

# (Messages) Nearness of Jesus

by Basilea Schlink

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*The sermon shares the story of the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary and how God's presence and miraculous provision transformed their lives and ministry.*

**Duration:** 55:31

**Scripture:** Psalm 30:5, Psalm 34:17, Psalm 126:5, Matthew 7:7, Romans 8:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Hebrews 12:6

**Topics:** "Jesus"

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## Description

In this sermon, Mother Basilia Schlink talks about the experience of Canaan, the land where God dwelled and performed miracles in biblical times. She emphasizes that Canaan has become a reality today, where God continues to perform miracles through prayer and faith. Mother Basilia shares a personal example of how God intervened during the construction of the motherhouse and chapel, turning a difficult situation into a blessing. She also highlights the importance of repentance and the love for Jesus as the motivation for their ministry. The sermon concludes by acknowledging the power of loving Jesus and how it has made Canaan a worldwide influence for believers.

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## Transcript

The Miracles of God Experienced Today, Part One. On a small piece of land located on Route 3 between Heidelberg and Frankfurt in Germany, you will find the home of the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary. They call their little land Canaan.

Like the biblical Canaan, their land is a promised land. It's a place where the reign of Jesus should be seen. It is a land where the miracles of God are experienced today.

Today you'll be hearing the first part of a series of talks written by Mother Basilea Schlink, one of the two foundresses and mothers of the Sisterhood. The sisters will now share with you themselves how their Sisterhood came into being in Darmstadt, Germany, after the frightening events of the Second World War. God comes when everything is dark.

An hour of destruction and suffering becomes the occasion which God uses to pave the way for His work. In the dreadful night of September 11 to 12, 1944, our city, Darmstadt, Germany, was almost completely bombed out in 18 minutes. Thousands were killed.

In the smoking ruins, we looked for our dear friends. We had lost all of our possessions. The flourishing youth work of Mother Basilea and Mother Materia, at that time Dr. Clara Schlink and Erika Madaus, also seemed to lie smoldering in ashes.

What had happened on this dreadful night to the 150 girls that had come to the Bible studies once a week in Mother Basilea's parent cellar? Christian work was almost entirely prohibited during these years, and it was very difficult and dangerous for us to attend these Bible studies. Yet we continued to come as we were so gripped with a hunger for the Word of God. But now it seemed as though God said no to us through that terrible night when Darmstadt was bombed.

In that night, God had destroyed everything for us. In the air raid shelters in our homes, we were not only physically hurled to the floor, but also during the explosion of bombs God placed us before His holiness. It was as though we were standing before His judgment seat.

During the attack, we called on Him and experienced how He laid His hand upon us. He uncovered our sins and gave us the grace to repent of our lukewarm Christianity. So in the midst of the horror of death, He lifted us out of our spiritual death and gave us new life.

Many of us had become homeless. After the attack, we sought shelter in the outlying areas. Now we had to travel for hours to come to Mother Basilea's house, which was still standing, although it had been badly damaged.

We were driven to confess our sins without sparing ourselves. Our lives were to belong to God, no longer lukewarm, no longer divided. God had come in this hour of catastrophe, when it seemed as though everything was all over, and the forgiveness of our Lord Jesus Christ, which we experienced in the following days as never before, became a source of unspeakable joy and awakened in us a burning love for Him.

Up until this very day, we cannot stop telling others about this and singing. Only those who have had similar experiences can sense what the following year contained. No trip was too long or too dangerous.

No bicycle ride was too strenuous. Our love for Jesus drove us to come together for Bible study and for prayer. The scantily furnished room, which still leaked, was not too primitive for us, and the meals of that time were not too meager.

The presence of God transformed everything. The political situation, it was March 1945, became more and more acute. Darmstadt was to be occupied at any moment.

Everything was moving in the direction of chaos. Under the pressure of low-flying aircraft attacks and a dark future, the inhabitants of the city were filled with fear and despair and with a desire to escape. However, in the midst of this situation, God gave Mother Basilea and Mother Materia the assurance that they should take 15 of us to a place about 70 miles away in the Oden Forest for a few days of meditation.

They felt that they had the promise of the Lord that we would safely return home before the foreign troops were to take over our city. Even though our train was under fire, we felt secure in the fatherly hands of God, for it was He who was calling us apart for a few days of quiet meditation. He intended during these days to lay the foundation of the sisterhood that was to come into being two years later.

During this retreat, the Lord worked on the formation of the Sisterhood of Mary in the midst of the panic of war without anyone knowing it. We could sense His presence so strongly that the bit of hell around us, created by the attacks of low-flying aircraft, really became a bit of heaven. In the presence of Jesus, all fear and horror had to fade away.

Instead of asking ourselves what would happen to us at the end of the war, it seemed to us as though our Lord Jesus stood before us as the man of sorrows and asked us, Who will go the way of the cross with me? That is, will you bear the burdens, great or small, that I lay upon you in your daily life out of love for me? In these days, our Lord Jesus spoke to each one of us very personally. We sensed that although we were brave enough to stand up against an anti-Christian regime and take part in forbidden Bible studies, we did not have a living relationship to Jesus, the cross-bearer, in our everyday life. In spite of following Jesus so bravely, at least in the eyes of our fellow students, we were actually leaving Him alone.

We remained spiritually poor, and the suffering that the bombing brought us made us so unhappy, because it was so difficult for us to bear out of love for Jesus the loss of our homes and possessions. However, the question of our Lord, Do you want to go with me? contained the offer of a precious treasure. He wanted to take us into the fellowship of His love, which cannot let suffering remain suffering, but has to transform hell into heaven.

As soon as we said yes to Jesus, to go this way with Him, our hearts were filled with great joy. And over the past 25 years, this joy has become greater and greater. Our greatest yearning was and still is today that Jesus be loved above all.

How did we get back to Darmstadt? The Lord had given us the assurance before we left that we would be able to return to Darmstadt. We had already experienced the protection, but we did not know how we would make it back to our homes. Train service was suspended.

There was a long hike ahead of us. Streams of refugees were going in the opposite direction. Everyone said, What? You want to go back to Darmstadt? It has already been occupied by military troops.

Had God kept His promise to bring us safely back to our city? In faith, we clung to Him. After midnight, a truck picked us up and for the first time in years, we sang in public again. The great stream of refugees going the other way heard these songs.

On the morning of the day that Darmstadt was occupied, we arrived safe and sound. God had really sent His angels so that no evil could come upon us. The next few months were filled with a great deal of preparation, both inwardly and outwardly, for the beginning of our communal life in the Sisterhood of Mary.

We were all eager to see how we would practice in everyday life what the Lord had called us to do. The way to the realization of these goals led through many narrow paths and difficulties. The petition to found the Sisterhood of Mary was first turned down.

That was a hard blow for us, for we had all our plans ready to begin. Everything seemed hopeless. And yet it was God's hour, for through a conference with one of the leading men of the city, we saw that God Himself suddenly took the matter into His own hands in a way which no one would have thought of, and we were granted the permission to begin.

We could only stand in awe and worship. Indeed, on the 30th of March 1947, in the house where the girls' Bible studies had met and grown all those years, the founding ceremonies of the Sisterhood of Mary took

place. And now there are over a hundred sisters from many different countries.

Next time we will tell you how God gave us our land Canaan, together with its houses. Again He led us along dark ways, but they were filled with miracles. Whenever we think of the ways which led to the founding of our sisterhood, we have to proclaim loud, with God, suffering, even during a terrible air raid, is never the end.

He comes when everything is dark, especially then, and He turns suffering into joy. In the midst of hell, He lets us taste something of heaven. He carries His plans out to a wonderful end, for His heart is love.

He cannot bear to see any of His children in need. All of His promises are yea and amen. God made me, He taught me, He died, He died for me.

The miracles of God experienced today, part two. He is my Lord, my God and my King. Today, part two of a series of talks written by Mother Basilea Schlink about the work and founding of the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary, Darmstadt, Eberstadt, Germany.

Today, we will be taking a small trip to the land of Canaan. When we land at the airport, it's only about a half hour's drive along the highway between Frankfurt and Heidelberg to the large entrance gate of Canaan. There, we are welcomed by the three angels on the entrance monument who blow their trumpets and call out, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

On the other side of the gate, we read the word Canaan written in large letters. Canaan, kingdom of heaven. Are they only words? Merely a wish? Who would not like to taste a bit of the kingdom of heaven here on this dark earth? Canaan, the land where God dwelled and did His great deeds and wonders in biblical times, has become a reality today.

It's really true. The small land of Canaan, where everything testifies to the great deeds and wonders of God, is really a ray of the kingdom of heaven. It is a land where you can see happy faces, where people live together in love and reconciliation.

A land where God dwells. But now the sisters themselves will share with us the ways of faith which brought this land into being. Of blossoming meadows and gardens, with a small lake and a fountain of the Father's goodness, with two chapels and its ten houses, lying near the mountains of the Odin forest, really testifies to man.

We have a God who works wonders. For the houses and chapels were built without our having any steady income, without any mortgages, and without financial support from church or state. We were continually faced with having nothing.

Living by faith and bringing every need to God in prayer, we experienced God answers prayers. He gave us everything we needed, and often in marvelous ways. For example, our sisters built the mother house and the chapel with their own hands and without any money.

How would we ever be able to buy bricks? We prayed in groups night after night. And what happened? One day as Mother Basilea took the tram back to her parents' house, where the new sisterhood was then living, a man who sat across from her suddenly asked, Who are these sisters who are digging foundations over there? Mother Basilea answered his questions. It was humanly impossible for us to build without any money.

A few days later, as we were praying about this and beseeching the Lord for help, this man who Mother Basilea had met in the tram called up. He said that the town officials had decided to tear down the old army barracks. During the next day he suddenly had a wonderful idea.

The sisters could certainly use these bricks. Immediately he suggested that the town officials donate the bricks to our sisterhood. He was calling to say that the town council had accepted his proposal.

We were overjoyed and filled with thanksgiving. We could scarcely grasp the goodness of God. Our hearts simply sang with joy.

God's name is Yea and Amen. His holy name we laud and praise. He does whatever he says.

But God not only gave us bricks. Later he also gave us the roof, the doors, the windows. Yes, everything.

And always in answer to our prayers he performed his miracles. Time and again we were faced with having nothing. Before we began construction we only had about seven dollars.

And then, even if it was often just at the last minute, he gave us exactly what we needed. It was incomprehensible how we could testify to the crowd of guests that had come to the consecration of the mother house and chapel that God had proven himself to be the God who is called Yea and Amen. The chapel and the mother house had been completed and there were no debts to pay.

Yes, if we had kept silence, the very stones would have had to cry out and proclaim there is a God who does wonders. Yes, we have a God who lives, who answers prayers. We are eyewitnesses.

Not only can the stones of our houses join us in testifying to this, but even the water on Canaan calls out, Who is like God? For the Lord performed a water miracle. To be sure, he could only do it after we had spent years praying for it and had let our hearts be prepared. For first he had to remove all inner obstacles standing in the way of his answering our prayer.

Because of its sandy soil, Canaan almost became a desert in the hot summer months. There would be no sense in drilling for water, at least so we were told. Due to the nature of the soil, if there were any underground water on Canaan, it would only be enough for four to six people.

It would never be enough for several hundred. But what happened? Our well yielded 22 times as much water as was expected. A leading geologist from the city waterworks said, A miracle has happened here.

You can imagine we couldn't stop singing our songs of praises. Yes, he is truly a father of goodness. Yes, we have a God who performs miracles.

Now the water of the fountain of the Father's goodness flows day and night. Now we have a small sea of Galilee and have even enough water to irrigate our fields. When something was humanly impossible, God made it possible through his fatherly goodness, through his intervention.

When we let our hearts be cleansed more deeply, he is moved through prayer and faith to perform his miracles even today. This is the testimony we give to the thousands of visitors that come to Canaan during the course of the year. We have a God whose name is Yea and Amen.

He does not only give us promises through his word, but he also fulfills them. However, he does not perform his miracles like a magician, but as a father who loves his children and who wants to bring them

up correctly. This we have experienced in many different ways, great and small.

For example, while we were building the mother house and the chapel, we had a dump cart to transport the dirt that we had dug out. One morning, six times in a row, the cart jumped the tracks. This was not just a matter of coincidence.

Each time it took a great deal of time and trouble for us to get the cart back on the tracks. Finally, we went into our small prayer tent on the construction site. Together we prayed, Lord, show us what the obstacle is.

Show us why you can't bless our work today. Then the Lord showed us very clearly that we had a spirit of criticism towards each other. We were judging and criticizing each other in our thoughts.

There was no longer a unity of love. After we had asked each other for forgiveness and when we began to work again, the dump cart didn't jump the tracks once. Up until this very day, we have continued to experience such things.

Only when we let God chastise and punish us can we give Him the opportunity to perform His miracles in our lives. He wants to help us when we are true children who trust Him and let Him punish us. So God is calling to us all, Be true children who expect everything from the Father's love, but who also surrender themselves up to His chastisement.

Such children will experience that God will give them what He has promised. He keeps His word. Not only the residents of Canaan, but also everyone else who hears this testimony should experience in all their concerns, large and small, God lives.

He answers prayers. All we have to do is to endure in faith. We have to let the Father train and discipline us.

We have to pray with all our heart. Then we will experience the miracles of God. God wants to reveal Himself through our lives and show us what a loving Father He is.

The miracles of God experienced today Part 3 Jesus, my Lord, my Lord How often people who come to our little land of Canaan ask Mother Basilia and Mother Martyria, Can you tell us why all the sisters look so happy? One of the songs written by Mother Basilia expresses the reason for our joy. We are happy because we have the privilege of loving Jesus. Ever new we cannot understand that Jesus wants to be loved by sinful men.

Why is that He isn't satisfied with the homage and reverence of all the angels and shepherds who worship Him before His throne? Why does His heart long for personal love from us sinners? Jesus yearns for it because He Himself is love and love can only be satisfied with love. And yet, He does not only yearn to receive something from us, He wants to give us something also. He wants to give us His abundant love which will make us completely happy.

But He can only give it to those who love Him. This love is the secret of true happiness. But this love for Jesus did not suddenly fall down from heaven as a gift for us sisters of Mary.

Mother Basilia has often told us about the sad conversation she had with Mother Materia over 20 years ago. At this time, they sensed that there was something missing in the spiritual lives of the 150 girls who

attended the Bible studies which later developed into the Sisterhood of Mary. Often, when they opened the question box, they would find such questions as Can you really love Jesus as much as another human being? To us, it seemed that this was an impossibility.

Therefore, in spite of our brave witness for Jesus in coming to these Bible studies which at this time were forbidden, we were just living for ourselves. We did not have this overflowing love for Jesus. Not one of us had any interest in giving our lives to full-time Christian service.

That is why we were missing this great joy. At that time, no one ever asked Mother Basilia and Mother Materia Why do all of your girls look so happy? But then came the hour when God brought about the great turning point. It was the hour of His judgment in the night when Darmstadt was bombed.

At this time, God gave us broken hearts that could cry over our sin of lukewarmness. Something wonderful grew out of this godly sorrow. A great personal love for Jesus.

This became our blessed secret. It filled our hearts with joy and made our faces radiant. And up to this very day, it has remained the source of the happiness of our sisterhood.

Again and again, Jesus has given us the gift of tears of repentance. Out of this repentance grows the great love for Jesus. This is the motivation of our whole life and ministry.

Many times visitors come to us and cannot comprehend why the teaching of Canaan has reached many other parts of the earth. They want to know how it is possible that our small Canaan has become such a world center for believers. Then we can only answer that all comes from loving Jesus.

There is a great power in this love. It works just like atomic energy when it comes out of a contrite heart. This love can do nothing else but bear witness to our Lord Jesus.

The life of our sister Claudia, who had a ministry for her Lord Jesus in our Canaan branch in Italy, demonstrated this. A short time ago, she was a young, lively sister in the prime of life. Suddenly, she contracted a serious blood disease and was called to her eternal home.

After her death, we received letters from all sides which said, I only remember Sister Claudia as a sister of joy. She left behind her a ray of light, a blaze of joy. How did this come about? There was a secret in Sister Claudia's life.

It was love for Jesus. And when this fatal disease entered her life, we could see how happy her love for Jesus made her. Due to this sickness, she had to fly back to Germany.

While she was sitting in the plane, waiting for it to start, she thought, Why do I have to go to Germany for treatment? I'm actually quite healthy. But then, when the plane rose and flew towards the sun, she suddenly heard the voice of her Lord Jesus asking her, And if this disease should lead to death? Later, she wrote down in her meditation notebook, Oh, Jesus, you filled my heart with such an immense longing to see you soon, to embrace you that I could scarcely constrain my joy. The reaction of such a young, happy sister in such a moment showed what was really in her heart.

It was her great love for Jesus which brought out this reaction in her. What power there is in this love for Jesus. Because it contains divine, everlasting life, it can never die out.

This we saw in Sister Claudia's case. During the last few agonizing weeks in the hospital, her face was radiant. She had a smile that seemed to come from above.

Doctors and nurses made a point of stopping by at her bedside to hear about the secret of her life. Amazed, they experienced that Sister Claudia's love for Jesus really made all the bitterness of her fatal disease sweet. When Sister Claudia entered the sisterhood several years ago, she was one of the weaker sisters.

At the beginning of her way, she made a serious wrong decision. Yet, this brought her a heart that could cry over its sin. She could really lie at the feet of Jesus, clinging in faith to the Lamb of God and to His victorious redemption.

By praising the sacrifice of Jesus, she became an overcomer with a great love for her Lord. So in Italy, Sister Claudia could testify to the victorious power of the love of Jesus. Many people have written us how they have experienced a bit of heaven through her testimony in life.

Yes, how wonderful is this secret of love for Jesus. That is born out of a heart that can cry over its sin. What happiness it contains! What power! It is stronger than suffering.

For we love the One who is the Son of all sons, who brings heavenly joy into every sorrow and makes it sweet. Yes, Sister Claudia's aim in life was to live only to love Jesus. Jesus loves to love you only.

I shall live for that alone. All your suffering... Countless numbers of visitors have joined us in singing this song. Jesus has set their hearts on fire with His beauty, glory and unspeakable love.

He has drawn them out of their lukewarmness and given them a burning love for Him. Now they are impelled to love Jesus where He has placed them. This love for Jesus compels all of us to love our families and relatives with patient, reconciling love.

We should not work with ambition and self-satisfaction as our motives, but rather we should work out of love for Jesus, saying, for you, for you, Lord Jesus. Whoever loves Jesus will not avoid sacrifice and suffering. Whoever loves Jesus is compelled to come to Him in prayer, even if it means sacrificing sleep, even if it means earning less money and having less social life and comforts.

Yes, whoever loves Jesus experiences that He is the secret of our happiness, the joy of our life. No one and nothing can take it away from us, not even the dark times which lie ahead of us. When we love Jesus, we have the eyes to behold how He is waiting for our love in return.

None of us can escape our problems and burdens. People who do try to escape only become more unhappy and create problems for those around them. How can we deal with our problems in a positive way so that they work to our advantage instead of getting us down? This meditation, The Cross, The Key to Heaven, written by Mother Basilea Schlink and in part spoken by her, will give us the answer.

City of God so fair, For the land's peace is prepared, Radiant with wondrous light, Love to all heaven's dreams, Blessed ones, Walk by the great city's shine, So power of His love divine, Brighter than noonday sun, Transforms the city of God. A heavenly glory that really shows God the Father in His whole love. That is why He has conceived such a wonderful thing for us, His children.

When we consider that God the Father has prepared the City of God, a golden city with perfect beauty for His chosen ones, then we comprehend what is in the Father's heart. The beauty and splendor of the city tells us this. I want to make my children happy.

They are to have the most beautiful and most splendid thing that there is. Therefore, it's easy to understand why we have to have a new heart in heaven. The old earthly heart could not bear the bliss there.

It would burst to pieces. For it is too wonderful, too great, too blissful, what He has prepared for us. But now this is the great joy.

We do not have to wait until we are baff. Heaven begins for us here on earth because Jesus Himself is the essence of heaven. And when Jesus is close to us, we taste heaven.

That is an incomprehensible gift, that we are completely independent of what is happening here on earth. Even when a bit of hell breaks out, heaven is still around me and in my heart. It is really astonishing in which way heaven comes to us on earth.

It is a way which everyone can go. Everyone can find heaven here on earth. A minister, who because of his faith had been in prison for many years, came to visit us after his release.

He was our guest for dinner in the mother house. When he began to tell us about his imprisonment, he said that it was like hell. But strangely enough, as he said this, his face began to radiate and he continued.

You will hardly believe what I am about to tell you, but it is true. This time was the most beautiful time in my life. Jesus Christ was so close that I could taste heaven.

Heaven was literally in my heart. This is overwhelming. A bit of hell, a really heavy cross, is the key which opens the gate to heaven.

That means if we say yes to our cross and suffering. Time and again we sing of this in our songs about heaven. The story of the origin of one of these songs tells us about this truth, the cross which awakens the joy of heaven.

It is one of the songs which we sing very often in our sisterhood. This song has a moving story. During one summer in the course of the history of our sisterhood, we experienced the serious speaking of God in His holiness.

We were judged inwardly very much. But then there followed a time where we received one blow of judgment after another externally. In many cases, we were judged externally.

In May, one of our young sisters died of cancer. We had hoped, believed and prayed over and over again that the Lord would lay His hand upon her. It was a great sorrow for us when she was called home because we loved her very much.

On this day, which was so filled with grief, another one of our sisters took to her sickbed. This was Sister Angelica, a sculptress. For years she had been severely ill.

She had become sick while working as an anti-aircraft spotter during the war. For years she had lived from a miracle. Despite great suffering, she could still work artistically.

Now she began to lose her eyesight. This was a sign that her illness had reached a very serious stage and that she only had a few months to live. Mother Basilea and Mother Marturia's hearts were about to break for they love us, their spiritual daughters, as if we were their own daughters.

Now they had to stand by and watch her suffer in agony. And at the same time it happened that still another sister became severely ill and had to be taken to the hospital. Mother Basilea was at the end of her strength because she had stayed up so many nights to sit at Sister Angelica's bedside.

She writes, Exactly at this time, when such a heavy cross was lying on us, heaven came down. For I said, it is a cross, if we have accepted it, which is the key to heaven. In the cross, if we say, Yes, Father, we are suddenly united with Jesus Christ, who is the center of heaven.

One evening, when I was very sad, heaven began to shine in my heart. I wrote down one verse after another about what heaven contains. Altogether there were 43 verses.

There was no end to my thanksgiving and my joy in looking forward to heaven. My heart became more and more joyful by picturing what is awaiting us in heaven. And I found that it is true.

With just one thought about heaven, all earthly sorrow disappears. In my great joy, I took the song that I had written down and went to Sister Angelica, who was so sick. I sat down at her bedside and sang her one verse after another.

She, too, became very happy and sang along as much as she could. I think the whole room was filled with angels. It wasn't so we were in heaven.

What could sorrow do to us? We boasted of suffering and affliction because they bring heaven down to us. I cannot tell you how much we have to thank God for His goodness. He does not place us into a veil of tears on earth without giving us hope and refreshment.

In times of trouble, He does not leave us at the mercy of all the tribulations. No, in the midst of darkness, His heavenly splendor shines forth. Yes, heaven begins to sing and rejoice while here on earth the powers of darkness seem to be triumphant.

We read about it in the book of Revelation. In the times of the most terrible happenings on earth, the heavenly voices announce, the marriage of the Lamb has come. Revelation 19, verse 7. Our hearts will be able to hear this singing and rejoicing in heaven as much as we have allowed ourselves to be prepared in suffering.

Then we will have an antenna that will reach up past all earthly suffering. Therefore, let us sing about heaven and praise that the cross has opened the gates of heaven for us. Yes, heaven is ours.

How can we be sad?

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