for them is why the Holocaust? They can't understand it. And many have had their convictions shaken by the impact of the shocks that we Jews have had to absorb in this 20th century. And so it was a great question for me also.

Well, it came Yom Kippur, and I wonder how many of you know what that means. Because in just a few weeks, Jews all over the world will be observing the Day of Atonement, coming into their synagogues and into their temples, maybe for the only time of the year when they will attend, feeling some kind of a compulsion to be in that Jewish place on the Day of Atonement. I think if you visited, you would find little resemblance to what they practice and what is described in the scriptures.

Of course, there's no longer a temple. There's no longer a place for sacrifice. There's no longer a high priest.

There's no longer an atonement in conventional Jewish thinking. And yet they find substitutes which don't satisfy. I wasn't going to go to a synagogue on that Yom Kippur Day in Germany because I was an atheist.

I went instead to a concentration camp, Dachau. Oh, I didn't think I was going to find anything that I did not know or understand. But that's just how foolish a man I was, because we don't know as we ought to know.

And my experience in knowing is that every time God gives me to know as I ought to know, I'm rendered speechless. And that day I walked through that concentration camp, Dachau, and I walked into the barracks, and I ran my hand over the splintered bunks. And in mine's eye, I pictured these gone skeletons that had only been heard of there a few years before.

I walked the company streets. I saw the whipping posts still in their place. Nothing had been changed that we might have a living memorial of that age of horror.

I went into the commandant's office, and exhibition tables had been set up, and I could peer through the glass and see the pictures of bodies being pushed into a pit with a bulldozer. I could see tattered uniforms, fragments of letters, implements of torture. I went into the gas room.

I saw the jets in the ceilings and the sign in German informing these people to disrobe in expectation of a shower. And then I went into the great factories of extermination, and I saw the ovens with the ashes still in their places, the conveyor belts where this marvel of efficiency had taken place, and tens upon tens of thousands had gone up in smoke. And my last thing was I stood outside by the great smokestacks and put my hand upon it.

If you'd seen me leave that day, you would have said, well, that man's drunk. I didn't walk away. I staggered away, speechless, out of control.

My mind, my spirit, overcome by what I had seen. You see, we humans have the wonderful faculty for creating greater horror than we can even comprehend. And I found myself on a train that day.

I didn't care where I was being taken. If my life had ended that day, I would not have complained. I was numb with pain.

And I found myself being taken back to Munich, because Dachau is practically in the shadow of that great cosmopolitan city. I think God is trying to tell us something, that the horror of the 20th century, and maybe we've only begun to see the first installment, has not been perpetrated by barbaric and uncivilized people, but by the most eminently civilized people on earth. Civilization has failed.

Culture has failed. Human solutions have failed. And we're going to be desperately driven to the knowledge of God, even despite ourselves.

And this is my hope for my Jewish people in these last days. Because the same thing that came upon me, this affliction of soul, this distress, this anguish, this want of a solution, is going to come upon them in increasing number, and modern men everywhere, when we realize how bankrupt and how futile and how impoverished our human solutions are. I had not yet come to that point, because that day in that train being taken back to Munich, I had a strange experience.

I had my face pressed to the glass, and I was watching this idyllic Bavarian countryside whiz by, and the beauty of it cuts your heart like a knife. And I thought of the great genius that that beauty had inspired, and

names like Beethoven, Mozart, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Goethe, Schiller, poets, composers, writers, philosophers came to mind. And I wondered how the same nation that could have produced this great genius could also have produced that horror.

And while I was contemplating that question, I was distracted by the presence of another person with me in that compartment. It was one of these European trains where you slide the little glass door shut. And I turned for a quick second, and then I did a very quick double take when I saw the blur of a blonde head and blue eyes.

And I felt something welling up in my chest, great waves of hatred, because there opposite me was the enemy, the master race, the Aryans. And I turned to focus on that brute, and I was ready to rend him limb from limb. But when I focused, I realized that I didn't have to do it.

The job had already been done. I was looking at half man. His arms and his legs had been left behind on some recent battlefield.

He had hooks for arms and artificial limbs for legs. And that poor sucker was writhing in pain, and I had my arms folded over my chest, wearing the uniform of Uncle Sam, looking on that sorry spectacle, and thinking to myself, suffer you dog. Whatever pain you're experiencing now is the most minute portion of what your people have visited upon mine.

And I felt something struggling, as we Jews say in our kishkas, deep down. And it was pity. It was hatred.

It was things I can't even name. And in disgust, I got out of my seat, and I walked right over to this man. I didn't say a word.

I put my hands right on his limb to adjust it. And the moment I touched it, I could taste the nausea in my mouth. And this man beckoned by signs and gestures what I should do until he achieved his peace, and then he had me sit down beside him.

I thought to myself, what a sorry scene is this. I, the Jew, and he, the German. I wearing the uniform of Uncle Sam, the army of the victor, and he, the defeated, the vanquished one, and we're trying to be brothers.

And I thought to myself, given the opportunity and the desperation again, we would be at each other's throats. And you know, I was studying that man's faith, because I believed then, as I believe now, that our faces, that our life is written in our faces. It's no accident, the faith that we carry.

And I was looking at his face for telltale signs of barbarism and cruelty. And for the life of me, I couldn't find it. Why, it was an ordinary man's faith.

Why, these I see behind me today. And you know, a thought came to me that I know now is not of myself. It said, Art, there but for the grace of God go you.

It's only an accident that you were born in Brooklyn. It's only a caprice that you're Jewish. You might just as easily have been born German, and then you would have been the one stoking the bodies into the ovens.

My first impulse was to cry out, oh no, not me. I'm one of the righteous ones. I carry placards, and I distribute leaflets, and I'm for the underdog.

I embrace all the right causes. But I didn't say that. My head yet slumped on my chest, and I received what was so evidently true.

And I knew deep down in my heart that I was completely capable of atrocity. I knew I was a murderer already. I had never committed the act, but there were many occasions that I had given looks that could kill, and that I had murdered and raged in my heart and with my mouth.

I had never come to that Jesus who said that if any man be angry with his brother, he's already. But the moment I did, some years later, something in my heart went click, and I knew he was true. God allowed me my last illusion, and on the basis of my experience that day, I somehow resolved that what the world needed was education.

Oh, our great patient God. Education is the answer, and I cried out, Eureka, Kat. No wonder you couldn't have found yourself.

You were the high school dropout. You were the clown. Your mother had to come up to see the principal every two weeks.

No wonder you never contemplated that as a vocation for yourself. You needed a calling, and this is it. This will take into account your Jewish zeal and your purpose, and you're not going to be a mere time-server.

You're not going to just disseminate information. You're not just going to dispense grades, but you're going to create a brave new world with these unspoiled and uncorrupted young people. You see how I was being set up for the fall? And I labored when I got out of the Army.

I graduated the University of California, Berkeley. I became a high school teacher in the Bay Area, and I worked till all hours of the night. I tried to find ingenious ways to penetrate the hearts and minds of my students.

I was trying to awaken moral and ethical sensibility, but after four years of back-breaking labor, I finally had to face the facts. Kat, you're a total failure, and you know how ironic it is? Because I had reached the age when men are expected to arrive. Oh, I was receiving congratulations and applause, and my Jewish mother, beaming from ear to ear, she used to speak about her son, the professor.

You know the way Jewish mothers exaggerate? But she had it coming, because the lives of Jewish mothers are so impoverished, so full of frustration and defeat, that when they see a little nachas--I'm teaching the Jewish word today--a little satisfaction from their sons, they deem. My mother didn't know what I taught or why I taught, but she could have nachas from my son, the professor. And while she was beaming, I was being destroyed, because I saw that my kids were not being changed.

Oh, their tear could come to their eyes from time to time. They could get a little excited about a little issue, but they would subside to where they really existed, not lived. And I was made to see that where they really lived was in their closets with their wardrobes, with the power of their cars, with such petty questions of social life and dates and personal things.

And I thought to myself, this is a glimpse of what men really are. And Cass, are you better? So you can say all the right words, so you can speak all the right slogans. You know all the humanistic things, but what are you? And what is your university degree? Has that made of you a man? And I knew that we

desperately needed to become somehow new men, that we needed a new quality of life.

We needed a new quality of courage, a new quality of compassion. We needed somehow to be able to pour out our lives. And I knew that you don't obtain this through education.

And I was entered into a period of such despair that I could not go on teaching. I had nothing to offer my students. I took a year's leave of absence, and I began to be the wandering Jew all over again.

I didn't know where to go or why or how. I just knew that somehow I had to break every connection and throw my life out on the mainstream and just let it be carried where it will. And I began a 14-month journey as a bum, a hitchhiker.

We teachers are not paid that well that we could travel in any other way. And I went 30,000, 40,000 miles standing by the side of the road like that, letting myself drift and be carried. And I kept a journal of that trip, and it's a fantastic journal.

The book is coming out this week, made from it. And it begins with a description first of the outward events, and then slowly of things that were being brought to my consciousness, and then of unusual kinds of experience that I had never anticipated. Because I used to speak about human brotherhood, but it was another thing to stand by the side of the road in the drizzling rain and watch the cars whiz by and see blank faces and slash lines for miles, people lacking the courage to stop for the desolate and broken man.

Where were our phrases and our slogans then? But you know the strangest kind of people stopped for me? A man stopped for me in Switzerland with a brand new car, not content just to wait behind the wheel and give me the come on. He got out of the car and he greeted me at the side of the road, beaming from ear to ear as if I were doing him the favor. Imagine what my first suspicion was.

And he took my filthy rucksack, out of which I had been living for months, realizing I didn't even need half the things in it, and tossed it in the backseat of his car. And when it hit his new upholstery, I winced for him and looked at his face. He didn't even notice.

I thought, what manner of man is this? Every American I know, if they got a scratch on their bumper, they're panic stricken. And he made me to sit down in that front seat, and I felt as if I were the exalted guest. You know, you can't make somebody to feel that way by feigning anything.

And as we drove off, he turned and he looked at me. It was well past the tourist season. I was not a high school kid out on a lock.

And he said to me in German, why are you traveling? And so well as I could, I tried to explain that I was not just a modern man. I was the modern man. I was the quintessence of modern men.

And my life was broken at its very foundation, and I was seeking for the deepest answers to life. And for some strange reason, which I can't even understand to this day, I told this Gentile stranger that I was Jewish. And that's something I didn't share with most Gentiles, because they don't know what to do with it.

They grunt, or they go silent, or wurf. You are listening to Mr. Katt, Arthur Katt, telling you of his search for the Christ, the true Messiah. The Jewish gentleman telling of his search for the true Messiah.

And here is Arthur Katt. A man stopped for me in Switzerland with a brand new car, not content just to wait behind the wheel and give me the come on. He got out of the car and he greeted me at the side of the

road, beaming from ear to ear, as if I were doing him the favor.

Can you imagine what my first suspicion was? And he took my filthy rucksack, out of which I had been living for months, realizing I didn't even need half the things in it, and tossed it in the back seat of his car. And when it hit his new upholstery, I winced for him and looked at his face. He didn't even notice.

I thought, what manner of man is this? Every American I know, if they got a scratch on their bumper, they're panic stricken. And he made me to sit down in that front seat, and I felt as if I were the exalted guest. You know, you can't make somebody to feel that way by feigning anything.

And as we drove off, he turned and he looked at me. It was well past the tourist season. I was not a high school kid out on a lark.

And he said to me in German, why are you traveling? And so well as I could, I tried to explain that I was not just a modern man. I was the modern man. I was the quintessence of modern men.

And my life was broken at its very foundation, and I was seeking for the deepest answers to life. And for some strange reason, which I can't even understand to this day, I told this Gentile stranger that I was Jewish. And that's something I didn't share with most Gentiles, because they don't know what to do with it.

They grunt or they go silent or worse. This man began to beam as if I had pressed a secret button, like a neon tube. He was radiant.

And he insisted that we stop for refreshments at his expense, for which I was grateful. And we had a conversation that day that I'll never forget in life of much talking. And many Christian people say to me today, Art, how do you witness the Jewish people? I want you to pay very close attention.

This is the first witness that I had ever received in 34 years. And I was not a Jew who had grown up in a Jewish ghetto, who had been insulated and cut off. I was widely traveled throughout the United States, had had many contacts, many jobs, and I had never been given a piece of literature.

I had never been spoken to. I had never been challenged. I didn't know what the word witness meant.

And for the first time, I was going to hear the gospel, not even in my own language, but in German. And the whole thing began by me doing all the talking. I found things coming out of my mouth that I was pouring out to the stranger that I had not shared with my own mother and closest friends.

I wondered why I was pouring out like this to a man that I did not even know. But he was not just simply listening to me. He was receiving my life into his.

Real hearing, people, is an act of love. It's not putting a notch in our spiritual belt and applying the four questions or any other technique. We Americans are people of techniques and manuals, and we profess to believe in the Holy Spirit.

That man was hearing me as I had never been heard, and he wasn't gingerly holding up his skirt for fear it would trail in the mud. He was receiving every filthy thing of my life. And when I finished, I was just completely drained.

I leaned back with complete exhaustion. I had nothing more to say. I was a man who had been brought to the utter end of himself as I had never before seen it, even myself.

And I looked at this Gentile man, and I thought to myself, now what is he going to tell me? There's nothing exceptional looking about him. Is he going to tell me about philosophy? I've been a Marxist, an existentialist, a pragmatist. You name it, I've been it.

Is he going to tell me about ideologies and mass movements and politics? Well, I've belonged to half a dozen organizations on the attorney general's list. There's nothing new under the sun. And this man looked at me, and he said, Art, he said, do you know what the world needs? I looked at him, and with my smug, white, alicky, cynical face, thinking, what can he tell me? I said, what? He said, Art, what the world needs is for men to wash one another's feet.

You know what happened in my heart in that moment? Something went pow! And I felt fragments and smithereens flying around in the cavity of my chest. I staggered back. I gasped.

I choked. I sputtered. I wondered what had hit me, but my whole heart exploded under the impact of that single utterance.

To this day, I could ask, how did he know? How did he know that the single great burden of my life that was killing me was the inability of men to be reconciled to each other? Wherever I looked, I saw enmity, division, strife. I had kids who came into my class at the beginning of the school year who were my enemies before they saw me, simply because I was teacher. And I saw that we teachers were no better.

We had enmity against the administrators who were above us. And something cried out in my heart, Eureka, catch, this is it. Overnight, without a single drop of blood being spilled, the world may be made whole in a spirit of love and humility.

And I tell you that the saliva began to run in my Jewish mouth, as it had not run for many years, going back to the time when I was a kid stumbling around the streets of Brooklyn, thinking of those great words like truth, justice, mercy, compassion, righteousness, not knowing in the world what they meant, but knowing that these great swelling words had everything to do with real life. And for the first time in many years of a dry mouth, I was salivating again in the impact of pure truth. And then this man went on to relate to me the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There was no question in my mind that I was hearing truth. But the thing that shattered me was that it all came centered in the name of Jesus, that it had to do with this Christ and this Christianity, which has meant for Jews over the past 1900 years, so much oppression, so much persecution, so much death. I could not understand that.

And some weeks after that, I met a young Gentile girl with whom I should have had nothing to do. She was a symbol of everything that I despised in American life. She was a Gentile of the Gentiles, who had been left in Europe by her friends for the day on vacation.

I happened to stumble upon her. I should have turned on my heels, but there was something about that girl, just like Edwin in Switzerland, that drew me like a magnet. And we went off hand in hand that day, walking the woods around this European city.

She was lily white, middle-class Protestant from Kansas. And all through the afternoon, I was probing this girl's motive. How come you're being kind to me? How come you're not afraid of me? And she would answer every question very simply and decently in a very straightforward way, as you would expect a fine Christian girl to do.

And the more she spoke that way, the more exasperated I got. And finally, I could take it no more. And I thought to myself, okay, kid, you've had it now.

I hitched up my sleeves in delicious expectation, planted my heels in the dirt, and I was going to give them my famous \$64 question. You see, when I wanted a little diversion in my atheistic days, I would find a Christian and wipe them out in debate. I had never found a Christian who could answer this question that I was now going to propound to this simple little girl.

I said, now, look, you've been talking about God all day long. How do you know that He is? I felt so smug. I thought, here it comes, one of those little answers they learn in Sunday school, why I'll roll over like a steamroller.

That kid didn't hesitate for a second. She looked up at me with that face, and she said, why aren't you? I said, I know that God lives. He lives in me.

You know what happened to my steamroller? Stopped dead in its tracks, and something in my heart went pow! And I felt the fragments flying again. I was choked and stupefied again, and scratching my head, thinking, what did she say? What was so brilliant about that? What was so theological about that? And then it occurred to me that what she said was true. There was something in that girl's face.

There was something that permeated that girl's total personality that I could not identify and that had drawn me like a magnet. And I knew in that second that this little kid, I was twice her age, twice as educated, twice as sophisticated, but she was in the light, and I was in the darkness. And you know, this is exactly what Paul is talking about when he says that God is waiting for you Gentiles to move us Jews to jealousy.

Not for your great cathedrals and great churches and eloquent ministers. We're quite masterful at those things ourselves, but to see the light of God transforming the faces and lives of Gentile people is something that will prick our hearts. And only a few weeks after that, aboard the deck of a tramp steamer in the Mediterranean, traveling as a bum, the cheapest way to go out on the open deck for three days and nights isn't a significant number, huddled together with homosexuals, drifters, beatniks.

I met a Jewish man like myself who had obtained a copy of the New Testament when he bought a ship in New York some months before. I was a well-read man, and I had never opened this book in 34 years of life, not once. I was contemptuous of the Bible or any other single book that could claim to answer all of our questions.

But now I was anxious to read from it only because of the unusual lives that had been encountering mine. And I borrowed that New Testament, I found myself a place to slip down to the deck against the bulkhead with a porthole over my shoulder, the well-paying passengers living it up inside, their laughter coming out on the night there, and I began the reading of this unusual book in that light. And from the very first the sense came upon me, this book is unlike any book you've ever read.

It had such a commanding authority. I was drawn to the personality of this Jesus. I couldn't put that book down.

I didn't know who he was, but I knew that everything that he represented was everything that the world so desperately needed. I understood in a flash why it was not the humble and the broken and the lowly who opposed him, but the religious, the righteous, who gnashed their teeth at him, and as they do right to this

very day. He's not changed and men have not changed, and it's exactly the same conflict now as it was then.

My mother loved it when I came home as a Marxist. She loved it when I embraced radical philosophy. She delighted in her son who could spin all kinds of atheistic philosophy.

But when I came home professing the Messiah, the door was slammed in my face and she called me mad. I came to a certain passage in the New Testament that night of the woman taken in the act of adultery, and I had to put the book down. I got so scared.

Something had been quickening in my heart as I've been reading that book. I felt that I had found a hero indeed, not another Karl Marx, not another social philosopher, but a real hero indeed. But he had said he had come to fulfill the law, and the law says dead by stoning.

What could he say to these men? There was no human answer. I was afraid for him, and I closed the book and the sweat was oozing out of the palms of my hand. My heart was palpitating.

I didn't want him to be crushed, and I tried to think of some human answer myself. I racked my brain up one side, down the other, and finally I was exhausted. I knew there was no human answer.

And expecting the worst, I opened those pages and I continued reading on, and it described Jesus bent over the earth poking his finger in the dirt. That woman who stood broken by his feet to me was a symbol of the world, guilty. But somehow we needed more than just judgment.

We needed more than just condemnation. We needed something deeper than justice, and I didn't know what the worst way it was or where we would ever find it. And when Jesus looked up, and I picture those men circling him with their eyes ablaze and spittle running from the corners of their mouth, delighting in this opportunity to do in this great nuisance, he spoke that one line, let him who is without sin cast the first stone.

And I tell you people that that line came up right off the page. It went up into my eyes and into my brain. My body began to shake and quake, a tremor, and it didn't stop in my brain.

I was so surprised because I thought my brain was everything. I worshipped human intellect, and it turned down to where we really live, out of the heart, precede all the issues of life. And I felt something like a knife's blade wending and turning, cutting and penetrating, deep, deep, deep, and cutting through every issue over which I had ever agonized all my life long.

What is truth? What is justice? What is mercy? What is righteousness? And when that shockwave stopped, I knew with complete certitude, unshakable as I've known it from that day to this, there's a living God, I'm reading his word, and Jesus is who he claims to be. See, the word of God is quick, powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword to the cutting of the center of the soul and the spirit. I acknowledged that Jesus was the Son of God, and I went on four months more railing, lusting, and being the same egotistical monster that I had been for the first 34 years.

Because I acknowledged, but I would not receive the revelation that God had given me. You know what God has shown me in these past six years? There are countless numbers of Gentiles who are exactly in this condition. Oh, they acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, but they've never seen any evidence in their life of the presence of the Spirit of God.

Their Bible is a dead book. Prayer is sawdust in their mouths. They have to bring themselves up by great physical contortions to ring a bell to witness because they've merely acknowledged.

I frankly confess I wrestled against God trying to avoid this most painful and embarrassing revelation he had given me. I didn't want to become a Christian, what would my mother say? What would my intellectual colleagues say? God was threatening not just to reveal a truth, but to turn my life completely around, and I didn't want it turned. And four months later in the city of Jerusalem, staying at the Hebrew University, going to the library every day, trying to find a way out by refinding some book, talking to professors.

I was put on a bus one day to go visit a community of Orthodox Jews. I never got there. I still don't understand how because it was a bus I had taken many times.

I found myself lost. It was pointless to go on. I came out of the bus.

I walked into the first store I could find. I asked the woman at the counter for instruction. She made me a little map.

I was about to leave, and I took a look. I was in a bookstore. I took a look at the titles that said New Testament, Bibles, Christian commentaries.

I turned to my heel and looked at that woman's Jewish face. I said, what is this place? She said, we're a congregation of Hebrew Christians, Jewish believers in the Messiah, and this is our bookstore adjoining our chapel. I heard something click in my heart, and I knew I was not to leave.

I stayed five days with these Pentecostal Jewish believers. Don't we have a lovely God? Isn't he painstaking in every detail? Does he miss an iota? Doesn't he pour himself out at us with such lavishness as if we were the only of his children of which he is concerned? And I saw Jews pray in those five days as I had never seen Jews pray, not mechanically out of a prayer book, out of their hearts with power, with conviction, as if they really knew God. And when I saw Jews worship with their hands above their heads, hallelujah.

I knew, I said to myself, you can't feign this, Kent. You can't fabricate this. You can't manufacture this.

You can't learn this. This is the result of the spontaneous overflow of a loving heart that knows God in spirit and in truth. And they were opening up the scriptures to me and giving me the most intense four-day orientation in the Bible that any Jew had ever received, and praying for me, under me, with me, over me.

And I went to sleep that fourth night on the front pew of that chapel, agitated out of my skull, trying by the power of my brain, my intellect, to put all the pieces into place. And it didn't work. I didn't know that God's salvation was that no flesh should boast.

He does it all. And in my sleep that night, the pieces fell into place. I could feel something going click, click, click.

I woke the next morning with the most wonderful sense of peace and calm that I had ever enjoyed in 35 agitated years of life. How I'm waiting for this peace to come upon my Jewish people, my own family, my own mother. We're perplexed, and we're frenzied until we come to Him who is the Prince of Peace.

And I came to that breakfast table that morning, and I said to this lovely Jewish woman, Rina, Rina, I believe I understand. And when she heard understand from my mouth, she fell out of her seat on the floor,

knocked her chair over. With her hands above her head, she began to praise God as tears rolled down her face, because her prayer that night was, Lord, we've done everything with this stubborn man.

You make him to understand. And God showed me my sleep that night. He had taken me by the hand as a child.

What is our intellectual attainment? What are the things in which we boast? And he led me step by step by step with the most painstaking and loving care, and counter by encounter, put his book in my hand, brought me to this crossroad in that I might see other Jewish believers, that I might not think I'm the only freak who had ever been sought by Jesus. And that day, six years ago, I prayed my first prayer. Oh, there were a lot of questions I couldn't answer.

I didn't understand about the virgin birth. I didn't understand about the Trinity. I had intellectual perplexity, but I knew this Jesus who says, I am the way.

I know that I am is the name of God, and no Jew would ever dare call himself that. I am the way, the truth, and the life, and art. No man comes to the Father.

You'll never come to the Father. You'll never come to a knowledge of yourself. You'll never come to your Jewish identity, except you come by me.

I bowed my head that day, and I prayed. I invited this Jesus to be my Messiah, my Lord, and my God. And I, who thought that I was the radical and revolutionary, was entered into the most radical revolutionary transformation in the entire course of my life.

And it's going on still right to this moment. God began to work in my nature and in my life. The first thing I was aware of was this great peace and this great calm.

I didn't have to make my point. I didn't have to drive home. I didn't have to assert myself.

I returned to the teaching profession. I lost every friend that I ever had, but one. And this Jewish brother subsequently received the Lord before he died in a swimming pool accident.

And God began to do strange things in the classroom. After that, I received the power of the Holy Spirit. One night, in a home of Gentile friends, in a distant community away from any urban settlement of Jews, I said to these people who all loved the Jews.

They were studying Hebrew. They knew more Yiddish kites than I did. I said, how is it you have this intense love of the Jews? There's not a Jew for miles around.

She said, I don't know, Art, but our God loves your people. And to the degree that we have his love in us, we love you also. And in that atmosphere of love that night, the heavens parted, and I, who had been seeking this baptism for a year of frustrating circumstances, being slapped on the back of my hands, being held up and chucked under the chin and sweating and frustrated, that night, in the most beautiful way as a Jewish girl laid hands upon me, as everyone was speaking in the Spirit, as I had my eyes closed and I thought I was in some ancient synagogue and they were all wailing in Hebrew, the heavens parted, the God touched me, something burst from around my chest.

I found myself breathing and sucking air as if I had never truly breathed before. And in that same instance, something collapsed around my heart, which I had not even known existed. It was a wall.

And God showed me it was the accumulation, the residue of heartache and disappointment and defeat and bitterness that had accumulated all through the years and had granulated and become a solid wall between my heart and the hearts of men and the heart of God himself. And that night, that wall fell. He touched me.

One touch of God, one touch of God has more cathartic power, more cleansing power, more renewing power than all of the psychiatrists, than all of the human resources of men. He touched me. In that same instant, I found myself floating through a black chasm, and God made me to know that this was the gulf that had separated the Jewish people from their God since the advent of Jesus.

And I came to the beginning of that place where the Jews had known their God as Yahuwah and as Jehovah. And in that great moment, something burst, and my hands were above my head. I had been a self-conscious man before, but then I didn't care what I looked like.

I didn't care how I appeared. The water was running down my face. I was sniffing and sobbing and choking and sputtering and gasping.

And as God flushed out all of that wall, all that accumulated grit, all of that dirt, all of that filth, in came something to fill that great void, which I knew was love and the Spirit of God. And as it reached my head, I began to speak in a new heavenly language. From that day on, I became God's fool.

Things began happening in the classroom. Eighteen students were saved in a world history class, in a discussion of life after death in Egypt. Some sixty students saved in a high school in my last year as a teacher.

And my wife, Thereseus, collected the notices from the principal when I was called into his office to explain my unusual behavior. He said, Don't you know art? You're going beyond the rules and regulations. I said, Why, of course I know.

I said, But don't you know that this is a matter of life or death? Are you aware of that this afternoon, precious people? This is a matter of life or death. I said to this principal, who was coming to the end of his tenure as a public school official, he was going to retire. He had his station wagon lying in readiness with his maps and everything ready to go, just making it out before the riots and the real hell were to break loose in those schools.

I said, Don't you know, Mr. Pinckney, that it's life or death? And if you saw someone drowning and you were standing on the beach and they were going down for that third time and the water was coming out of their eyes and ears and mouth and they were sputtering and choking, literally sinking, and there's a sign on the sand that said, No swimming allowed, wouldn't you go in? He had no answer. And then I turned to him. I said, Mr. Pinckney, I said, Are you a Christian? Oh, I knew he was some kind of a denominational man and he had some kind of office, but he looked at me so aghast, so pained that I dare put to him that simple question, and I left.

Some months ago, I met a colleague from that school and said, Art, did you hear about Dr. Pinckney? I said, No. He said three months after his retirement, he dropped dead. It's literally a matter of life or death.

And God called me supernaturally into the works in which I'm now engaged. He said that he was going to make of me an oracle and a mouthpiece that I would speak to the dead, that graves would be opened and the spiritual dead would come forth and that my ministry would be attended by signs and by wonders. And

I know that this is what I'm looking for God to bring to my Jewish people, that they might see in 1970 and in this decade, the same power, the same confirmation of the living word in Jesus as they saw in the book of Acts, when in the unction of a single sermon under the power of the Holy Spirit, thousands came to the knowledge of God in spirit and truth.

I think it's the same God who will work the same way today. God has brought us to New York. I'm the director now of a work to the Jewish people, the American Board of Admissions to the Jews for the New York Outreach, charged with the responsibility of bringing the gospel to two and a half million Jews.

I'm nothing, utterly nothing. No human skill could possibly do it. But God knows that I know that my whole dependency is upon Him and all that would be released by your prayer.

And I want to finish with this today. Some months after I came back to California as a saved man from Israel, wondering why the God of all this world, against whom I had railed all my life, against whom I had been such a blasphemer and such an enemy, would condescend to seek me, to breathe upon me, to touch me, to draw me to Himself, to enter me into His precious service. And God began to lead me as a schoolteacher to give my testimony in churches in the community.

And one Sunday evening after the service was over, some people came up to me, and among them was a roly-poly Gentile woman. Not much to look at. She said, Mr. Katz, you don't know me, but you had my daughter when you first began teaching at the high school.

She knew that you were an atheist and a radical and came home from school every afternoon weeping over you. See, it's the sexual fervent prayer of righteous men and women that avails much. And she said, you know, Art, since that day, both my daughter and I have been praying for you.

I didn't say a word, but I just took roly-poly up into my arms and I kissed her. I said, so you're the woman whose prayers have entered me into the kingdom of heaven. I knew I did not know one single person who knew what the prayer meant.

And so we come at your prayer for this ministry to God's chosen people in these last days. I praise God for the Spirit-filled Gentile believers whom He has used to bring me to Himself, to fill me with His Spirit, to pray for this ministry, because we know that He's going to work great wonders in these days. Will you bow your heads with me in a moment of prayer? Gracious, merciful, loving, patient, wonderful living God, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Lord, Thou doest all things well. We praise Thee for Thy unspeakable and infinite mercy, how You seek the lost. You're the great shepherd of the sheep.

And our hearts cry to You this day, Lord God, with this congregation of Thy children, as Thy Spirit, Holy God, would be poured forth upon this earth, that You as the great shepherd might speak, O God, that Thy sheep might hear Thy voice, wherever they wander, lost, broken, disconsolate, tormented, anguished, frustrated, defeated, that they might be brought into that great sheepfold of Jewish and Gentile believers, that they might know Thee, and praise Thee, and love Thee, and serve Thee, Jesus, our Messiah, our Lord, and our God, in spirit and in truth.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/wandering-jew-comes-home/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net