

The Day I Preached To Nobody

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the importance of obeying God's voice, even when it seems like there is no audience or visible impact. It highlights the need to trust in God's promises, believe in His power to transform lives, and have the courage to step out in faith regardless of circumstances or doubts. The story shared illustrates how obedience to God's leading, even in apparent obscurity, can lead to unexpected and powerful outcomes, bringing salvation and restoration to those who are lost and broken.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:22, Hebrews 3:15, Luke 15:11, Romans 10:17, Psalm 95:7, Isaiah 55:3, Jeremiah 29:11, John 10:27, James 1:22, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Obedience to God", "Faith in God's Promises"

Description

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Transcript

I had a message all prepared tonight, but as I'm sitting in my seat this evening, worshiping with you, I felt the Lord asking me to put that away and save it for another time. And tonight, I just want to share with you a simple thought before we go to communion together. So if you're at home, and if you can get some juice and some crackers, we're going to share communion in just a little while.

It'll only be a few minutes. But I want to talk to you tonight. If I were to give this a title, I'll call it the day I preached to nobody.

The day I preached to nobody. Father, I thank you, God, for, Lord, over the years, I've learned to hear you and obey your voice. And God, when we obey you, it always leads to life.

It always leads to freedom. It leads to wholeness, not just for us, but for others, beginning with members of our own family. And so, Father, tonight, I just ask you, God, for the grace to speak the word that you have planted in my heart.

I ask you, Lord God, for a touch of heaven to come upon those that are listening in the sanctuary tonight and those that are online, sitting at home and wondering, could God ever touch my life? Could things ever

change? Is there a way that I can be free? Can he restore my home? Can he restore my family? Will he forgive my sin? God, I'm asking you in Jesus' name tonight to answer those questions in a way that's deeper than just with the natural understanding, by gripping the hearts of the hearers and giving us, oh God, the opportunity and the desire to get up and go home. As we've been hearing all night, this simple thought, it's time to get up and it's time to go home. And so, Father, we thank you for this and we praise you for it in Jesus' name.

Amen. In 1 Samuel chapter 15, the prophet Samuel came to the king of Israel. At that time, his name was Saul.

Now, Saul had committed a grievous mistake. He was given a word from God. He was given a leading from God.

And as a matter of fact, he was given great promises of God. His life was to be a life that had a continuation. It was going to be a blessing not just on him, but on his family, on his children.

There was to be a succession after him from his own house. But he was a man who just could not do it God's way. He just could not hear the voice of God and just obey the voice of God.

He had to figure everything out and he had to do things his own way. And the prophet Samuel came to him after one of these moments with a question. And he said, has the Lord a great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifice as in obeying the voice of the Lord? In other words, does God really want us to try to figure everything out? Does he want our own reasonings involved in our own go-forward strategies, the freedoms that God wants to bring into our lives and the lives of others? Or does he just want us to hear from him and obey him? And again, the writer of Hebrews in chapter 3, he says these words.

Now, he's exhorting the people of God of his time to, again, to believe God, to believe that God is who he says he is, to believe that God will do what God says he will do. And he says these words, today, if you can hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. Now, he talks about the people of God of the days of Israel being released from Egypt who came out and just could not believe that God could take them into this place of promise.

Don't harden your heart. Don't say in your heart, it can't be that easy. You know, I know I'm speaking to some people online tonight who just believe in your heart that, God, there's got to be something I must do.

Is it just as easy as getting up and going forward? And what if I can't see the way forward? What if I don't see a future before me? I don't see the freedom that maybe God's promising me for my house, for my family. I don't see the healing in my marriage. I don't see the deliverance for my children.

I don't see my own life making a difference in my home, let alone in my community. But yet, I feel the strange drawing, the strange pulling of God. So I have a choice to make.

Do I get up and I go towards the voice of God, the creator of all life, the one who has the power to create a universe by the words of his mouth, or do I draw back into my own reasoning, which will always lead me into unbelief? And when you put human reasoning in with the leading of God, quite often it leads to this thinking in the heart that what's set before me is impossible. It simply can't be done. Now I just have an illustration that God put in my heart today, and it was about the day that I preached to nobody.

When I was pastoring in Canada, we had arranged to do a Saturday outreach concert to the unsaved and an evangelistic crusade, basically. It was going to be an all-afternoon thing. People were going to come from everywhere.

There was a huge park where we were set up. They had a big, big band shell with a covering over it, and we advertised it, and it was in a community that really needed a touch of God. There was a lot of addiction and such like there, and we just knew that there was going to be quite a big turnout in that field.

So the day we set up, it rained, and it not just rained, it poured. We were set up in the band shell. It was Pastor Theresa, myself, and a worship team about the size of the worship team that was on the platform this evening, and there was nobody there.

It was a huge park. There was nobody there. It was a thundering rain that turned out to be a drizzle after a little while.

So the worship leader said to me, Pastor, should we pack up and go home? So I took a moment to pray, and I prayed, and I felt the Lord say to my heart, take a moment to worship. I said, well, guys, girls, we've come all this way, and we're all set up, and we have big speakers and everything. Why don't we just worship for a little while? So they said okay.

So they got up, and for about 20 minutes, we sang praise songs. We sang songs of worship and adoration, and after about 20 minutes, then we stopped, and the worship leader said to me, should we pack up now and go home? And the Lord spoke to my heart and said, no, I want you to preach, not just preach just for five minutes. I want you to give the whole wagon load as if there was 10,000 people in this field, as if this park was packed with people.

I want you to preach your heart out to a crowd. So I got up, and I said, no, I'm going to preach. Then suddenly, they're looking at me askance.

You know, they kind of look like our pastor is losing it. There's something wrong with him. Can he not see there's nobody here? Now, I could see there was nobody there, but the Holy Spirit said preach.

Now, isn't that amazing? So sometimes we have a choice to make. Do we obey our own heart? Do we plant our own reasoning in with the leading of God? Do we succumb to the snickers of others around us and the worries of what they're going to think about us when we step out and preach to nobody as if there's 10,000 people there, or do we obey the voice of God? You know, that's why Samuel said to Saul, does the Lord have as much delight in sacrificing all the things that we do of our own strength as obeying the voice of God? So I opened my Bible, and I don't remember the exact message, but let's just say it went something like this. I would always preach on the prodigal son, and I assume that I did that day as well, and talked about you may have taken the life that God gave you, and you may have gone far away from what God intended your life to be, and you may be wondering, how can I get up, and how can I go back home? And I said, I want you to know, now there's nobody there, you have to understand it's an empty park, right? I want you to know today that God loves you.

I want you to know that He's been waiting for you to come home. I want you to know that just as happened in the life of this young son of his father, when he finally just got tired of where he was living, he got tired of the selflessness in society, got tired of all that he had done, and all that he had been. He got up, and he was so far away from his father, but the scripture says his father saw him.

He was waiting for him on the porch, and as the son began to head home, his father ran to meet him. Now the son may not have known what was his father's intent as he came down the road, but only to find his father embracing him, and kissing him on the neck, and calling his servants, and saying, bring forth the best robe out of the house, and place it upon my son. And I talked about the best robe being the shed blood of the Son of God on the cross, the covering of God, the covering that takes away all of our sin, the covering that makes us as clean as God is, the covering that brings us home, not as a slave, but as a son of the living God.

And I talked about the father now taking off his ring, and putting that ring of authority on the son's finger, not just to be brought back and to be cleansed, but to give him spiritual authority, the authority of his father, and then putting shoes on his feet, and inviting him on this incredible journey to go, and simply as our gentleman did tonight, tell others what God has done in your life. Tell them about the mercy of God, and about the goodness of God. When I was done preaching, I let it loose for about 20-25 minutes, and when I was done, the Holy Spirit said, give an altar call.

For real, there's nobody there folks. Give an altar call. So I finished the message, and I said, you might be here tonight.

Now at this point, I could feel what people on the platform are feeling behind me. Our pastor has really lost it. He's giving an altar call, and there's nobody here.

I said, you might be here today, and maybe this message has touched your heart, and you want to get up, and you want to come home. I want to give you an invitation to come forward to this stage, and we're going to be here, and we're going to pray for you. There's nobody there folks.

I'm preaching to nobody. When I finished giving the altar call, on my left hand, there was a whole hedge of bushes. This guy had been out on a drunk all night, and he had been laying under one of the bushes, listening to the whole message, wondering, is it possible that I can come back to God? Is it possible that I could be cleansed of my sin? Is it possible that I could be free? So he comes rolling out of the bushes, stands up, and starts coming from my left hand side in the field, quite a ways away too, might I add.

This is a huge, huge park, and he starts walking toward the stage. On the other side, on my right hand, behind, it used to be big wooden telephone poles at this time, there's another man who's been hiding behind the pole the whole time. He had just been released from jail.

He'd been paroled for manslaughter, and he had gotten out of jail, and he was thinking in his heart, how am I ever going to fit back into society? I don't think I'm ever going to make it. I don't think there's a future for me. I don't think there's a hope, and he heard the message of God's mercy and God's love.

So now I've got two coming this way, making their way to the platform. Now, as the park went this way and kind of dipped down into town, and so the speakers carried quite a distance. So there's two teenagers the whole time have been making their way towards the sound of my voice, and the way it was, the way the echo was, they heard the whole message.

And so here comes two umbrellas over the hill with two teenagers walking towards the stage, ready to give their lives to Jesus Christ. And so I preached to nobody that day, and four people came to Christ. Four people got saved.

The point I'm making tonight is simple. Just think of what could happen in your life if you have the courage just to obey God. Why does it matter what anybody thinks? Why does it matter what your neighbor thinks, or your family thinks, or why does it even matter what your own heart thinks? If God is speaking to you today, don't harden your heart against him.

If the Lord is telling you that just as you heard Blake and Will share their testimonies today, that you too can have a testimony of being set free from the power of drugs, and addiction, and alcohol, and depression, and suicidal thoughts, and broken homes, and minds, and marriages, that that can be your portion. And you might be sitting at home tonight, and on your couch, you're just saying, God is it possible this could be me? But today, if you can hear his voice, the scripture says don't harden your heart as people before you have once done. Stand up and move towards the voice of God.

And say, I don't care what other people say. I don't care who says there's no hope for me. I don't care who tries to tell me there's no future.

I don't care who's going to laugh at me in my house. I'm getting up, and I'm moving towards the sound of the voice of God, because he's telling me I can be free. I can be clean.

I can be saved. I can be born again. I can be a brand new person.

I can have a future and a hope. Hallelujah to the Lamb of God. Hallelujah.

I do believe as our pastor Serge said tonight, there's a day coming when America is just going to get up and start coming home. Sons and daughters are going to come home. People raised in Sunday school are going to start coming home.

People are getting sick of this society right now. Sick of the immorality. Tired of the confusion.

Sick of the addiction. Sick of the incivility. Tired of all of the things that are going on around us.

And evil purporting itself as good. And there is a people in America that are going to get up and say, I'm done with this. I'm going home to God.

I'm going home to my Father. Today, if you can hear his voice, don't harden your heart. Today, don't try to figure it all out.

Don't think that you have to put some formula of your own effort into this, other than you need to bring to God a heart of faith. And say, Lord, I don't know the way out. And just like Pastor Carter shared tonight, I don't see anything before me, but I hear you calling.

And I hear you speaking. And I don't know how this is going to happen. And I don't know what kind of life it's going to bear.

But if it's you speaking, Lord, I'm coming. And I'm going to do what you say, in spite of what anybody around me says or has said or is trying to say. Those who tell me that it can't be done, those who try to say it's never been done or it won't be done, I don't believe any of them anymore.

Because if I hear the voice of God calling me, it will be done. And it will be done just as God has said it will be done. Father, in Jesus' name, in Jesus' name, Lord, your presence has been here so, so powerfully all night, God.

We have felt you like an oil in the sanctuary, because you are reaching out to people in this generation as a loving, heavenly Father. You're reaching out as a Savior who went to a cross, opened his heart, and opened his arms to whosoever will, that we may come, God. You told us to come with our confusion, come with our struggles, our trials, our difficulties, bring it all to your cross.

And you said that you would roll it away from us, oh God. You would cleanse us and cover us and empower us and invite us on a journey to tell others about how great you are and what you have done. Oh, Father, in Jesus' name, in Jesus' name, don't let anybody sit back down who's already stood up at home in their heart.

God, don't let them drop back into the caves of fear. Don't let them drop back into the places of addiction and hopelessness, oh God. Oh, Jesus Christ, you promised us that our homes will be changed, our families can be saved.

You can bring restoration into places, God, where there's nothing but chaos and disorder. That's the God that you are, and that's what you do. So we choose to believe you tonight.

We choose to cast away our doubts, and we choose to believe you with all of our heart. Oh, God almighty, God almighty, give the men and women, teenagers that are listening tonight, the courage just to say these few words with me from their own heart. I'm going to ask you tonight, those that are online, and maybe somebody here in the sanctuary, because I don't know everybody here tonight, but maybe you can just pray these words with me if God would put it on your heart to do so.

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for loving me. Thank you for coming to get me and bringing me home to you again. I don't know how to figure it all out, and I don't have to.

I just have to move towards you, because you died for me. You paid the price for my wrong, and you promised me new and eternal life. So I open my heart to you tonight.

I don't harden my heart. I open my heart, and I get up and come to you, and I believe that it will be as you say it will be. I will be born again.

I will be free. I will have a future. I will have a hope.

Healing will come into my home, into my mind, and into my family. It will be as you promised me it will be from this day forward. Jesus Christ, you are the Lord of my life.

You are my savior and my God. I will follow you. Where you lead me, I will follow.

What you ask of me, I will do. And my life, I believe, will bring glory to your name. In Jesus' mighty name, hallelujah, hallelujah.

Thank you, God. Thank you, God. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Lord. If you prayed that prayer, do one thing for me. Just text the word DECIDED to 51000 on your cell phone.

Just go to 51000, text the word DECIDED. Let us get in touch with you. Let us help you start in this new life and this new walk that you have tonight with God.

We're going to go to communion in just a moment. The band behind me is going to sing one worship song. Feel free to join in with us.

Then we'll go to communion, and we're going to celebrate this incredible victory that God gave to us through his son, Jesus Christ. God bless you.

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