

Hear the Voice of God and Live

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of hearing God's voice and the new life that comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 41:14

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 1:1, John 3:16, John 10:10, John 14:6, John 20:31, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Topics: "Supernatural Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by expressing gratitude for the opportunity to share the word of God and bring hope to those in darkness. He emphasizes that God's love is for all people, regardless of their past actions. The preacher then reads from the Gospel of John, highlighting the profound words of Jesus. He encourages the audience to come to God just as they are and experience the transformative power of His grace. The sermon concludes with a heartfelt rendition of the hymn 'Amazing Grace' and a reminder that God's grace will lead us home.

Transcript

Jesus said some profound words, actually quite powerful. In the next couple of minutes as I'm going to share with you, I'm going to share with you for about 15 or 20 minutes, and then I'm going to give you an opportunity to let your heart be touched by something that God is willing to do that you could never do for yourself. Now Father, I thank you Lord for these few moments.

I thank you for the ability to share and to reach into the deepest darkness tonight, the deepest places of hopelessness with a light and a life that can only come from the voice of God. And Father, I thank you Lord that you're going to remove all the obstacles, you're going to take everything out of the way, you're going to demolish every argument of darkness, every lie of hell, and God, your voice is going to reach those men and women here tonight that were created in the image of God, no matter what they have done to that image. Lord, you passionately love all people.

Help us to realize this, help us to understand what you want to do for us, and we thank you for this in Jesus' name. Now I want to read to you from the Gospel of John, one of the four writers of the Gospels and of the story of the life of Christ in the New Testament. And he recorded the actual words of Jesus, phenomenal words really.

And here's what it says, I'm reading to you from an old, old English translation we call the King James, and so it's got some old English words and if you'll permit me I'll just paraphrase them and put them into modern English for you. Jesus said, Truly, truly, I say to you, he that hears my word and believes on him that sent me has everlasting life and shall not come into a place of being condemned, but is passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live.

What perplexing words for that generation. Imagine if you're sitting on that mountainside and you're hearing him say these words. The hour is coming and now is.

So he puts it in present tense. The time has arrived, he said, that the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear his voice will live. And actually in the original version of the Bible, it actually says will be caused to live.

Those who hear the voice of God will be caused to come alive. It's an amazing thing when you think of it. Now you and I can't live until we realize that without the presence and power of God in our lives, we are already dead.

Now a lot of people are dead, they just won't admit it. It's like somebody in a casket in a funeral parlor that just insists that he's still alive when everything around and everybody around insists that he's already dead. Paul the Apostle, one of the writers of the New Testament, says it this way in the book of Romans that he wrote in chapter 7. He said, I was alive without the law once.

Now what he means here is there was one time when I was young and I had life and I had hope and I had vision and dreams for the future. But then came the knowledge of right and wrong. And that happens to all of us, doesn't it? When we're children, we really don't know what's right and what's wrong, and there's a great liberty, a great grace for that.

But there comes a point in life when we do know what is right and what is wrong. It's a whole lot of difference between a five-year-old taking a pencil from a table and a 50-year-old taking a pencil from a table. One may not yet know that that is wrong.

The other one definitely knows it's wrong. Paul said, I was alive, but when the knowledge of right and wrong, it's a knowledge that God plants in us. There's an inherent conscience in all of us.

We simply know that the way we're behaving is not right. We may not fully understand the right way, but we know what we're doing is not right. And Paul says, when that came to this knowledge that there's a right and a wrong, something switched on inside of me, and I died.

He calls it sin revived, and I died. This nature inside of me that seems so bent against everything good. He goes on to say in the same chapter, he says, the law of God is good, but I am a different kind of a being.

I'm carnal, and it seems like there's a law at work in me that I have no control over. For the things that I don't want to do, I do. And the things that I know I should do, I can't do.

It's no more I, he said, that does it, but there's a law of sin inside of me, a law of death at work inside of me. I want to do what is right, but how to do what is right, I don't know how to do it. He said, the good that I would, I do not, but the evil that I don't want to do, that's what I do.

I find a law, then Paul said, that when I would do good, there's something evil that's present within me. I recognize truth and right inside, and I want to do it, but I can't do it. How many here tonight, you've made promises, you can't keep them.

You promise you're somebody that's close to you, that you're going to speak the truth from now on, I'm going to be always honest with you, and within an hour, you're telling lies again. You know what is right, you just simply can't do what is right. He said, there's, I want to do right, but there's something else inside of me that, that wars against this inner desire to do right, and it brings me into a place of captivity.

Oh, he said, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this dead body. That's what he actually said, this body of death in the King James. Paul recognized, I'm a dead man in myself.

I can't find the strength to do right. I want to do right. I have a, an inner desire to do right.

I know everybody here does. I know when Patrick was at the worst of his, of his activity, there's, there's still an inner desire in all of us. Even if it's just a momentary whisper or just a, a thing that just comes into our mind during the day.

I sure would like to live a different kind of life, but I don't know how. I don't know how not to be selfish. I don't know how not to hurt people around me.

I don't know how to turn away from drink and drugs and every other addiction in my life. I, I don't know how to speak the truth. I don't know how to stop stealing.

I don't know how. I know what to do, but I don't know how to do it. It just seems like I have this desire inside a dead body.

There's no power inside of me to, to do right. And, and Paul cries out as, as many are here this evening, who will set me free from this? Is there, is there, is there something I'm not seeing? Is there another way of living? Is there, is there a power that's hidden to me? How do I get out of this way I'm living and thinking and the hopelessness of it and the, the, the darkness that wants to just literally squeeze my mind and convince me there's no hope. There's no life.

There's no future. There's, there's no nothing for me. I know how you feel because I've been there.

In John chapter 11, there was a man who died. His name was Lazarus. And a lot of people are just like him.

Although we still can breathe and we can still see and we can still hear, but we're just as dead as Lazarus was. It's a type of a man who's in a grave. He wants to change, but he can't.

He's laying there. And how many here tonight, you've, you've gone to bed night after night and you hate the way you are. You hate the things you do.

You hate the man or woman you're becoming, but you don't know how you, how am I going to change? You get up in the morning. You don't feel any stronger than when you went to bed the night before the same inherent weakness is still inside of you. And you feel like Paul said, God almighty, that's probably why you're here tonight.

Somebody invited you or you wandered in and maybe you're just wondering, is there any truth to the things of God? Is there any hope in this place? And a lot of people don't come to church because they dread that. It's almost like the church is the last place that there's hope. And if I come to church and there's no hope there, it's almost like the reason to live is gone.

Like Lazarus, we want to rise to new life, but we have no power to do it. We want to change. Remember when I was a young man, I didn't like the way I was.

I didn't like what I was turning into. I didn't like, my life seemed to be on a trajectory that I was powerless to stop. I was drinking more.

I was getting angry more. I was more selfish than when I was younger. There was just so much going on inside.

Oh sure, I could take my guitar and still be the life of the party and fool a lot of people, but you can't fool yourself and you can't fool God. You eventually get home. You're eventually sitting on the side of your bed all by yourself in your conscience, and you hate what you're becoming, and the songs are so hollow, and the laughter is empty, and the things that you've been involved in don't satisfy anymore, and you're wondering, is there anything to life? Is there something more than what I'm living? Surely life's got to be more than this.

You want freedom like Lazarus would have wanted in that grave, but you're boxed in. You get up and there's no way out. It's dark, and the door, there's a stone rolled in front of your door.

You don't know how you're ever going to get out of this thing. You feel helpless, and you feel hopeless until one day a voice comes, and that's what happened to this man Lazarus. A voice, it was the voice of Jesus.

Remember Jesus said, the hour is coming, and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. The dead shall hear. God waited until Lazarus was dead before he spoke to him.

He waited until there was no hope of Lazarus doing this in his own strength, otherwise the testimony of Lazarus would have been, me and Jesus did this. No, when a man is dead, he knows only Jesus can do this. Only God can change me now.

No, there's no me and Jesus in this at all. It's all of Jesus and none of me, and suddenly he hears a voice calling him, Lazarus come forth, and there's a stone that, there's a doorway that has always blocked his way into hope and into a future, and suddenly this thing is rolled away, and he sees light, and no matter what, everybody's around outside the grave is saying, oh no, he's doomed. He's had it.

He's finished. He stinks. He's dead, and you may feel that way about yourself, and everybody here that knows you intimately might even agree with that, but there's only one voice that doesn't agree with this report.

It's the voice of the Son of God. He said, I gave you life. I allowed you to be conceived in your mother's room.

I knew you before you were formed. I have plans for you. I have a reason for you to be alive.

I have a purpose for you, not just for time, but forever. There's something I have for your life that is so far beyond what your own mind can even begin to think about or even imagine. I have a place that I'm preparing for you in eternity, and now I'm calling you to myself.

I'm calling you out of death. I'm calling you out of powerlessness. I'm calling you to the life that only God can give you, and he calls your name.

It's just amazing when you've experienced it, amazing when you have gotten up and moved towards the call of God to you. The realization hits your heart that Jesus Christ came to this earth and went to a cross and suffered terribly and died in my place to pay the price for all the wrong that I have done, and then as God the Father raised him from the dead on the third day, so he promises to raise me out of death and to give me new life. He said, not only will I forgive you, but I will come in the person of God, the Holy Spirit, and I will actually live inside your body, and I will begin to change you from the inside out.

I'll give you a new mind. I'll give you a new heart. I'll give you a new spirit.

You'll be a new creation. That's what the Bible says, if any man's in Christ, he becomes a new creation. The old things pass away.

Behold, all things become new, a new creation. You know, my house burned down years ago, and we've lost all our pictures of years ago, but I used to have a picture of when I was a cop. I remember one day picking it up and looking at it, and it was scary looking into those eyes.

I said, that man died, and another man lives. Now, I knew that in my heart. I'm not that man anymore.

That was another person. The gospel is true. I tried to change myself, and I couldn't.

I made promises I couldn't keep, and my finest and best resolutions with the deepest amount of determination all fell flat, and not only couldn't I keep my promises, I was getting worse. Week by week, year by year, month by month, that is the downward spiral of death, until we get to the point, you and I, of saying, Lord, I'm a dead man, and once that admission comes into our heart, suddenly a whole realm of God begins to open to us. He said, no, you're not dead.

You're just ready to hear now. You're now no longer going to put your hand to this plow, but you're going to put your hands in mine now, and you're going to let me lead you, and I'm going to lead you out of death. I'm going to bring you into life.

I'm going to make you different than you ever believed you could be. I'm going to put things in your heart you never had before. I will prove to you that I am God.

Folks, I can tell you, I can stand here tonight and say, you open your heart, and you let God prove to you that he's God. I don't have to prove it to you. He will prove it to you.

One year from tonight, you'll be in this house. One month from tonight, six months from tonight, you'll be in this house. Tonight, you're here with questions.

Tonight, you're here with struggles. Tonight, you're here with fears, but a year from now, six months from now, you'll be leaping and dancing in the air, not believing in your heart, oh my God, what the Lord has done for me, how he has transformed my life, how he has changed me from the inside out. Religion is man's attempt to change himself from the outside in, but Christianity is God's power changing us from the

inside out.

That's why if anyone is in Christ, they become a new creation. Oh, thank God. Oh, thank God.

Oh, thank God. What a journey this has been. I thank God with all my heart, with everything that's inside of me, that at 24 years of age, the Lord gave me the sense to realize I was dead and gave me the ability to hear his voice calling me.

I remember being astounded that he wanted me. You know, I saw a guy this morning on the way into church, and he was going through the garbage cans, picking up cans, putting them in a bag. A lot of folks do that in the city.

I was thinking, God, you're like that. I was one of those cans in the trash can, and you search the streets, and you go into places nobody else is looking, and you go through the garbage, and I say it that way, and you pick out all these cans. They still have value.

I understand they trade them in for five cents or something like that now, and you picked me up, and I felt like I had no value for the kingdom. I didn't like myself. I didn't much know why God would even want me, but suddenly I realized he did.

I don't know how I knew. I just knew he did. He wanted me with all my flaws, and all my failures, and all my struggles, and all my trials, and all my selfish heart, and my stone coldness to the sense of caring about anybody, anybody, not even myself, and yet he wanted me.

It's amazing when you know that tonight, that he came to a cross not because we were perfect. He came to a cross because we had no hope without him. He himself said, I didn't come to call people who have it all together.

I came to call sinners to myself. I came to call those who know they're dead and have no power. I came because I love you.

I'm not willing to let you be thrown away for eternity. How could we not love God? I wonder today, how could I have not, how could I ever even thought of not opening my heart to him? It's been such an amazing life. I was so cold inside that death didn't bother me.

I saw a lot of it in a short season, and it just didn't bother me. To be here tonight, knowing that God has put his love in my heart is a miracle, to really care. It's not a religious thing.

It's not a pulpit thing. It's really in me. I thank God with all my heart.

He has so changed me. You ask me how the song goes, I know he lives. He lives within my heart.

You've heard the testimony of Patrick tonight. You've heard Kathy's story. I could pull anybody out of this choir, and there's powerful, powerful testimonies of God's ability to forgive and save us and change us when we had come to the end of ourselves.

And so tonight, if you can hear his voice calling you to himself, don't harden your heart. The scripture says, don't put it off for another day. If you can hear him calling you out of death and powerlessness into the life he promises, let God prove himself to you.

I often say it in this church, I wasn't really sure because I was a skeptic really about a lot of things. And I had met a Christian police officer who told me that, he said, I used to be a womanizer, a gambler, and a drunk. And he said, God changed my life.

And the guy I'm looking at and talking to is anything but the things he said he used to be. And that intrigued me more than anything else. And then he told me, he said, if you do come to Christ, he promises to give you a new life.

An abundant life, a supernatural life, a life that only God can give you. And I remember thinking, is that possible? Is it possible? Or is this just another Amway presentation? No. This is another dream circle.

You know, sell this soap and you're going to be fulfilled. No offense to any Amway people here tonight. But soap can't cleanse you of your sin, folks, no matter how much of it you sell.

It can't transform your life. And I remember thinking, May 12th, 1978, 3.40 in the afternoon, I pulled over on the side of the road. Actually, it was 2.40. Sorry.

And I pulled over and I said, Jesus, if this is true, policeman, I knew his name was Irv. And I said, if what Irv has told me is the truth, if it is the truth, God knew I was sincere in that prayer. Then I opened my heart to you and I invite you to come in to be my Savior and my Lord.

I was a dead man. I couldn't change myself. And I knew that.

I was selfish to the core. I was destroying my marriage. I didn't feel anything.

You know, a lot of people feel like you're going to come to an altar in a church like this and you're going to get the shakes or something. You know, you're going to get a fuzzy. I didn't feel anything.

Nothing. Nothing. I went to work.

I worked my shift. I went home. Still didn't feel anything.

Forgot about what I had prayed. But I have shared it probably 300 times from this pulpit. And I probably will share it.

You're going to be stuck with me for a few years. You're going to hear it about 900 times more. And I remember it like it was yesterday.

I got up in the morning and I roll out of bed. I put my feet on the floor and it was at the moment my feet touched the floor, I knew I was a different man. There's nothing, nothing in me.

Nothing I had done. I hadn't made any promises. I had made no resolves.

I had not even determined to try to change. I just knew I was different. He had come.

He had come. And I guess as they say, the proof is in the pudding, right? Everybody can claim to have the recipe, but the proof is in the pudding. Here I am today.

I mean, it's a miracle. It's an absolute miracle that I am where I am today. And so we can put before you dozens and dozens and dozens of witnesses tonight.

You could hear some testimonies that'll just make your jaw drop. I know a lot of them in this church. You'd say, how could these people be saying, let alone living for God after what they endured, but yet they are.

But there's a point where you have to come to that, where you say in your heart, if this is true, then Jesus Christ, I hear your voice calling me. And you said, there's an hour coming that the dead will hear the voice of the son of God and those who do will be caused to live. And so, Lord, I hear you calling me.

I hear you offering me life. I hear you offering me freedom and hope and a future. I hear you.

I hear you calling me to something of you in my life and through my life that I can't even dream of at this moment. I'll be caused to live by God's life being lived inside of me. I'll be forgiven of the wrong I've done.

You promise a new mind, a new heart, and a new spirit. And that is true. That's what he gives.

You said you'll set me free and I will be free indeed. And so, God, I am another dead person, but I hear your voice. And so, it's a unique moment for you.

It takes courage to admit you're dead because we spend our whole life trying to prove that we're alive. We try to move like we're alive. We try to speak like we're alive.

We try to do things like we're alive, but really inside, we're dead. We know we're dead and we're getting deader by the day. So, it takes courage to say, God, I'm dead.

I'm just a dead man. I know inside something is dying and something has died, but I hear your voice calling me. And so, tonight, I'm opening my heart to your forgiveness.

I'm opening my heart to the price that you paid to get me back to you. I'm opening my heart to your presence and forgiveness in my life. I'm opening my heart to my life becoming a place where you can be honored by changing me and proving to this generation that God is still alive.

I open my heart to whatever plan you have for my life and wherever that place is that you're going to lead me to. I simply open my heart to it. And if that's you tonight, and you just say, Pastor, I really don't get it all, but I feel this is right.

I feel that this is something I've looked for all my life. And I can hear God calling me. I can hear it inside.

And I don't fully understand it, but I want to get up and I want to move towards it. And as you did years ago, I want to believe that God is able to change me and save me. If that's you tonight, that's in your heart, would you join with me and just raise your hand, please, wherever you are? God bless you.

Thank you. All over the sanctuary, way up in the back. God bless you.

Thank you. We're going to stand in just a moment. And for those that have just done that in your heart, I'm going to ask you to come forward.

We're going to pray a prayer together. That's all we're going to do, just pray a prayer together. And I'll lead you in a prayer that will be that moment that you open your heart to God like I did 35, 36 years ago.

If you're sitting with somebody that you brought into this house tonight, you might want to turn to that person in a moment and say, if you want to go forward, I'll go with you. You don't have to go there alone. I'll walk with you and I'll be your friend and I'll try to help you get started in your walk with God.

Don't be shy to do that. If you should have raised your hand tonight and you know you need to be down here, you just get up, don't let anything stop you and just come forward. If you're here with your wife, your husband, your children, perhaps it's time that as a family you just came and gave your home, gave your family to God.

Let's stand. The Lord's calling you, just come. The balcony, go to either exit and make your way down.

Move in close. Please make room for those that are coming. How you doing buddy? You ever done this before? Never? Welcome.

Like your hat. How old are you? 13. Wow, that's awesome.

I wish I had heard this message when I was 13. Better late than never though. Thank God.

Just come all the way down. Just come all the way down. He'll take you just as you are.

Thank God. Andrew, would you do me a favor? Without any other music, just play Amazing Grace on your trumpet please. Amazing grace, what so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming? Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight, O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming? And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air, Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.

O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming? And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air, Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there. O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming? Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there. O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming? Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.

O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming? We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.

I want to speak to somebody tonight before we pray. You know this is true. And you're standing here thinking of all that it will cost you to step out of your seat and come to this altar.

But I want you to think for a moment of what it will cost you if you don't. It will cost you a lot more than it will ever cost you to step out and be identified with Jesus Christ and with what he did for you and is willing to do for you today. I want to just enter one more time.

We're just going to play that first verse of Amazing Grace. And there's just still somebody here, I just know it in my heart, that if you just make the step, just take the step, no matter what your friends say, you'll be so glad you did. You think it's going to cost you this great and glamorous career.

And it's going to bring you into something that's so far beyond your deepest imaginations right now. It's going to bring you into a life that you ever only dreamed you could have. Just come.

Just as Andrew plays, as this couple is coming, there's more, just come. Just come. Just get out of your seat and come.

This is the beginning of a new life. And according to the Word of God, it's the beginning of an eternal life with God. Forgiven, the Bible calls it born again.

Given another opportunity for life that you never, this opportunity came to a dead end. God says, I'm opening a door now to a new life. You will never regret this.

Don't go halfway with this. You're going to open your heart to Jesus Christ and He says, if you do, I will come. And I will take up residency in your life.

You start reading the Bible, start in the Gospel of John in the New Testament. Find a good church that preaches from the Bible and has a new believers class and make sure you get into that. We can help you with that.

Let's pray together. You're going to be forgiven tonight. Jesus Christ did not die to rub your face into your sin.

He died to forgive you. That's why the cross. Died to make a way for God to come to you and you to come to God.

Died to give you a supernatural life with God. And that's what's happening tonight. I'm going to lead you in a prayer.

It's not found anywhere in the scriptures. It's just a way of helping you understand what you're doing tonight. Pray with me, please.

Lord Jesus. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for going to a cross.

To make a way home for me. To come back to you. I'm sorry for the way I've lived.

My life has come to an end. And tonight. Your life.

In me. Has come to a beginning. I open my heart to you, Jesus.

And I ask you to come into my life. And be my God. And be my Savior.

From this day forward. I will trust you. And I will follow you.

You gave me a promise. That you would never abandon me. And you won't forsake me.

I am weak. But you are strong. And so be my strength.

And let your life. Inside of me. Become the joy.

Of my heart. Give me a new song. And give me a new heart.

From this day forward. Jesus Christ. You are my God.

And I am. Your child. I will follow you.

As you guide me. And you give me strength. I believe tonight.

That I am forgiven. And that you have come. To give me new life.

I believe. That when I die. Heaven will be my home.

Not because of what I've done. But because of what you did. In my place.

Thank you. With all of my heart. For receiving me.

And this night. Allowing me to say. I have heard your voice.

And I live. In Jesus name. Amen.

Praise God. Praise God. Let's give a shout of praise tonight.

This is an awesome night. This is an awesome night. This is an incredible night.

Give God praise tonight. For what he has done. Thank you Jesus.

Thank you Lord.

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