

Where Have You Taken Jesus?

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon challenges believers to seek a genuine relationship with Jesus amidst the distractions of misguided religious practices.

Duration: 58:50

Scripture: Psalm 12:1, Isaiah 60:1-3, Ezekiel 6:14, John 20:11-13

Topics: "Religiosity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the struggle of being in a religious environment that is disconnected from the true heart of God. They emphasize the importance of being touched by the life of Jesus Christ and the dissatisfaction that comes from seeking fulfillment in man-made ideas and theories about building God's kingdom. The speaker encourages listeners to cry out to God and believe that He will reveal Himself again. They draw parallels to the story of Mary at the sepulcher and highlight the power of God's plan that cannot be stopped. The sermon concludes with a vivid description of the darkness surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus and the ultimate victory that God has in store.

Transcript

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But Mary stood without at the sepulcher, weeping. And as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher. And she had two angels in white sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She said unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne

him hence, tell me where thou hast taken him, and I will take him away.

Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master. Now for this particular lady, Mary, who we know from the scriptures to be Mary Magdalene, it must have been like a whirlwind nightmare.

And sometimes a walk with God can even seem like that from person to person. Luke chapter 8, verses 2 tells us that she had been set free from demonic oppression. And when a group of other women began following Jesus and ministering to him out of the substance, whatever it is that she had, whatever her earthly possessions had been, she had now found a truth that had set her free.

She was a wholehearted and devoted follower of Jesus Christ. But suddenly, after just a few years, she's caught in a firestorm of misguided religious passion. Now that can happen in every generation.

We get letters here in Times Square Church of people who come to Christ. And they're walking in a church that seems to be feeding them. They're touched with the power of God's presence.

And all of a sudden, some program comes in. And there's a tremendous passion, but there's such a coldness that comes with it, such a sense in the heart that this isn't God. This direction we're moving in is not good.

And it can happen to anyone. And it's happened to many who have been in the professing charismatic Pentecostal churches in the last two decades. This firestorm of passion is removing the hope of the Christ that she has known and placing him somewhere out of her sight.

And quite often, it is animated by religious men who hate the simplicity of Christ because it offends their ambition. The simplicity of Christ, he came to be a servant to all. He came not to be ministered to by the words of his own mouth, but to be a minister.

And there are so many who want to profess to know Christ, but yet they want to be lords over God's heritage. And just even that factor alone can obscure Jesus from the view of his people. They're looking to the ministry as a type and shadow of Jesus Christ, but what they see does not reflect him.

And the ambition that is found in the heart puts him out of the sight of the people. The selflessness of Christ exposes their greed, and his life magnifies the power of death that's still residing in them. And every time you have a ministry that rises, that is moving in the flesh and moving by its own ambition, there will unwittingly begin to put away from the people this visible manifestation of Jesus Christ that so touches and warms the hearts of those who are hungry for him.

They say in their hearts, John 11, 48, If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and our nation. And by their very statement, they reveal that the intent of their ministry is position and kingdom. They want a position and a kingdom.

And they say, but if people start looking at Jesus, they'll stop looking at us. And if they stop looking at us, then we'll lose our esteem as it is in their sight. We'll lose the high seats at every banquet.

We'll lose the greetings in the marketplace. We'll lose the finances that so freely flows from their hands into ours. We'll lose our place, and we'll lose our kingdom.

And so they went, and they stood on Calvary. All these religious, misguided religious passion as it is. And they mocked the cross and the blood.

And we see it today, even in the non-charismatic churches, where there are churches rising in our generation that are saying, we don't preach the cross here. We don't talk about the blood here. Because these things are an offense.

They don't even understand they're of the same spirit as these men were. Where Christ is hanging on the cross, and they're mocking everything about the cross and everything about the blood. This very life, love as it is of God, that is dripping out of the veins and feet of Jesus Christ for fallen humanity.

They have no understanding of it. It is a disgrace to them. It's an offense to them.

And so they succeeded as it is in killing Him, so they thought, and removing Him out of the people's sight. And they went and made the sepulchre sure, and they set a stone. They sealed the stone, rather, and they set a watch.

Every generation has its ministry whose intent is to promote itself and obscure Christ. And we have no shortage of that now. As they increase, the land becomes increasingly barren under their leadership.

As in the days of Ezekiel, when the ministry rose that caused the people to be worshipping at wrong altars, God Himself said, I cannot endure this anymore. And He said, I'm going to come down, I'm going to defile these abominable altars, and I'm going to take the bones of those who worship around them and scatter them around the altars. You'll find that in Ezekiel chapter 6. You see, later on in Ezekiel 37, when God says to Ezekiel, can these bones live? He's speaking about these bones that have been scattered around these false altars.

In Ezekiel 6.14, God says, I'll stretch My hand upon them and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than the wilderness. We have more Christian preaching on television and radio than we have had in the history of America. Or the western world.

You can go to television stations now, uniquely set aside for what's supposed to be the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can turn on radio, you can go to Christian bookstores, you can buy tapes all over the place, yet the land is getting increasingly desolate. We see this spiraling out of control immorality, touching every level of society, every level of the media.

The Christ mockers now are on the airways with no apology whatsoever. There is absolutely nothing they won't say. And you see, beloved, because the nation is under a ministry that is largely obscuring Jesus Christ.

Men are standing and they have other agendas. They are selfish, they are out of touch with God. They have lost an understanding of the very principles of the gospel and doctrines of Jesus Christ.

They are building on another foundation. And so as they preach and as they increase and as they mesmerize one another and as they encourage one another and gather people to themselves, the land becomes increasingly desolate. Before the justice of God ever hit a nation in the Old Testament, speaking of Israel of course, you'll always find a rise of religious frenzy.

You'll always find 400 or 450 prophets pushing into the inner court of government and parliament and position and power and authority because that's where their gospel is. That's what they want, that's what they're after. They're pushing into it.

They'll tell the people everything they want to hear, just so that they themselves, their place in their nation will remain intact. In Luke 22, 53, the scripture says when they came to arrest Jesus in the garden, He said to them, this is your hour and the power of darkness. In other words, this is your time, this is given into your hand by God the Father.

This is your reign and here is the effect of your reign. If this religious falseness were loosed, here is in effect what the end result would be. Luke 23, 44 says it was about the sixth hour and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

And the sun was darkened. Now it's an amazing type as it is. You read everything you want to read about it and there are many opinions on this.

And certainly some of them have some validity. But I see in this passage of scripture, this is the reign of darkness. When a religious zeal without knowledge is guiding the heart, this is what happens to the human heart.

There is no life. It's exactly as creation before God's word breathed into this empty void that was called earth and the space that surrounded it in the galaxy. Until God spoke, it was just empty and dull.

And that's exactly what happens to people when they're under a ministry that is zealously religious but fundamentally wrong in the theology about Jesus Christ and in their principle and practice of the word of God. But even in the midst of this darkness, God always has a plan. He had a plan that he formed before the world was ever fashioned.

And nobody can stop his plan. That's why God says, never give up. Never give up because it's not about you.

I have a plan. I formed it before the world was formed. And I invited you into it.

That's why you don't have to give up because I formed this plan in my heart and nothing can stop what I'm about to do. And you can see, perhaps if I could take us into a theater of the imagination for a moment, you can see the powers of hell dancing around the cross. They have this religious crowd worked into a frenzy as they are crucifying the Lord of glory.

You can see all of the celebration and the supposed victory and this veil of darkness that comes with this misguided zeal as they see it for God. Bringing this veil of darkness over the people. But you see, God always has a plan.

I believe it's a darkness probably thicker and darker than any darkness perhaps they had ever known. A very fearful darkness had come on the earth at this particular time because the scripture says that the sun was darkened. God literally turned the sun out.

It lasted for three hours. There is no way, as I read it yesterday, there's no way throughout any history that an eclipse of the sun could ever last that long. Or completely block out the sun.

It was a sovereign act of God. He turned the sun out. Perhaps he put his hand in front of it.

I don't know how he did it. He just simply blocked it out. But in the midst of this darkness, verse 45 in Luke 23 says the veil was rent.

The veil of the temple was rent in two. In the midst of all this darkness, God says, yes, hell seems to be prospering. Yes, the land is getting increasingly desolate.

But I have a plan and I'm going to reveal myself to all who seek me. Now, he didn't do it by stealth. But it's as if he just, in the midst of all this darkness, just slipped out from behind the curtain.

God, who was separated from man from the days of Moses, building the tabernacle. God, who is so holy that if the high priest went in and he was in any way defiled, would die right on the spot. They would put bells on his feet and a rope around his ankle.

So that if the bells stopped ringing, they knew he had died in the presence of God. And they would just haul him out of the holy of holies. And this same God, who is so holy that no flesh can approach him and survive, slips out, as it is, from behind the veil and says, I have a plan.

I'm going to now be revealed to everyone who's seeking me. They're going to find me. And it's a plan that the religious are not going to see it.

It's a stealth plan, in a sense. Because it's not obvious. Yes, one day he comes back with horses and he comes back with thousands and ten thousands of his saints and trumpets and fanfare and the whole world, it says, will see his return.

But till that day, he says, no, I'm coming to a people. But I'm coming in such a non-obvious way that those who are religious and zealous and misguided, those whose hearts are not in line with mine, are not going to be able to see it. They will not understand it.

Can you see the religious leaders of the day dusting off their hands, satisfied that their misrepresentations or accusations of Christ have left the people sufficiently bewildered enough to fall back under their control? As they stood there and said, he saved others. And himself he cannot save. If you're the Christ, come down off the cross.

Even the thief, one of the thieves said, if you're the Christ, save yourself and us. And as they walk away, seemingly satisfied, can you see them turning to teach the people now and telling the people, now let us tell you who God is. Now, David, in Psalm 12, he knew this dark time, even in his generation.

I'll read it to you, unless you want to turn there. Psalm 12, that's where David says in verse one, he says, help, Lord, for the godly man seizes. The faithful fail from among the children of men.

David knew this time. He said, oh, God, help us. Where are the godly men in this generation? He is himself a godly man, a seeker of God.

But he's looking around and seeing perhaps at this point so little of what really represents the heart of God. He says in verse two, they speak vanity, everyone with his neighbor. With flattering lips and a double heart do they speak.

They speak things to people that are of no profit to them. They tell people what they want to hear for their own advantage, as it is. The Lord, he said in verse three, shall cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaketh proud things.

Who have said with our tongue, will we prevail, and our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us? Verse five says, for the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy. Now will I arise, saith the Lord, and I will set him at safety from him that puffeth at him.

Now I want you to listen to this because I believe that I'm speaking this prophetically to our generation. He says, for the oppression of the poor and for the sighing of the needy. I'm going to arise, saith the Lord, and I'm going to set him at safety from him that puffeth at him.

And the word puffeth in the Hebrew text means to scoff, to utter lies, to incite sedition. To encourage a person to abandon or rebel against God. To become cool in the evening as when the heat departs.

And what the Lord is saying, there are people out there who are still seeking me. They are still looking for me. They still want me.

And I'm going to set them at safety from the people around them who speak coldness into their hearts. Who speak about me, but there's no warmth. When they open their mouths and they open this book, they speak a cold breeze like at the end of the day when the sun is gone.

And the people leave and there's no passion, there's no life in the heart of the people. They don't go out and want to serve God. They wonder why they even keep going to the house of the Lord.

And many of them become meat now for every beast of the field, as the scripture says. Anything that looks like it's got life, they're so desperate for life, that anything that looks like it's alive, they will gravitate to it now. Even, sadly in many cases, if it's deception.

And I can see many returning to listen to them, but not Mary. Many going back to the Pharisees and the Sadducees and say, well, tell us now who God is. Obviously, this wasn't God.

Tell us now who God is. But Mary didn't go back. You see, she had been touched by the power of his life.

And Mary had more longing for what she supposed was a dead Jesus, than for a religious system that had left her under demonic oppression. It's amazing, folks. When you've been touched by the life of Christ, nothing else will ever satisfy you.

I might be speaking over the internet now to people who listen to these tapes every week. And you know exactly what I'm talking about. You were touched by the life of Christ.

Your heart burned like the men on the road to Emmaus with a passion for Almighty God. But you ended up somewhere in a cold place. And now it's all systems and theories about God.

It's all man-made ideas about how to build a kingdom that you can't even see. And the longer you are there, the colder your heart is becoming. But there's a longing in you now, because you've been touched by the life of Jesus Christ.

And once you've tasted and know that the Lord is good, nothing else will ever satisfy you. And there's a cry. Remember, the Lord says, for those who rise up and are thirsty, for those who cry out to me, I'm going to arise and I'm going to reveal myself to you again.

John 20 again, verse 11. The scripture says, Mary stood without at the sepulcher, weeping. And as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher.

Now, Peter and John have already been there. They've already confirmed the fact that Jesus' body is not there anymore. And they've gone home.

They've looked into the history as it is and said, yeah, that's right. He's no longer there. And they've gone home, but she was not willing to leave.

And verse 12 says, she saw two angels in white sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And the interesting thing about Mary is she's not even interested in angels. Some people settle for angels.

They settle for angels of light even. They settle for anybody who looks like they have life. Or looks like there's some measure of God's radiance about them.

But you see, it's not an angel who had touched her life. And even Paul the Apostle himself said, if an angel from God preached any other gospel, let him be accursed. She saw two angels, but she's not interested.

All she wanted to know was, where is Jesus? Where have you put him? And they said to her woman, verse 13, why weepest thou? She said to them, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing and knew not that it was Jesus. Remember what the Word of God says in Psalm 12, verse 5, For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord.

She turned back and saw Jesus standing, but she didn't know it was him. In verse 15, Jesus said to her woman, why weepest thou? And whom seekest thou? And she, supposing him to be the gardener, said unto him, sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. She supposed him to be an ordinary person, until in verse 16, Jesus said unto her, marry.

Now this is an incredible thing. I want you to just follow me in this thought. She thought he was just an ordinary person.

She turned after he was raised from the dead. She looks at a man. He looks like a gardener.

I don't know what gardeners look like. Maybe they're a little smudgy in their clothes. Who knows? Maybe he had a rake in his... I don't know.

But he looked like the gardener. Like the man who just comes in and takes care of the whole garden area that surrounded this tomb. And it wasn't really just so much when he spoke to her, because initially, he asked her why she was weeping and who was she looking for.

She looked at this ordinary man. Until he spoke her name. You see, nobody can speak your name like God.

Nobody. You see, many, many people will speak your name, but nobody speaks it the way that Jesus can. You see, when Jesus speaks your name, he speaks it as a creator.

Just like he said, let the world, let there be light. And light was. He said, let there be John.

Let there be Grace. Let there be Alice. Let there be Mary.

You were not born by fluke or happenstance. God determined in his heart for you to be born. And he spoke your name before you were born.

He knew you before you were formed in your mother's womb. He spoke your name. He wanted you from before the foundation of the earth.

And when he spoke your name, it's because he wanted you for fellowship with himself for all of eternity. He said, you are born to be mine. You are born to be my beloved bride.

He spoke your name as a bridegroom. And those who have been married or have ever been in love, you know that nobody can speak your name like the bridegroom. Your mother can't speak it that way.

Your brother can't speak it that way. Nobody can speak your name like the bridegroom can. There's such a tenderness.

There's such a love. There's such a care. There's such an authority that all he had to do was say her name and she knew it was Jesus.

Nobody ever said my name like this. She was a disadvantaged person in society. She had been oppressed of the devil.

We don't know what her life was like, but some commentators don't seem to think it was a very pretty situation. But one day, God Almighty in the flesh came along and he spoke her name. And when he spoke her name, it was spoken like nobody else had ever spoken it before.

And it's as if it was branded in her heart, God spoke my name. Have you ever heard God speak your name? Have you ever heard him call you? Have you heard him tenderly speak your name in the prayer closet? Have you ever understood the compassion that God has in his heart for you? The care, the authority to fight against all of your enemies. The desire to cover you with his presence not only in time, but for all of eternity.

Have you understood that he's going to take you as a jewel in his crown and parade you before the galaxies for eternity as his beloved bride? Nobody speaks your name like Jesus speaks your name. And so Jesus takes on a form after he's risen from the dead. Now follow me carefully here.

And he speaks through a person who looks like a gardener. That's incredible. Stop and think about it.

He could have very clearly stood there in his majesty and there could have been no doubt. He could have had fire coming from his feet, six feet on every side. Could have done anything he wants.

He's God. But he appears to Mary looking like an ordinary person, a gardener. That's what perplexed Isaiah.

When Isaiah wrote these words, he said, Who has believed our report? To whom has the arm of the Lord revealed? Isaiah said, God, this is incredible. Here you are sending me with a message of this incredible strength that you have for a generation of people who will believe in you. But you are revealing yourself in a way, who's ever going to believe it? Who's ever going to know your strength? You're not showing yourself in a way that the world wants to see you.

They want to see a conquering king and you're coming as a suffering savior. They want to rule, but you're coming as a servant. You're doing everything backwards.

You're doing it differently than the world does it. So those whose hearts are not in line with God are looking in all the wrong places. And they're looking for the superstars in the church today.

They're looking for the great wonders and signs and these great men and women of God. And they're missing it. Isaiah said, he will grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root at a dry ground.

In other words, you're not coming with this sense of incredible strength. You're not coming with majesty that causes men to stop and bow right on the spot. He says, he has no form or comeliness.

And when we shall see him, there's no beauty that we should desire him. He looks like a gardener. Amazing, the risen son of God looks like a gardener in this passage of scripture.

You see, but what she was really looking at was the form of an ordinary earthly body which contained within it the risen and living son of God. He had chosen at this moment to take on this form, to look like this. What was he trying to say? You see, the majesty, when he came out of the veil, the revelation, how he was going to show himself to this world was through an ordinary body.

An ordinary people like you and me. Not gifted, not talented, not educated, not handsome, not pretty, not necessarily anything more than a gardener. But we have God living inside of us.

That's how he chose to reveal himself. He could come down through the clouds this very moment to New York City. He could send lightning bolts into everything that displeases him.

He could speak a word and either cause to live or die the whole surrounding area. He could reveal himself any way he wants. But God being God made a choice to have a body, an ordinary body like you and me.

Ordinary people. And he said, here's my plan. I'm going to die for their sin, then I'm going to come and live in them.

And I'm going to so change them that... I'm getting ahead of myself here, just hang on. You see, you ask me the question, how does this affect me? You've got to catch this. The people at your workplace think you're just an ordinary clerk.

Or an ordinary salesperson. An ordinary cleaner. An ordinary janitor.

An ordinary single mom living in an apartment building. But within you is the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. When you've come to Christ, God in the form of the Holy Spirit has come into your life.

Like helium into a balloon, for lack of a better example. And has given you the power to rise above your old nature. He's given you the power to be more than you are.

To go higher than you could go. He's given you more intelligence than you could ever possess. He's given you a greater heart of love than anything in this world could ever impart to you.

He says, I love you. I've cleansed you. Now I'm going to change you.

From image to image and glory to glory. By my spirit within you, you're going to change. You're going to know victory.

And people, you go to work and people think you're just an ordinary clerk. But you've got to have that sense of the supernatural in your heart as a church. I'm not just an ordinary person.

I have God living inside of me. Not just an ordinary fireman. Not just an ordinary policeman.

Not just an ordinary housewife. Not just an ordinary street cleaner. Not just an ordinary store clerk.

I have the spirit of God in me. I'm the temple of the living God. God almighty.

No longer lives in buildings made with hands. No longer dwells behind curtains. Let the religious mock him.

Let them try to figure him out. Let them scheme how to build his kingdom. I have God living inside of me.

And you see, the same spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, through you, if you can catch this, through you, through me, Jesus calls out the names of those who are sighing and crying for him. Mary. He puts something in your heart that can only come from him.

You begin to speak to those that are lost and searching for him. God begins to move you by his spirit. I've sat in a restaurant with a man recently and he just wept.

We talked together and this man was not a Christian. And he was weeping and he kept saying to me, What am I hearing from you? What am I seeing? Why am I feeling this way? He was very embarrassed that he had begun to weep in a restaurant. He began to weep openly.

I said, You are feeling from me the love of God for you. That's what you're feeling. And he could not shake it.

God using an earthly vessel to call his name. You have to understand this. You see, if you don't understand this, you're always going to live at the level of the four spiritual laws.

You're always going to live at the level of evangelizing people as just somehow getting your foot in, like a skipper playing a skipping game, just trying to get in the conversation and throw in a few scriptures and hope that somebody bites. It's much deeper. You're not sent out by the Holy Spirit to do this alone.

God is inside of you. He is the one who died for them. Not you, not me.

He died for them. We're only human vessels. We walk into a situation and if our minds are fixed on the things that are above, if our hearts are in tune with the ways and the will of God, if we're not given to secret ambitions, if we're not doing what we do because of inward lust, if we're not being led by the natural man, if the Spirit of God is leading us, he begins to speak.

The scripture says, he says, this is the way, walk in it. Do this. Stay away from that.

Speak to this person. And it doesn't have to be a barrage of information to lead a soul to Christ. Sometimes you just have to speak their name.

That's how he chooses to reveal himself. It's amazing. If you could sit down beside somebody and say, what is your name? Oh, your name is Sam.

Sam, I see you're having a hard time. But God loves you. And he's calling you.

We're just ordinary people. Jesus never, after the cross, appeared in recognizable form. If you study your Bible, you're going to see that.

Even in John 21, they didn't know. They saw. He told them to throw the net on the other side of the boat.

They gathered in a huge multitude of fish. John says, it's the Lord. Peter jumps in.

They're sitting there. He doesn't look like Jesus. Every time he appears, he's got a different form.

And he's trying to make a statement, trying to help them to understand. They're all looking for a kingdom with a powerful king to come in deep in their hearts. They're still waiting.

They thought Jesus is going to die. He's going to go back and he's going to come back. And it's all going to happen in just a month or so.

But he's trying to tell them, no, I'm going to be revealed from now till the day I come back to the earth. And I'm going to be revealed in this manner. When the men walked on the road to Emmaus, the Scripture says clearly that Jesus came up and walked beside them.

But they didn't recognize him. And he opened the Scriptures. And starting at Moses.

And through all the prophets began to expound everything concerning himself. And then, of course, it says when they invited him in and broke bread, their eyes were opened. Not necessarily that they saw anything physical.

But they knew it was him. Their eyes were opened. And they said to each other, did not our hearts burn while he walked with us by the way? You see, that's the difference.

When God is speaking, it ignites something in the heart. It causes a deep inner burning. There's something happens to you and me that says, oh, Jesus, you are the source of my life.

You're the source of my strength. You're my hope for the future. God, I yield myself to you, Lord.

How could I lose by yielding my life to you? I yield it, oh God. There's this burning in the heart that says, Lord, come with me. I trust that you're going to guide me.

You're going to keep me. You're going to use my life for your glory. Where Christ is, you will always find this passion.

You will always find your heart stirred when you are hearing from the Lord. When it's his voice. When people look at our lives, what do they say? That's an interesting question.

Do they say, where have you taken Jesus? Or look where Jesus has taken you. Where have you taken Jesus? That's a good question. That's the question Mary had to the angels and to the gardener that she thought was a gardener.

Where have you taken Jesus? What an indictment. What an indictment to have my children ever one day look at me and in their hearts say, where have you taken Jesus? I've heard so much about him. But where did you put him? I don't seem to see him.

Where have you laid him? The whole churches, whole churches will stand before God one day. You have to answer this question. Where did you put Jesus? The church of Laodicea, just hardly a generation as it is from the cross, finds Jesus Christ outside the door trying to get in.

They're all rich. They're increased with goods. And in their hearts, they say, we have need of nothing.

We're rich. We're prosperous. God has been so good to us.

They sing their songs. But Jesus is outside the church trying to get in to his own house. Where have you taken Jesus? Isaiah chapter 60.

I'll close with this. This is a prophecy about Christ, about Christ's work, his church. And, of course, twofold also about the nation of Israel one day when the glory of God comes to the Jewish people.

He says, Arise, shine, verse one, for the light has come. And the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people.

But the Lord shall arise upon thee and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see.

All they gather themselves together. They come to thee. Thy sons shall come from far and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.

Then thou shalt see and flow together. Thine heart shall fear and be enlarged because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee. The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

The Lord says there's a time coming of gross darkness. Very similar to the darkness that we spoke about earlier that happened when Christ was crucified on Calvary. And it's going to cover all the people.

And so many are going to be saying, Oh, God, where is hope? Is there hope in our generation? But the Scripture says here's the hope. The Lord will arise upon thee and his glory shall be seen upon thee. I believe with all my heart that I am part of an end time victorious, glorious church.

It's a church of every race, every nation. It's a church of every culture, every color, every language, every country. All throughout every continent, throughout the entire world.

It's a body of believers who have found Jesus Christ. They understand. They have a revelation in their heart of who Christ is.

They've opened their hearts to his truth and invited him in. And he has arisen upon them and his glory is revealed through them. They are speaking for him.

And he is speaking through them to their generation. I want to be part of this end time victorious Christ honoring church. Paul says in Ephesians, we must put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

If you want to be part of the church that Jesus Christ is building, if it's your heart's desire to be a voice to this generation, that Christ can call people to himself through your life. Scripture says clearly you must, of course this is done by faith alone, but you must put off the old nature. You cannot intermix the two.

Jesus said when he comes into the house, he will bind the strong man and take over his goods. He doesn't come into your life in the power of the Holy Ghost to share the temple with a corrupt nature. He comes to overpower it and to give you a new nature.

And to create a new man which after God is created in righteousness, that means right standing with God and true holiness. Yes, it's an ongoing work. It's a work that, but the true man or woman of God can honestly say, Lord, I'm not what I should be, but I'm changing.

I am changing every day into the image and glory of my Savior. The heart begins to change. The values change.

The thinking changes. And we find ourselves being able to call a generation to God. How do I account, folks, for being a policeman for 12 years? I had a heart as cold as stone.

I'd go to shootings. I'd go to accident scenes. And I've told you before I'd put chalk lines around bodies in the highway, help pick them up, put them in the ambulance and go and eat my lunch.

And it wouldn't even bother me. I was just stone cold dead in my heart. How do you account for that same man standing in Africa, broken hearted, calling home the lame, the poor, the blind, the maimed into the kingdom of God? How do you account for Muslims hearing God calling their name and yielding up a lifetime or generations even of religious deception to come to the one true living God? I had a Muslim write to me from Africa, and he said when I heard I was compelled to lay down a religious system where God cannot be found, I was compelled to embrace one where the true Savior of the universe has been revealed.

He said I am now a loyal follower of Jesus Christ. Pray for me. How do you account for the difference? The difference is God working through earthly vessels.

He doesn't have in this generation a few supermen and superwomen anymore as it happened in the Old Testament. It's what the prophet Joel said. Yes, it's a select few in times past when Israel was under the law and previously to that.

But now it's to all flesh. When the veil was rent, Jesus came to every man, every ordinary woman, every ordinary student, every ordinary young person who wants to be the temple of the living God. And He says I will live in you.

I will change you. I will overpower your enemies. I will make you into a new person.

I will give you victory over the powers of darkness. And I will begin to speak through you to your generation. I will put within you everything you need.

And your testimony will simply be this. I know my Redeemer lives. I know He's alive because He lives in me.

You'll not be presenting to your generation or your family some theological argument about Christ or some scheme to build His kingdom. You'll be presenting the living Christ who lives within you, flows through you, calls through you, touches through you, walks through you, sees through you. Christ in me, Paul says, the hope of glory.

Hallelujah. Don't settle for anything less. Don't settle for religion.

Don't settle for knowledge just about God. Don't settle for anything but His life in you. And don't let the thought that you're just ordinary stop you from what God has for your life.

So many people are stopped. And that's always the story, well, I'm just ordinary. Jesus put it to rest in the garden.

He said, this is the type of man, the type of woman that I manifest my glory through and I call people who are looking for me through. Ordinary people. Hallelujah.

The ground is so level, it's amazing. That's why Isaiah said, the lame take the prey. Hallelujah.

With all my heart, I want to be part in my generation of an end-time Christ-honoring victorious church. I want to know this. Everything that I've preached, I want to know it in its fullness.

I don't want to get to heaven and have God say, well, Carter, you attained 85% of what I had for you. I want it all. It's my inheritance.

It's Christ. I want all He's got for me now. I don't want to stop short of what God has for me.

I want it all. Whatever He is destined in my life to be, that's what I desire it should be. If you're lost in sin this morning, this life you're hearing about, even if you don't fully understand it, is attained by being born again by the Spirit of God.

Jesus died on the cross for your sin. And when He died, He made a way that you can be forgiven and that God can come and live with you again and accept you as His own. And it's not just that your name is written in the cosmos in a book somewhere, but God Himself says, I know, I'll come and live in you.

That's who the Holy Spirit is, the third person of God. And He says, when you receive Christ as your Savior, I will come and live in you. And you will become a new creation.

I spent quite a long time in 1978 looking for God. It was a long journey. Went all through Europe.

Stopped, had a Eurail pass, and my wife and I, we stopped in every town through Europe, all the way from France to Greece. When we would stop, we would visit all types of buildings that are religious buildings. It doesn't matter what denomination they were.

And I was like this sighing Mary. Although my life had not been touched by God at this point, I wanted it to be. And I knew that He was the only one who could satisfy this deep inner longing in me.

But everywhere I went, the question was in my heart, where have you put Jesus? Where is Jesus in all of this? I knew that it was Jesus I needed, but I couldn't find Him. I found a lot of gold, a lot of glitter, a lot of smoke, a lot of religion. But I never found Jesus.

And I remember coming back from Europe after six weeks of searching so utterly disappointed to have a policeman come and knock on my door who looked like just an ordinary guy. But there was something about the way he spoke to me that so stirred my heart. There was something about the fact that he cared for me even when I was rude to him.

Never got ruffled. There was a compassion in him for my soul that is so far beyond human ability. It stirred me to the very depths of my soul.

An ordinary man. I've been in all these big buildings and seen all the smoke and the fluff that goes with religion and couldn't find Jesus. But an ordinary man came to my door, thank God.

And I found Jesus. I found where He lived. I found how I could know Him.

I saw Him, I heard Him. He spoke to me through an ordinary man. And so stirred my heart that I began to read the Bible and He opened my eyes to an understanding of the Scripture and I invited Him into my heart.

And now He speaks through me. That's the miracle of the gospel. It's the miracle of the church of Jesus Christ.

Ordinary people. Touched by an extraordinary God. Hallelujah.

Father, God, You are speaking to us. You are speaking to us about being an end-time victorious church. You are speaking to us about something that's in Your heart that You want to do in New York City through this body and through Christians around the world who can hear Your voice.

You are longing, Jesus, to be revealed. You are longing to speak. You hear the sighs and the cries.

God, You know the shopkeepers, the school children, the college kids. You know them, Jesus. You know the ones who are searching for You.

You know the ones that are visiting empty buildings where You can't be found. You know them, oh God. You see the teenagers without hope, walking home day in and day out, not having a future.

God, You know. You want to speak to them. And You've chosen to speak to them through Your church.

Oh Jesus, oh Jesus. We ask You, God, that we might be found where they are. That we might be found standing in the power of our God.

Oh God, we ask You for the grace that our mouths might be opened. Lord, that we would have words of knowledge and wisdom flow through us. That healing might come from our hands, oh God.

Lord, that we can be Your body in New York City in this last hour of time. Oh Jesus, I pray, God, that You open our eyes to see who You are. I pray You give us an understanding of why we are a church.

What it means to be part of the body of this living Savior. Oh God, I thank You from the depths of my heart for the knowledge that You delight in using ordinary people like me. God, I delight in it.

I thank You for it, oh God. Oh God, enlarge my heart. Enlarge my heart, oh God.

Enlarge my mind. Enlarge my spirit, oh God. Help me, Jesus, to know what it is that You're doing in me and through me.

Help me to cooperate with You, to walk with You, oh God. Make me willing, Lord, to be a vessel that can do good for people who are searching for You in my generation. My God, I pray in my life, You put out of me everything that offends You, God.

Any area of ambition, any pride, anything in me, God, that offends You, that obscures You, Jesus. Oh God, take it out of me. Take it out of my mind and heart.

Take it out of my body, oh God. I want to be released to You and to You alone. I want to serve You and You alone, oh God.

Oh Jesus, oh Jesus, send an awakening to New York City. My God, I cry out for this city. Send an awakening, oh God.

Cause people to hear Your voice again. Father, I thank You, God, from the depths of my heart. I praise You, God, from the depths of my heart.

You've heard this cry today, oh God. And You hear the cry of Your people all over this city. I pray now, oh God, You release this church in faith to understand who You are and what You desire to do through Your body.

God, help us to get things out of the way that are not supposed to be there. Relationships, financial practices, areas of besetting sin, lying, pornography. Oh God, get it out of the way.

I pray now that You just put something in this church to lay down this filth, to lay down all these things that cause Jesus to be out of people's view, that cause Him to be hidden from those that are seeking. Lord, we want to be a righteous people, a holy people, a people who can stand and others can draw from us, oh God. They can see Christ in us.

God, let it be. Let it be, oh Lord. Let it be, oh covenant-keeping God, let it be.

Let's stand, please. The Holy Spirit is speaking to you and you have stuff in your life that's got to go. You're obstructing Jesus.

You're obscuring Jesus from your family, from your co-workers. Slip out of your seats. Balcony, go to either side.

Annex, stand between the screens. Do it now. God is calling a people.

Do it now and do it without apology. Just slip out. You know what it is.

It can be pride. It can be fear. Whatever it is.

You have an uncontrolled tongue in your home. You have a violent temper. You have something that's obscuring Jesus.

Come and believe Him to change that. Come and believe Him to give you strength. Just step out wherever you are.

You have a lying spirit. You can't tell the truth, even about the present, let alone the past. You're a financial cheater.

You're stealing at work. Whatever it is. You have secret desires in your heart.

You're married to someone but you're secretly desiring someone else. Put that filth out of your mind. Get it out of your spirit.

Come down and give your all for the purposes of Jesus Christ. And then you will know Him. You will know His power.

You will know His resurrection inside of you. Pray with me, please. Lord Jesus.

I am your church. I'm part of your body. And you have chosen to reveal yourself to New York City and my area through me.

Jesus, forgive me for the areas of death that I allow to operate in my life. That obscure you from view. That cause people not to hear your voice.

Who are struggling and broken hearted. And they are looking for you. Today, by an act of my will and by faith in the power of God, I lay before you my life in its entirety.

I ask you, Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to take out of my life every practice, every way in me that offends your nature. That causes others not to see you alive and reigning in me. I willfully give these things to you, trusting that by your power, you will take them away and make me into another person in the image of my Savior.

I ask you, Jesus, to speak through me to the hungry and the hurting and the confused. I ask you to touch them through my hands and love them with my voice. I ask you, Jesus, to call their names through me when I speak to them.

May they hear your voice calling them through me. I yield myself to this purpose. And I ask today that for the rest of my life, my life would bear fruit to the honor and glory of Almighty God.

I ask it with faith. I ask it believing in the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and my Savior. Let me pray for you now.

Father, you've heard the cry of those in this church at the altar and many who are still in their seats. I believe this is a tremendous hour for New York City. You have determined a visitation on a city that you are going to judge.

And Lord, you always remember mercy and judgment. God, you have an army. There's 8,000 in this church and there are thousands in other churches.

You are speaking to and raising an army in this generation. God, you're going to speak. You're going to send ordinary gardeners, ordinary fishermen into every area of this city.

And you're going to speak and call names of those that are hurting and longing for you. God, I invite you to call them through my voice. On the street, make me sensitive.

Shopping, in the drug stores, everywhere we go, I pray, God, my voice and their voices might be sensitive. That we would unashamedly call their names. Oh, God, this is a supernatural work.

It cannot be manipulated by man. But, oh, God, we believe that it's in your heart. You are sending us into the harvest field.

I pray that there may be a shout of glory even in the midst of the fires. I pray, God, that your name be so glorified that it will be noised abroad in the earth. We give this to you and we give ourselves to you.

We ask you, Jesus, to be glorified in us. In your precious name. This is the conclusion of the message.

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