

Speaking for God in a Hopeless Time

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the importance of speaking for God with compassion and hope during times of societal hopelessness.

Duration: 45:23

Scripture: Luke 24:13-27, John 20:13-16, John 21:4-6, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:17-23

Topics: "Hope And Comfort", "Evangelism Ministry"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of speaking for God in a hopeless time, drawing inspiration from Jesus' example after His resurrection. It highlights the need for compassion, patience, and simplicity in reaching out to those in despair, focusing on the power of God's word and the victory found in Christ. The message encourages believers to be willing servants, to comfort others as they have been comforted, and to trust in God's guidance and provision in challenging times.

Transcript

I want to speak to you this morning about speaking for God in a hopeless time. There are times throughout history that there's a general malaise, a hopelessness begins to hit society, and it becomes difficult to speak for God. But I believe that Jesus Christ has given us a clear example by his own example.

I want to focus on the period in his life from the time he was raised from the dead until he ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father. In between those two times, he walked on the earth and he gave us, I think, a clear pattern, a clear example of how we can be of effect speaking to people in a time of hopelessness. And that particular season was a hopeless time for those who had once had their confidence in God and had been shaken, for somebody who couldn't find him, and for others who were out trying to do what they felt was the direction of God, or even the work of God, and bearing very little results from it.

And he walked among them and he showed us a pattern. Now, in Acts chapter two, the power of God came on the church, but the power of God does not negate the lessons that were taught in this time period that was prior to it. And so we're going to focus on that this morning in John chapter 20.

If you'll turn there, please. John chapter 20, speaking for God in a hopeless time. Father, I thank you, Lord, for the anointing of your Holy Spirit.

I thank you, God, for your word, which is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path. I thank you, Lord, God, that you will never leave us directionless and powerless. You will speak to us.

You will guide us. You will help us, Lord. When we find ourselves in darkened moments throughout history, as we are beginning to live in today, you will give us as your people instruction and guidance that we might do the work that you've called us to do in the strength that you've given us to do it.

And so, Father, I'm asking today, God, that you would anoint this word. Make it real. Let it burn in each of our hearts.

God, change us from where we are to where you want us to be. Give us peace in the midst of the storms we live in. Give us vision in the midst of such blindness.

Give us hope when hopelessness seems to abound. I pray not only for an anointing to deliver this, but for an anointing to hear it and for hearts to embrace it and courage to walk in it. Lord, sometimes, sometimes we miss the power of God because of its simplicity.

We think it should be more complicated. But, Lord, you have shown us something here. I pray, God, that all of us can walk in it in these days in which we live.

And I ask it in Jesus' name. John chapter 20, beginning at verse 13. Then they said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? And she said to them, Because they've taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they've laid him.

Now, when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there and did not know that it was Jesus. And Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? She, supposing him to be the gardener, said to him, Sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus said to her, Mary.

She turned and said to him, Rabboni, which is to say, Teacher. There are so many times that there seems to be so much hopelessness in this world. Outside of these doors and the streets of this city and our society as it exists today, and even inside this sanctuary to some that are listening, we're listening online to these words this morning.

You're living in a place of shattered dreams. You once had great hopes in your heart. You once had a song that seemed that it had endless numbers of joyful verses in it.

Now you find there's a deep sorrow. You can hardly sing your song anymore. And despair comes knocking at your door every day, trying to take away the little shred of hope that you still have for the future.

And so many have given up. They had hopes for the future. They had dreams.

They had aspirations. And all of these things now seem to be gone, irretrievably lost. Of course, the enemy is always there at the door trying to confirm what really isn't true.

There's endless efforts going out, even good efforts, producing so little fruit for the kingdom of God. Have you ever been discouraged that your life is having so little impact in your family, in your workplace, in your community? Week after week, you hear messages from pulpits like this that talk about the power of God given in the book of Acts chapter 2 and how they went out and how they prayed. And you go out, and

you're all encouraged.

And it just seems to work for everybody else, but it doesn't work for you. Have you ever been there? It's not that you're not working to do something, but it just doesn't seem to bear fruit. And you say, God, am I missing something? Have I laid hold of a wrong concept of where your power is? And how can I speak for you in such a hopeless time? So many people angry.

So many people confused. So many searching for a new society, and they don't even know what it is they're looking for. How can we make a difference? Is there a way to speak for God? That will make people turn towards truth in such a darkened time as ours.

And did Jesus leave us examples of what our speech and life should look like? Now, I think it's there. Sometimes we just don't see it because it's too simple. We read over.

This is a living book, this Bible. We read over passages as if they're just historical facts. And we forget that this book speaks to us life every day, every generation, every season.

And there are incredible gems of truth in the word of God that sometimes we just miss. And I've been looking and rereading some of these passages, especially that portion of the life of Jesus after he was raised from the dead. You have to understand, I'm talking post-cross, resurrected Christ, a season, a short season, where he walked among people before he ascended into heaven.

And the whole time he was there, he was encouraging people. He was bringing them back to life. He was giving them clear direction and focus again.

And I believe he just left us a picture of what we should look like. So in our opening text, think of the context of John chapter 20, verses 13 to 16. It's a culture, which was Rome, that considered itself superior to the word of God had arisen.

Do we not live in a day like that? We live in an hour when this sudden flood of alternate thinking to the word of God has come, and it's just seeking to permeate every border everywhere in our society and everywhere in our culture. When those who live for God are vilified now as bigoted and non-inclusive and ultimately not worth even having within the borders of the nation. And this culture of Rome considered itself so superior that it marginalized the people of God, it mocked the people of God.

They were only just a short distance past a few years ago, when the children in Bethlehem were indiscriminately slaughtered with no consequence. We're living in a generation where children are slaughtered with no consequence in the womb. It was this social context with a religious system that had betrayed the son of God.

That's not even debatable. The religion, a lot of religion was still going on, but it had betrayed the son of God. And we think about our generation with churches on almost every corner in most of the towns.

And yet we've had little or no effect on this society. And the society is just plummeting into darkness right before our eyes. And I suppose it'd be difficult to make the argument that in some measure, we haven't betrayed the son of God.

If we truly had been standing for him, speaking for him, living for him, it's indisputable that our society wouldn't be in the condition it is today. When they say that as much as 70% or so of this culture actually

believes in God, then what have we done with that belief? And how has that belief been so marginalized that we seemingly have no voice and no effect in this time in which we're living? Not only had the society of this day killed Mary's Messiah, but in her mind, they had succeeded in removing him in physical evidence of his even having been among them. We're living now at a time when that is underway every day, all day.

There's an attempt to eradicate everything of Jesus from all our colleges or schools, every institution, the marketplace, anything public, anything to do with God, anything reminding us of God, anything talking about prayer, anything that speaks of holiness according to the word of God. There's a move afoot now to eradicate everything of Jesus from this society. And so we're living in a generation very much like the generation that Mary was living in.

And so how would God choose to speak to somebody in such a hopeless situation? I find it incredible when I look at it. You realize this is the risen Christ. He could have appeared any way he wanted to.

He could have been hovering 15 feet above the earth in a chariot of fire. He could have had angels with trumpets all around him. He could have been glowing like he was on the Mount of Transfiguration.

He could have presented himself with irrefutable evidence that he was the risen son of God. He could have done whatever he wanted to do. He was raised from the dead.

All power, all authority was his. But how did he choose to come to this woman in this hopeless situation? The scripture says she turned around and she assumed he was the gardener. He just appeared as an ordinary person.

And when you and I think of what he could have done, that is awesome. I believe he was showing us a pattern of what his church was going to be like. Just ordinary people like you, like me.

Coming to somebody in a hopeless situation. He was going to have a body on the earth. That's the whole lesson he was trying to teach.

Because realistically, when you study it, he never appeared in recognizable form. Do you know that? Do you understand that? Every time he appeared, whether it's in the room where they were gathered, whether it's on the road to Emmaus or at the seashore in John 21, every time he appeared, he appeared in a different form. He wasn't recognizable as the physical Jesus they had known.

Yet he still was Jesus. But he was trying to show us, I'm going to have a body on this earth. A body of just ordinary, non-distinguishable people that I'm going to live inside of.

And I'm going to speak through that body. They're not going to be superstars. They're not going to have an entourage.

They're not going to have a chariot and a big band and trumpets announcing them. They're just going to be ordinary people that are walking in the power of God. Walking in a power that those who are given to their own lust for power will never see it.

They'll never understand it. They can't even see it in the scripture. They'll miss it.

He appears as a gardener. Don't you love that? The risen Christ. It's like you being outside in the park somewhere, and you've lost heart, and you've lost hope, and you don't know, oh, where's God in my life?

And where did he go? And they took him away, and I feel so hopeless.

And you turn around, there's a guy in coveralls with a straw hat and a rake. What are you weeping for? That's how it would have appeared to her. She thought he was the gardener.

There had to be something about his appearance that would indicate that. And then he says, why are you weeping? She said, if you've taken him away, tell me where you put him, and I will take him. And then Jesus said to her, he only said one word, Mary.

But he said it with such compassion. He said her name with such assurance. He said her name with such confidence.

He said her name with such an ability to sustain her. He said her name as only God can say it. You know, it's so important in this generation, when everybody is running around terrified, oh, what will I do here? And what will I do there? And where is God in all of this? And how will I get through tomorrow? It's so important to just have that calm assurance that God is in control of absolutely everything.

You know, I remember years ago, I was pastoring in Canada, and we bought a church, and we were renovating. And it was a lot of work. And in the beginning, a lot of people came out and just cast themselves on this work.

And then over time, it got to be less and less and less and less. And every day, there's one or two less. And then finally, it got to the midweek day when it was only me.

And I'm in this church, and I'm looking at the dome, and I'm looking at the walls. I'm looking at the floors. I'm looking at all the work that has to be done.

And suddenly, the hopelessness of it all just began to overwhelm me. I can't do this by myself. And it was probably the first time since I'd left full-time employment and gone into the ministry that despair tried to get a hold of my heart.

And I remember, I'm sure that there were prophetic voices out there. I'm sure that there were tapes I could have listened to, but I don't remember any of them. But what I do remember is what brought me out of despair.

I remember looking up, and it was towards the evening, and there was arched doors in this church. And I saw the silhouette, because the sun was going down, two little old ladies who didn't attend the church. They had to be close to their 80s if they weren't in their 80s.

And they were very frail. They had to hold each other, and they came tottering in the church door. And they walked over towards me, and they said in a really soft voice, one lady said, Pastor, the neighborhood hasn't been the same since you've come.

I want you to know you're doing a good job, and don't give up, and don't lose heart. And it was in the strength of those words that the despair that was knocking at my heart was taken away. You see, Jesus had come in the form of two little old ladies that came through the door.

The point is that you and I are not called to be superstars. We're not called to have all the answers. We have an answer within us.

We're called to be just ordinary people with faith and compassion. There's been more done in my life through words of assurance and tender hands than every prophet that's ever lived in the kingdom of God, I'll tell you right now. There's been more done through people who just walked up and said it's going to be okay.

You don't even have to quote scripture, folks. It's going to be okay. God is with you.

God's going to keep you. God is going to help you. In Luke chapter 24, there were some men on the road to a place called Emmaus.

Now, when you look at a context to this story, they were walking away from Jerusalem. Now, Jerusalem is the place of promise. It's the place of God's intended coming kingdom on earth as it is.

It's the place where his power was going to come. Everybody knew the significance of Jerusalem, but these two men are walking away from Jerusalem. And they're walking away because they'd lost heart.

They'd lost hope. The one they had put their hope in had been crucified and taken away. And suddenly, this stranger comes walking along beside them in Luke chapter 24, and they didn't recognize him.

Again, they didn't know who he was. I love this about Jesus. He walks with me, the song says, and he talks with me.

He doesn't abandon me when I'm confused. He doesn't walk away. You see, there has to be a willingness to walk with those who are walking away.

From a former place of hope and not shout at them, but walk with them. We have a tendency to shout at people who are walking away from a former faith in God. We quote scripture at them as they're running out the door, but we don't walk with them.

The difference is Jesus walked with them. And when he walked with them, he let them speak. And he said, why are you so sad? And they said, are you just a stranger here? He could have been so offended at that remark, couldn't he? But he didn't even respond to it.

And he said, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was past tense a prophet, mighty indeed in word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests, our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death and crucified him. We were hoping that it was he was going to redeem Israel. Talking to the one who had just been beaten to death, nailed and crucified for them, and they had already so quickly lost confidence in him.

And besides this, today is the third day since these things have happened. And he had told them plainly, I'm going to be raised from the dead on the third day. They didn't believe it.

And even though they said someone told us that he's risen, we don't, we just don't, we haven't seen it. We don't believe it. Then the scripture says, and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in the scriptures, the things concerning himself.

You see, we have to open the scriptures. And help people to understand that suffering and sorrow and confusion and darkness does not mean that we've lost the battle. We have to be able to explain to them, which he did.

He opened the scriptures and showed them through all the old Testament up to, of course, they didn't have the new Testament at that point, but he showed them that it was the plan of God to send his son and have his son die on the cross and have his son take the sins of the world upon himself to be placed in a grave and to be raised again from the dead on the third day. So that forgiveness and life and victory could be brought back to those who would put their confidence in him. And he had to explain that sometimes darkness has to come before the dawn.

Sometimes suffering has to come. You see, we've allowed a gospel to be preached in our nation that tells people that, oh, if you come to Jesus, it's just going to be sunshine all the way. It's going to be health and happiness.

And it's just going to be bigger and better and broader all the way. But how do you explain when things start going the other way? How do you explain when people start walking away saying, we had hoped this was the one. Now we can either shout at them or we can walk with them.

Thank God that Jesus Christ is the one who doesn't leave us. He doesn't forsake us in our struggles and trials and our moments of questioning and confusion. Remember, it was King David himself who was appointed to be king of Israel, who at one point in his journey said, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from the words of my roaring? In other words, I'm calling up to you and you're not answering me.

It was a dark night of the soul for King David. But yet God's purposes were still faithful to him. He was still going to be king because God had decreed it to be so.

My brother, my sister, no matter what you find yourself in today, no matter how confused you are or dark your day may be or how lost your hopes may seem, what God promised to you is what your life is going to be. It's not going to be taken from you. We have to get to a place where we can open the scriptures, but not to condemn those that are confused.

And folks, listen to me. There are going to be a lot of confused people in the days ahead. There are going to be a lot of people who were in church and we thought this was the Christ.

We thought this is what he was going to do. We thought victory was going to come this way. We didn't anticipate that he was going to be crucified.

The sun was going to be darkened. The earth was going to shake. The Pharisees were going to rejoice.

The Roman soldiers were going to be cruel. We didn't anticipate this. We thought it was going to be a kingdom that was going to come now.

And we're all going to sit on the right and the left. We're all going to rule and reign with him immediately. We failed to understand.

We failed to see that there was going to have to come a dark day between the day of his promise and the day when that promise is fulfilled. It's a place where our willingness to stay with them mirrors that of Jesus who said he would never leave or forsake his own. Yes, there's going to be people come into this church and come into your circle of influence that are going to be confused.

They attended places and they thought this is who God was and they only to find out the God they thought had forsaken them. No, God didn't forsake them. It was only their concept of God that forsook them.

But the real Christ has a body on the earth. The real Christ has people that look like gardeners and farmers. Oh, hallelujah.

I don't know about you, but I just love it. I just love it and how gentle he was with these men. And when they invited him in, he stayed.

If the door is closed, the door is closed. I understand that. But here's a case where I'm sure and know he had things to do just like you and I do.

But they said, please stay with us for a night if you will. And he stayed even though they were still confused. It does.

The scripture doesn't say at this point. What we know at this point, they really didn't see him. They really didn't believe yet.

The hearts really weren't alive. Their eyes weren't open, but they wanted to know more. And so you have to be patient.

People who have embraced a certain view of God, they don't change that view overnight. But hardship is going to bring them to where you are. Do you understand what I'm saying? Hardship is going to bring them to where you are.

They're going to come. They're going to come with their theologies. They're going to come with their past views of who God is.

And you're going to have to be gentle. You're going to have to be patient. You're going to have to walk with them.

You're going to have to be committed to them. And he sat down at the table with them and he celebrated with them the purpose and provision of God. It's a place where they broke bread and began to understand that God will not abandon you in times of confusion.

He will not walk away from you when you have questions that you don't have answers for. He's not a fair weather friend that takes off when hard times come. Jesus walks with us.

He talks with us. He doesn't leave us. Well, thank God with all my heart, I give God praise for the simplicity of who Christ is.

And then lastly, in John chapter 21, his own disciples headed out to fish. And I look at it as a type of evangelism. We as a church age have tried everything that we know to do to win the lost, haven't we? We've built bowling alleys, swimming pools, surveys.

Pentecostal churches are even having dances and wine tasting parties now trying to get people to come in to the house of God. We've let them put their feet on the offering on the altar rail, served lousy coffee, brought in musicians that aren't even saved in some cases. Anything to try to get people in the house of God.

It hasn't worked, has it? And if it has, it's just produced a bunch of people that if you don't entertain them, they don't stay. They go across the road to the next show. And here are the disciples and they're out and they've fished all night and they've caught nothing.

And the scripture says in John 21, for when morning had come, Jesus stood on the shore. Yet the disciples did not know it was Jesus. Now, it's important to understand this.

They still didn't know him physically because in verse 12, it says, when he said, come and eat, none of the disciples dared ask him, who are you? They inwardly knew it was the Lord, but on the exterior, still, he didn't appear in a form that they were familiar with, but he appeared to them as a servant. I love this. Somebody with compassion came to Mary, somebody willing to walk and be patient came to the men on the road to the mass.

We know it was Jesus. And then somebody appears as a servant. He's the risen Christ.

He could have walked on the water out to the boat. So what you have to understand, and I have to understand, but he gave us a pattern of what the church looks like. Here's people toiling all night.

He could have done what Elijah did with the prophets of Baal and mocked them. Maybe the fish are sleeping, put the net down deeper, but he didn't do any of that. He didn't mock their efforts.

He didn't criticize them. He didn't ridicule them. He just simply made biscuits and fish on a fire.

And he asked them a question. He said, have you, have you caught anything to eat? Are you satisfied? How are your, how are your labors? What are they producing? And you know, these men were becoming men of truth because I don't know a single fisherman that tells the truth when you ask him if they've caught anything. Have you caught anything? And they said, no, they yelled it from the boat.

And he said to them, cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some. Now, Jesus never did anything just for the sake of doing it. There was always a divine purpose to everything he said.

And he was trying to help them get back to where the victory is. Romans 8, 34 says it is Christ who died and furthermore is also risen who even is at the right hand of God. Cast it on the right hand of God.

Cast the net on the place of where God's power is. Preach the cross of Jesus Christ. Preach the victory of that cross.

Preach resurrected life in Jesus Christ. Preach about turning away from the old and turning towards the new. Get back to the right side of the boat.

Get back to where the power of God is. Jesus rose from the dead. On the third day, he ascended later into heaven and he sits at the right hand of God.

In all power and all victory and all authority, the victory, the battle, the life we long for, everything is in Jesus Christ. It's not in methodology, everything we look for. It's not in singing the right songs.

It's not in having the fanciest building. The power of God is found in the victory of Jesus Christ. The power of God is found in what he did for us, not what we can do for him.

The power of God is found in his promises to us. Not our promises to him, but his promises to us. Hallelujah to the lamb of God.

We need to preach again the power of God, the cross of Jesus Christ. Listen to what Paul says in the book of Ephesians chapter one, beginning at verse 17. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

In other words, you and I are called to live and preach in the victory of Christ, not in the effort of man. Thank God for the victory of Jesus Christ. Thank God, thank God that we can call people back to that victory.

We don't speak about ourselves. We don't need to speak about our church. We don't need to talk about our pastor for all those things are going to pass away.

But what we need to talk about is the victory of our Christ on a cross 2,000 years ago. The reality of who Jesus Christ is, God's ability to raise from the dead by his power and to quicken those who are dead in trespass and sin by his Holy Spirit. That if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation.

The old things are passed away and behold, all things are become new. It doesn't say if any man go to church or if any man reads like I do, or if any man looks like I do, if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. Cast your net on the right side of the boat.

When people are hopeless all around you, tell them who Jesus is. Tell them what Jesus did. Tell them about the victory over sin, hell and death.

Tell them about the kingdom of God. Tell them about the power of God's Holy Spirit. Tell them about the newness of life that God promises to those who will trust in him.

You see, that's what the church looks like. Ordinary people. Ordinary people that have a word of compassion.

Ordinary people who have confidence in God. Who believe in spite of our storms and our dark nights, and we all have them. Our frustrations, our unanswered questions.

Ordinary people who just have come to the place of saying, I don't know all the answers, but I know who holds the answers and I trust him. I trust him with all my heart. I trust him with my life.

I trust him with my future. I trust him with my family. I trust him.

Live or die, I trust the son of God. I've chosen in my heart to trust him. And when I meet somebody who's in tears because they've lost sight of where God is, may God give me the ability as an ordinary person, just walking throughout my ordinary day, to just speak to them in a way that will bring confidence back in

their hearts again.

All he said was her name. The next thing you know, she's at the feet of the son of God. There's power in speech, folks.

Power in speech. Power in speech. And we are the only thing in creation given the ability to willfully speak the word of God.

There's power in speech. Oh, thank God for that. And there's got to be somebody that you could think of, that you could walk with, instead of yell at them.

I don't like most street preachers I hear in New York City. Because all they do is yell at people when they're walking by. But it's a symptomatic of something.

Somehow they feel they're fulfilling the commission of God by just yelling at and condemning everybody going down the street. I've only ever heard one preacher that arrested me in my tracks, and it was in London, England. I never in my life heard a man preach like that on the street.

Stopped me dead in my tracks, as with many other people. The passion of God, the compassion of God was in this man. I have no doubt that if somebody walked up and said, would you come to my house and tell me this, he would have left that moment and gone with them.

And the willingness to be a servant. Everybody wants to be a Lord. Just to be a servant, to bake biscuits for confused people.

To be a servant to this church age. To be a servant to all the confused Christians out there casting the net on the wrong side of the boat. Not to be a condemner, but to be a servant.

And if they know it is a servant speaking to them, then they will have a tendency to try what the servant speaks. Knowing, not recognizing a physical Jesus, but knowing it is the voice of the Son of God speaking to them. Truly amazing.

You see, because what he left to us is a pattern, because he was going to indwell a people called his church. You and me, ordinary, simple people. He was going to indwell us.

And throughout our day, we were going to encounter people weeping. I walked in recently to one of the nominal churches here in the city that kind of leaves its doors open for people to go in and pray. And I walked in one day and I looked and I just kind of, and I was overwhelmed with the number of weeping people that were sitting there.

People that you know in your heart, they've lost touch with God. They don't know where God is in the midst of their struggle and they're crying, their heads are down. Mostly women crying, almost all women as a matter of fact.

For me, it would be difficult for me to sit next to somebody and pray. But there are some ladies in here, I'm sure that could be a ministry for you. If you haven't gone there, go.

Church is not necessarily doctrinally correct, but I'm telling you people are in there weeping, looking for Jesus. Somebody, somebody has to sit. Somebody has to be the gardener.

Somebody, you don't have to know it all. You just say, it's going to be okay. If you'll talk to Jesus, he'll help you.

You don't have to know every book in the Bible and all the Greek and Hebrew and have a wagon load of scripture to dump on them. Just say their name the way God would say it. And then you're going to find people, you know, people in New York don't want to get close to anybody because God forbid you may have to walk with them.

We don't mind like a five second evangelism or a handshake. But what would happen if they invite us into their house? Somehow we got to break out of the barriers. If we're going to be, if we're going to speak for Jesus in a hopeless time, we have to be willing to go where they live and walk with them in their confusion and break bread.

At their table and serve them. This is what God's speaking to my heart. Kind of brings it all back to basics, doesn't it? And levels the playing field.

Because I don't see any big preachers in this story. I just see ordinary people. A body, a body.

He's trying to show us I'm going to have a body. And that body is not going to be recognizable as the physical Jesus. That body will be known by what comes from the inside out.

I will be in that body. Speaking through that body. And I will be recognizable to people because of the words and the actions of my body.

On this earth. It is truly amazing. Thank God.

And so I want to give an altar call this morning. And here's what the Lord put on my heart. It's for people who can say I'm discouraged myself.

But I do want to speak for God. Lord, would you comfort me? Would you help me? So that I too might become a comfort and help to other people. Would you comfort me today? Lord, would you speak to my frail heart? Would you be the servant that you are to me? Would you wash my feet if that's what it's going to take? But God, would you help me? If I'm casting my net on the wrong side, would you give me? Would you speak to my heart and tell me a better way to do things? Would you give me the courage to walk with people who need somebody to walk with them? Would you change my speech? And help me to not be so argumentative.

In the workplace or in my home, would you help me? Would you speak through me, God? Would you change my heart? Would you comfort me so that I can actually be your body? And you could speak through me to people. Especially in the hopeless days in which we live. And Father, I thank you, Lord, for letting me deliver this word that you put on my heart.

I thank you, God, for the witness of truth. Lord, some of these things are so simple, they're deep. But yet as we study it, you clearly showed us the pattern of the resurrected church.

You showed it to us. Just as you lived between the period of your resurrection and ascension, we now live between the period of where we were born again from the dead, and we are going to be home with God. But until the day we get home, would you help us to understand these things? To embrace these things? To get rid of the corporate thinking in your house? And to become a spiritual people again? Would you

help us to make a difference in our society? Our city, where we live, our towns, our workplace? Would you help us to meditate on these things today? And would you comfort us in our confusion and sorrow, that we too can comfort others? Father, I thank you for this in Jesus' name.

We're going to take a few moments to worship this morning. And if you just need the comfort of God, because you're in a time of sorrow yourself, but you'd like to be able to speak for God, I'm going to ask as we stand, just make your way to the front of this auditorium, or between the screens in the annex, or North Jersey. You can maybe just stand up in your living room, those that are online.

And let's, we'll just pray together, and we'll just trust God that he will minister to each of our hearts. You know, when I got saved, I didn't know, I didn't know a hundredth of maybe what I know now. I led 52 people to Christ in the first two years.

You shouldn't count, but I did. And for me, it was just as natural as breathing. And it wasn't difficult.

It was like, I want to tell you what God did for me. And I really cared about people, and they knew that. Then I got into church.

And I don't know what it is about us, but we take something so easy, and we make it into such a hassle. Suddenly, we're all supposed to be out there laying hands on the sick, and they're recovering and prophesying. And we get into the book of Acts, and we all want to go out into society, and wanted to speak in tongues, and see 3,000 come to Christ.

And we take something so simple, and we make it so complicated. And then it becomes frustrating. And with the frustration comes fruitlessness.

But I love it when you study the, and I want to really encourage you to go into John 20, 21, and Luke 24, and study just Jesus, looking unto Jesus. What did he do as the resurrected Christ? How did he interact with people? And just study it until it becomes part of you. And I find myself now getting back to the simplicity of being a Christian.

Does that make sense? I'm just really enjoying life. And walking through my day, and if I see somebody weeping, I don't have to go up and say, hey, I'm a pastor, you better listen to me. I don't have to speak prophetically.

I don't have to know a bunch of scripture. I just have to say, hey, just want you to know that God loves you. And he's going to help you.

If you'll turn to Jesus, he'll help you. Now, if the door opens to walk with that person, then walk a bit and talk a little bit. And if it doesn't, just be satisfied.

And all else fails, bake biscuits. For real. You can't win the neighbor across the hall, that obnoxious neighbor with the loud music.

Try baking biscuits and knocking on the doors. I'm not kidding. Jesus did it.

You throw in a fish for good measure if you've got the budget for it. So I just happen to notice you seem to be frustrated. I thought you might enjoy some biscuits and fish.

And you'd be surprised just serving and being kind. Suddenly, people's hearts begin to open. Say, well, what is it you believe anyway? And how come you're so joyful when everybody else is so sad in this neighborhood? And you'll find suddenly the door opens.

And it's truly amazing. Now, Father, I thank you for this day. I thank you, God, for these men and women and young people who are at this altar today.

And those who are at the altar in their hearts, Lord, even online today. God, we have come to perhaps the end of something and the beginning of something new in our time. And darkness does seem to be abounding.

But your word tells us that when the enemy does come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord will raise his standard. And so God, raise us back again to the simplicity of being your church, Jesus, of letting you be God inside of us, letting you animate our hearts and our feet and our directions and our words. And Lord, I ask you to make it a joyful thing to walk through this life, no matter how dark it is, knowing that you will be faithful to us.

And Father, we thank you for it. Bless these men and women who have come out of their seats today, Lord, to come and yield to you to be comforted. Bless them, comfort them, Father, because we can't comfort others if we don't know the comfort of God.

But the comfort that they're receiving this morning, let it be multiplied a thousandfold and given to others, Lord, throughout this coming week and month. Father, we thank you for these things. Oh, God, we praise you.

We bless you. In Jesus' name.

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