

Ever Increasing River

by Dennis Kinlaw

Dennis Kinlaw's sermon highlights Jesus as the source of living water, emphasizing the importance of recognizing holy moments and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives.

Duration: 46:12

Scripture: Exodus 3:2-4, Isaiah 6:1-8, Ezekiel 43:1-5, Matthew 6:33, John 7:2, John 7:37-39, Acts 9:1-9

Topics: "Spirit Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a generous person who donated a large sum of money to a missionary organization. Despite lacking formal education and considering himself ordinary, this person made a significant impact. The speaker then transitions to a biblical passage from the book of Ezekiel, where the prophet witnesses a stream of water that gradually increases in depth. This story serves as a metaphor for the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. The sermon concludes with a reading from the Gospel of John, where Jesus invites those who are thirsty to come to him and receive the living water of the Spirit.

Transcript

Scripture lesson for this evening is in the seventh chapter of the Gospel of John, just three verses, and I think they're three familiar verses, but let me read them for you. On the last and the greatest day of the feast, and that feast was the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, If a man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.

By this Jesus meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time, the Spirit had not been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified. Oftentimes we are unaware of how much richer our lives are because we have the advantage of Scripture, because the Scripture has introduced to us concepts and ways of thinking that we would not have if we did not have the Bible.

Take, for instance, our attitude toward time. If you take most of the cultures of the world, time tends to be interpreted cyclically. If you will read Plato, you will find that Plato believed that if we would just wait long enough, there would be a group of people that came together at a place in western North Carolina, at a place called Hemlock Inn, under the auspices of some strange group by the name of the Francis Asbury Society, and if you were to check the list, every person who is here would be here.

They believed that if you just waited long enough that time would repeat itself, because it was cyclical, it was circular, and it was repetitive. Now, of course, the reason for that was the Greek concept of time was rooted in nature, and there is something rather cyclical about nature, and if you wait long enough, whatever you find in nature at the moment, you will find it reproduced in nature, because that's the way the seasons come. But along came the Hebrews and said time isn't cyclical, time is linear, because there was a moment when it began, and there will be a moment when it will be culminated.

And so, time has a telecharacter to it. It had a start, and it's going somewhere. That's the reason the most purposive people in human history have been Christians, who have believed that God started things, and he had a purpose, and he intended to wind them up, and that that should be true of an individual's life, as well as of the purposes of time.

Now, there's a second concept, biblically, about time that we need to recognize, and that is that though time is very regular in its coming, we get it in seconds, and in minutes, and in hours, and in days, and it all seems to come at the same pace, biblically there is the concept that some time is more important than other times, that there are moments that have more significance than other moments, that there are hours that have more significance than other hours, that there are days that have more significance than other days, and that the best of those moments, or hours, or days, as far as they're being qualitatively different, are the ones that the Scripture speaks about as being holy times, holy moments, holy days, holy seasons. And the Scripture has a lot about just exactly that, holy times. You know, that means that, as I said, some time is worth more than others.

I remember when I read the first time the testimony of Blaise Pascal, the great French Christian thinker who had been an absolute pagan free thinker, agnostic, and then something happened to him, and he became a dramatic witness of the gospel of Christ in 17th century France, one of the most brilliant minds in human history, and nobody understood what had happened to him. His sister wrote about the change and identified it with a certain sermon that he heard on a certain day in a monastery in France. But the reality was, the great change had occurred before that some two weeks.

When Pascal died, his servant, he had never married, he was 39 years of age, his servant was preparing his body for burial. And as he prepared it, he put his coat on him, the coat he regularly wore, and as he put it on, he heard on the body of Pascal, he sensed something in the lining of his coat. And so, he slipped the inside of the coat and found three sheets with writing on it.

And those three sheets were what are called Blaise Pascal's memorial. And it was interesting, it was the testimony of two hours of his life. It tells you the date, if I remember correctly, it was the 24th of November.

It tells you what feast day that was, because he was a Roman Catholic, and so every day was registered by what saint you were recognizing that day and what feast it was. And it says, if you remember it, it begins with one word, fire, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, not the gods of the philosophers and the scholars. And then he goes ahead and says certitude, certitude, and he gives the description of an experience of the living Christ coming to him that totally transformed him.

He never discussed it with anybody, but wore it inside, the record of it, inside his jacket from the days of his writing about it very quickly after it happened until his death. Now, what interested me in reading that was, it says on so and such a saint's day and such and such a feast day and November, if I remember correctly, the 24th and the year. Then it says from about 1030 in the evening until about 1230.

Can two hours make a total difference in a person's life so a person is never the same anymore? Well, you and I don't have to think hard to realize that there are a lot of other biblical stories that fit with that. Bush burned. I don't know how long it burned, but it didn't burn too long, and Moses was never the same again, and human history was different.

You will remember a vision, something like that, in the temple for a man named Isaiah, and you will remember an experience on a road called the Damascus Road that came to a man called Saul of Tarsus. Obviously, it didn't last long, but all of human history is different because of those minutes of time when God came and made ordinary time holy for him. Now, there is biblical data to support the fact that there ought to be holy moments in everybody's life and that they ought to come on some predictable basis.

I've been interested in the fact that in the Old Testament there were three major festivals, religious festivals. The first was the festival of unleavened bread. It was related to the Passover.

The second was the festival of weeks, which we think of under the name Pentecost, and the third one was the festival that Jesus was celebrating in Jerusalem when this text was given, or when this event took place. Those three festivals, unleavened bread, weeks, and tabernacles, scattered through the calendar year were periods when every male in Israel and all of his family were to go to Jerusalem. And when they came to Jerusalem, they came to celebrate certain things.

Now, it's interesting that they came to a holy place, because you'll remember, Jerusalem was a holy city, and the central element in the holy city was the holy place, which was the temple, and in the temple, you will remember, was the holy place, and then inside that, beyond that, was the holy of holies. So, you get holy space and holy time, and these are supposed to be factors in the lives of God's people. You will remember that the feast of tabernacles was to celebrate their experience when they were delivered from Egypt and when they lived in the wilderness.

So, the head of the family would bring his wife and his children and his servants and anybody who was attached to his family, whether it was neighborhood orphans or widows or anybody else, and they all came to Jerusalem, and they chopped the trees and they built booths, and they lived in a sort of picnicking holiday fashion for eight days. Can you imagine the pedagogical value of that? Wouldn't it be interesting if every Christian family every year had to do that? Because, you see, I've decided that God would have made a great third grade teacher. He knew how to get his lessons across, so that every year for eight days the family lived together in picnicking, vacationing circumstances, and the children said, what's the meaning of this? And his father said, well, our fathers, our fathers lived for 40 years this way.

And so, the kid said, what did our fathers live 40 years this way for? And he said, well, we were being delivered from Egyptian bondage. And so, the whole story of the exodus was repeated to these children every year. So, it was an experience rooted in the deliverance of God for his people.

And they said, you mean 40 years you lived this way? Yes, and the father would say, and we were guided by day by a cloud and by night by a pillar of fire. God guides his children. What a wonderful way to teach young people that God wants to guide their lives.

And then, in addition to that, was not only deliverance and guidance, but provision. As they ate, the father would say, you know, our Heavenly Father set us when we were in the wilderness. Our fathers set us with miracle of miracles, manna out of the air and quail on the wind.

And so, we had bread and fish. And the father could say, now, God will take care of you that way, too, if you will walk in his ways. And then, the best of all, God said to, the father would say, and in the midst of the camp was a central tent.

Just like we're pitched around this tabernacle or this temple in Jerusalem, in the center of our people was a central tent. And while we lived in these tents, or while we lived in these booths, God was in a tent just like us. God was in a booth just like us.

God was in a tabernacle just like us, and he was the center of our fellowship. Now, you notice that those holy days were rooted in history, rooted in time and life. Now, there was a nature part to this, too, because this festival came after the harvest.

And so, it was a period in which they gave thanks to God for watering the earth and quickening the soil and the seed and producing harvest for them so that they could live. The Jewish scholars say that this was the happiest and the most joyous of all the festivals that they had, that they would sing as they celebrated this. Now, the interesting thing is the central ceremony and the Feast of Tabernacles took place every day when the priests took their vessels and walked in procession.

As the people sang and shouted their hallelujahs, they'd go down to the Pool of Siloam and get water, fill their vessels with water, and bring the water back into the temple for the ceremonies of the temple. And it was at that point on the eighth day, which was the most joyous day, as they went to get their vessels of their golden pitchers of water and bring them back, and as they poured the water in the temple, Jesus stood up and cried out, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, and I'll give him not the kind of water you've got in the Pool of Siloam, but I'll give you the kind of water that will be in you a well of water springing up into eternal life. Now, there's a lot of symbolism there.

I've come to love the way God uses symbols. You see, that time that is being recorded and that aspect of time or view of time that's recorded here is, they looked back and said, we've got testimony here to deliverance and to guidance and to provision and to the divine presence. But it's interesting that there was a telec element, a prophetic element in that, too.

Because, you see, what the Good Father said was, what happened to us in the past is not the big thing. Because, you see, what happened to us in the deliverance of the Exodus, the deliverance from the Red Sea, is prophetic. And there's coming a day when God's going to send us not a Moses, but God's going to send us a Messiah.

And when he comes, the deliverance that he brings us will be the fullness of which that was only a symbolical sign. There'll come a day when there will be one who comes who doesn't give us manna out of the air and quail on the wind, but there'll be one who'll give us the true bread, the bread of life. And you'll remember that this comes where Jesus had just gotten through saying, except you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you can have no part in me.

And if you do eat my flesh and drink my blood, then you will know the fullness of life, not only temporally, but eternally. And as the Father said, you know, the way the priests have gone and gotten water, when we were in the wilderness, it came out of a rock. Moses stood in front of a stone rock and struck it, and as he struck it, the water gushed out.

And there's coming a day when there's one who will give us living water, the real kind of water. And it was at that point that Jesus stood up at that point in the festival and said, if you will come to me, I will give you that living water. Now, isn't that interesting, the view of time? You look back at what God has done and all of that's prophetic of something better that is coming.

And now Jesus stands up and says, the better is here, and I am it. Now, that created problems for Jesus. If you remember the story, and I've come to be convinced that the one thing that's most difficult for any of us to accept is to believe that there's only one way.

That there's one way and one alone. And when Christ stood up and said, not only is there one way and one alone and I'm it, at that point the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the teachers of the law, the scribes, sent for the temple police to arrest him and said, this guy is obsessed and he's demon possessed. Isn't it interesting when the reality came, the people who knew the most about the symbols missed the reality.

The people who could tell you the most about the symbols when the reality came denied that that was what they were waiting for. And I think that's a word of warning for a person like me who's a professional religious. Because, you see, my business is to be an expert on all the symbols.

But when he stood and cried and said, I am it, and if you come to me, I'll give you the reality, you'll remember the Jewish leadership, the leadership of the church of that day said, this can't be. Now, let me make some comments about this passage where he speaks and says, if you will believe in me, out of your inward parts shall flow rivers of living water, this spake he of the spirit. Now, that must be seen in terms of the temple.

And let me remind you that when he spoke of the temple, he spoke of himself and he spoke of you and me. You remember when he cleansed the temple the first time and they said, show us a sign that you have a right to do this. He said, destroy this temple and I'll rebuild it in three days.

Because, you see, he dealt with symbols all the time. And when he used language that was symbolical. So when he talked about the temple, he was talking both about the temple in Jerusalem and he was talking about his own incarnate body and his own incarnate person.

And so, he said, you destroy this temple and I'll raise it again in three days. And they said, we spent 46 years building this thing. How are you going to raise it in three days? And he was never able to explain to them the shift from the symbol to the reality.

But now, Jesus is the temple. You'll remember that in Paul's letters to the Corinthians, first and second letters, he says, you and our temple. And so, there's a very real sense in which what Christ was, you and I are supposed to be.

And he says, out of your inward part I will cause to flow the one who flows out of me. Now, let me make a comment about the point at which he did this and its significance, I think, for us. I love this.

You see, the reason the priest went down to the Pool of Siloam was because the temple was built on solid rock. And if you'll go to Jerusalem and look at the temple site, you will find that there you find the dome of the rock. And that's what it is.

It is just simply a rock pile. And from the day that the temple was built, there was never any water in the temple except water that was carried from the outside in. What a parable.

That's a parable of you and me. Because the water that we need in us doesn't come from within us. If we ever get it, it's going to be from the outside in.

And that's the reason he says, behold, I stand at the door not. If you're going to have the living water inside you, it's going to come from the outside in. Because what's in here is just solid, dry, barren, sterile rock.

Now, isn't it interesting that out of rock can come living water? You know, I like that. A lot of scripture that is illustrative of the fact that God is capable of doing exactly that kind of thing. Let me just give you a line that has come to me of instance that has thrilled me lately.

Do you remember when God came to Abraham and said, I'm going to do something special in you? All of human history will be different because of what I do for you. Now, I know you're 75 years of age and Sarah is 65 years of age, and I'm going to give you a son. And out of that son will come a lineage, and out of that lineage will come the blessing of the world and the redemption of the world.

And I can hear Abraham saying, you obviously aren't from around here. And the other one says, no. What do you mean? Well, he said, if you were from around here, you'd know that when a man's 75 and his wife's 65, there's no chance of there being a child that comes out of that love relationship.

And the fellow said, that's right, I'm not from around here. Because if I was from around here and only knew what's here, I'd know that's impossible. But you see, the place where I come from, what's impossible here becomes possible.

And you may be 75 and she may be 65, but you're going to have a child. Now, what I love is, and I'm sure God has a sense of humor, he made Abraham wait 24 years before he started the process, so that Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 89 before she conceived. And when she was 90, she delivered, and when Abraham was 100, he had a son.

Now, how would you get a better illustration of the fact that God is the kind of God, yeah, he can bring water out of a rock. You will remember that when Abraham's son got married, he married a woman, and interestingly enough, she was barren. Because you will remember that Rebecca couldn't have children.

And God said, but she will, and she did. And so she had twins, Jacob and Esau. And it's interesting, when the chosen one of those, Jacob, got married, his wife couldn't have a child.

And so it took a miracle for the third generation to come along. Now, what's God saying? I'm the God who is the God who can bring water out of rocks. I can bring fruit out of sterility.

I can bring life out of death. That's the kind of God I am. And I can bring something out of your barren, sterile heart, too.

And so I want to put something in you, and if you believe in me, I'll do it. And then the miracle is, there'll be something inside you, not only for you, but there'll be something inside you for the world around you, and it'll flow out. Now, the second thing, who is it or what is it he's going to give to me to do this? The text says, John says, this spoke he of the Spirit.

Now, stick with me a minute. I don't know anything in all of Scripture that ought to be more exciting to you or to me than this. Do you know who the Holy Spirit was to Jesus? He was the one that initiated his conception, conceived by the Holy Ghost.

Jesus wouldn't have been here if it hadn't been for the one he's talking about. You will remember that when John the Baptist came to introduce him, and the Pharisees came down and said, Are you the one we're looking for? And he said, Heavens no. And they said, Well, who are you? He said, I'm his voice.

And they said, Where is he? And he said, There he is. And they said, How do you know? He said, The one who sent me said, The one that I saw the Holy Spirit descending on is the one, and I saw the Spirit of God descend on him after I baptized him. And then he said, I baptize you with water, but he'll baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Are you aware that the ministry of Jesus came out of the Holy Spirit's abiding, anointing on him? Let me remind you, the word Christ means anointed. The word Christ is a Greek form. Christos is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Messiah, Mashiach, which means anointed.

So, that the Christ is the one who has this Holy Spirit upon him, and the Holy Spirit was the secret of Christ's life. And Jesus stands up and says, If you thirst, and if you'll come to me, and if you believe on me, I'll put in you the one that's in me. I don't know about you, but I haven't recognized that yet.

That's beyond my comprehension. And I find myself saying, Lord, let me understand that, because we have resources we don't believe are ours. We have the same resources he has.

Wait a minute, take the S off that word resources. We have the same resource he had, which is the Spirit of God for you and for me. Now, let me raise the question, is what is it that he wants to do? Now, there is a magnificent passage in the Old Testament that interprets this.

I'm confident that in that crowd in Jerusalem, there were a few priests who were sympathetic to what they were hearing. Now, we know that Nicodemus was one of these who had some sympathy, and there were some others. It'd be interesting if we had the comments of some of the people who sat through some of Jesus' preaching, wouldn't it? Now, I don't know about anybody else, but I wonder if the priest attached to the temple that day didn't say, What do you suppose he was talking about when he said, If we believe in him, out of us would flow rivers of living water.

Now, I can hear one of the priests saying, You know what that makes me think of? Because they knew their Bibles better than we do. That makes me think of that vision in the tail end of Ezekiel. Do you remember the last nine chapters of Ezekiel? Seven of the most boring chapters in the Bible are in those nine chapters, because what is it? It's a description of the rebuilding of the temple, how long this carlator is, and how wide it is, and how high the roof of this room is, the priests and what they're supposed to do, and it's totally boring.

But in those passages, the Bible always fools you. When you decide there's nothing there, bang, you can count on it. Somewhere in it, there'll be some of these glorious moments.

There'll be some of these holy moments. That passage begins, you will remember, He had seen the glory of God leave the temple in Jerusalem because of the sinfulness of Israel. And God said, I cannot dwell with the people that are this evil.

And so He departed, just like He'll depart my life if my life is filled with that kind of sin. And so He had seen that in the first chapter, and He cares about Jerusalem as He lives in Babylon and thinks about the holy city and the holy place, and then He has a vision. And what does He see in that vision? He sees the glory of God coming back to Jerusalem because God never wants to leave His people.

And if He has to, He's always looking for a way back. And then He says, I saw, He led me around, when I saw the glory come back in the temple, He led me around to the eastern side of the temple. And I looked, and coming out from under the temple were some oozing droplets of water.

Now, you must remember, there was never any water in the temple except what was carried in. Now you've got a picture of water going out. And I can feature the prophet's eyes wide, and he watches while the angel walks up and measures out 1,500 feet, and the angel says, Come here, and says, Step in it.

And it was just enough to wet the soles of his feet. And the angel measured out another 1,500 feet and said, Now step in it. It was up to his knees.

And the angel measured another 1,500 feet and said, Now step in it. It was up to his hips. And the angel measured another 1,500 feet and said, Now step in it.

And he stepped in it, and Ezekiel yelled because the stream took him away. It was swimming water. And then he looked to what it did, and it turned south, and it turned into the Dead Sea.

I don't need to explain the Dead Sea to you. A place of absolute sterility, barrenness. And as the water turned south, he noticed as it came to the Dead Sea, he looked, and there was grass beginning to grow along the side.

And then he watched, and trees began to come up. And as he watched the trees come up, he watched the leaves form, and then he watched the fruit form on the tree. And then he looked at the sea, and the water had changed, the color had changed, and he watched the fish leap in it like they do in the Great Sea, as the text says, which is the Mediterranean.

Isn't that an interesting picture? Now that's the picture behind Jesus is, if you'll believe in me, out of your inward parts will flow rivers of living water. Water that produces life, water that produces healing, water that cleanses so that where there's been death there can be life, and you'll remember there was fruit for them, and the text says that the leaves were for the healing of the nation. There's healing here.

And Jesus said, if you'll believe in me, that kind of stream will flow out of you. Now I don't know about you, but that ought to be exciting to anybody who's in his right mind, that that could happen to any individual. And that's what Jesus is saying will happen to you and me.

Now let me say, to whom is that kind of promise given? Let me say, if I understand the text clearly, it's promised to everybody who's a temple. It's promised to everybody who's a tabernacle. And if I understand the scripture, every person who has let Christ come in, and above all, every person who has let Christ fill this heart, is a temple.

And that means that there's that kind of experience is available for every person who believes in Christ and knows Christ, and there can be that kind of torrent that flows from him, and that is a promise of what God will do. And you know, as I've come to live with these texts, I've come to believe, you know, I think I see the truth. I don't know about you, but I'd like for my life to count.

And I know that you would, too, because you see, you were made in the image of God, and there's something inside you that says this life is supposed to be of value. Is it really true that when God gets possession of a person, that kind of fruit comes out of it? You know, let me go back for a moment and just talk about that strain as it comes out. That's been helpful to me.

Do you remember what I said it was like when he measured out the first 1,500 feet? When it came out from under the temple wall, it was just oozing droplets of water. And when it got out of the way, 1,500 feet, it was enough to cover the soles of the feet. When it got on another 1,500, it was to the knees, and another 1,500 to the hips, and another 1,500, and it was swimming water.

You know, one of the beautiful things is the supernatural character of that strain, because you see, that strain was different from, say, the Mississippi. You know, if you go far enough north, you can find a place where the Mississippi isn't narrow enough, you can step across it. But when you get to Memphis, it's a different matter, and when you get to the Gulf, it's a totally different matter.

But why is it grown? It's because of the augmentation that comes from other streams that have flowed in and filled it, the augmentation, the increases from without. And you know what I think about? I think about the priest bringing the water outside in, and adding what they could. God said, the day will come when you won't have to bring it outside in.

I'll put this within you, and it'll flow out, and it will flow out a little bit at a time. But as it goes, the augmentation will not be by additions that you can add. The augmentation will come from within the droplets itself.

And you know, I think that's beautiful to me, because I've seen a lot of things that started very small, but because God was in them, before it was over with, they had an incredible outreach. You know, it begins very small, and before it was over with, an incredible outreach. I think I could tell you a dozen illustrations.

Across the years, I've had the chance to develop a friendship with a very interesting person. Last year, I think he gave \$1,600,000 to a missionary organization that I'm related to. Doesn't have a college education, thinks of himself as one of the simplest, thinks of himself as a very ordinary, ignorant kind of person.

He was a door-to-door salesman, and not a very successful one. And he finished making his pitch to a little farm lady in Ohio, and when he finished, she looked at him and said, now I've listened to you, I want you to listen to me, I have something to sell. And he said, what do you want to sell? And she said, I want to tell you about Jesus Christ.

He said, for the first time in my life, I had somebody witness to me about Jesus Christ. And said, before she got through with me, the water had started. Stanley Tam.

I suspect Stanley Tam has led more people personally to Christ than anybody I know in the 20th century. He is an incredible soul winner. You know where it all started? Started with that little farm woman.

Now when she gets to heaven, isn't she going to be interested in the surprise? And she'll say, does that come out of me? And you know what I think the Lord will say? Yeah. That's because you let me in. And I started to scream.

What I know is that he's got, what is it, I think 30-some evangelism teams that he supports in India. How many thousands upon thousands of Christians in India came because of that one woman. Listen to Mary talk about China, and what God is doing in China today, and the thousands that are coming to Christ.

Where did it start? It didn't start with thousands of people. I stood outside of Robert Morrison's grave in Macau. He spent his whole life translating the Bible into Chinese.

And when he died, he didn't have a single convert, but he left the Chinese Bible behind him. And when he died, he was in a Roman Catholic community of Macau, and he was a Protestant. Worked all day for the East India Company, and did his translation work at night.

And when he died, they didn't even have a place to bury him, because he was not a Roman Catholic. So, they kept his body above ground for two weeks to try to find out what to do with it. And finally, one of his friends persuaded the archbishop, the Roman Catholic archbishop, to sell one lot in the Roman Catholic cemetery.

So, in the middle of that Roman Catholic cemetery, there's one lot that doesn't belong to the cemetery, and Robert Morrison's buried in that. I stood outside of that grave, and I thought, yeah, you know, you never know what's going to come. But that's the miracle that comes when we let Christ into our hearts, and particularly when we let him fill us with his Spirit.

He gives us his Spirit in new birth, and then we need to come to the place where we let him fill us and possess us. And when he gets all of us, it'll be interesting the stories that he pulls out of your life. Could I mention one, many, some of you are friends of mine, all of you are friends of mine, I'm sure, but somehow we know better than others.

Let me tell you one that is personal that this comes through. I was pastoring four country churches in eastern North Carolina, down in the cabbage patches and the cranberry bean patches. Had a lady in my congregation who was very interesting.

She was in her 70s. She may have weighed 90 pounds. She was a widow.

The town was named Fayton, and she was Miss Fanny Fayton, so she was of blue blood. She had been a Methodist young lady in college, and she attended a revival meeting, a tent meeting. And a Presbyterian elder felt led to speak to her about her relationship to Christ.

When the invitation was given, he went to this tent meeting and spoke to this young Methodist college girl. He was a Presbyterian elder. And she found Christ, and out of that developed a friendship.

Now, that guy was a friend of A.B. Simpson's in New York, and he'd go to New York to hear A.B. Simpson preach. And he told A.B. Simpson about this young lady, and A.B. said, bring her to see me. So, he took Fanny from Fayton, North Carolina to New York and introduced her to A.B. Simpson, and A.B. Simpson turned to Elias Fayton and said, marry her.

And so, he did. He died, and she was a widow when I knew her. As I said, she was in her 70s.

She made life interesting, because she came to visit us every morning, and she'd come at a quarter of seven. She had a passionate interest in her pastor, her young pastor, and she didn't want him to start his ministry on the wrong foot, and she didn't want him sleeping late. Now, the thing that saved her, as far as

we were concerned, was she never came empty-handed.

She'd bring watermelon, cantaloupe. She'd bring peaches. Always brought something with her.

She could make more calls in a week than I could make, and she would. And she kept track of everything. She was an interesting person, as I say.

She ran for the United States Senate on the Republican ticket in North Carolina in 1928. And all 737 Republicans in North Carolina at that time voted for her. That takes courage.

She didn't win the election to the Senate, but they appointed her head of the Customs House in Wilmington. While she was heading the Customs House in Wilmington, personal friend of Andrew Mellon's brought his yacht, his private yacht, down the Inland Waterway. And she put her agents on it to check it out and found that one of the smokestacks was a fake, and that in it was a lot of bootleg liquor for the fellow to enjoy.

And so she padlocked it. And Andrew Mellon in Washington found out about his friend in Wilmington, North Carolina, whose boat was padlocked by Miss Fanny. So Andrew Mellon, the Secretary of the Treasury, sent word down she should unpadlock his friend's boat.

And she said, no, not until we've dealt with it. She was that kind of person. I was interested.

The Bishop paid deference to her on occasion, too. She was an interesting person. But I'd been there about six weeks, and I preached the message on mission.

And when I got through and went back to the door after the service to greet the people, when she came to me, I'd only been there about six weeks, didn't know her well, she sort of draped her 90 pounds around my neck and looked at me and said, come see me in the morning. I've prayed for years for a pastor who'd preach on mission. And when I got there the next day, I found one of the most passionate people I'd ever met in her interest in mission.

She had one son. She'd educated him at Davidson and in medical school at Duke, and then she sent him to Austria for further training. And he was one of the more promising sons in the state.

She said, I gave one doctor to North Carolina. So, she had educated six Indian doctors in India. The most outstanding thoracic surgeon in India was a woman doctor, and Miss Fanny had educated her.

She kept her porch covered with stuff that she was shipping around the world. My church treasurer, who was the local banker, would shake his head sadly and say to me, Dennis, poor Miss Fanny, she's going to end up in the poorhouse, giving everything away. Well, when he died, his wife found to her shock that she didn't even own her own home.

One day, Miss Fanny came and sent for me, so I went to see her. And she said, I want to give you something. And I said, oh.

And she pulled out a sheet of paper and handed it to me. And I looked, and for the first time in my life, I saw a share of stock. And it was 100 shares of General Electric stock.

And I said, is this for me? And she said, yeah. And I looked at it. I said, what am I supposed to do with this? It's never happened to me again, but it happened once.

And she said, use it for the Lord. I'm not going to be here too long. Use it for the Lord.

So, I carried the home with me. Kept it for several years. And the incoming year, I sent to India.

I thought that was in consonant with what her will was. Then, when I was 38 years of age, the Lord said to me, I want you to go to graduate school. And the way open for, go to Brandeis.

Exactly what I felt God wanted me to do. I said, Lord, you obviously aren't from around here. You see, tuition is \$2,600.

And in those days, I was a preacher, and the only scholarships were government scholarships for boys that were not hooked to the, with religious tags. And so, Brandeis said, I don't know how you can, we can do that. So, \$2,600 tuition, and then I had five kids.

We'd had three, and on Christmas Day, I also delivered twins unexpectedly. That's a dirty trick for your wife to play on you in a case like that. But nevertheless, now God was saying, I want you to go to graduate school.

And I said, how can I ever do it? And the Lord said to me, do you remember that 100 shares of GE stocks? And I said, yes, but that's for the kingdom. And the Lord said, it's for this hour. I sold that 100 shares and it was \$3,800.

And that's, so I started on a three-year trick with \$3,800 in tuition, \$2,600, and a wife and five kids, and resigned to pastorate. But the interesting thing is, I got through. But I would have never started without those 100 shares of GE stocks.

And you know, I never would have had the privilege of teaching at Asbury Theological Seminary if it hadn't been for Miss Fanny. I certainly never would have been the president of Asbury College. I would be standing here talking to you tonight.

Do you know what I honestly believe? I think I'd have gotten lost in the machinery somewhere if it hadn't been for that 100 shares of GE stocks. Nobody ever knows what's going to come with a few droplets when it starts out, if God is in it. Because you see, there's this supernatural divine potential in it.

Why anybody would ever want to leave his heart, any corner of it, shut to God? I can't conceive, unless he just doesn't understand. Because you see, he's in the business of taking the sterile and making them fruitful. He's in the business of taking the barren and giving them children.

He's in the business of taking the polluted and the death, that that has death in it, corruption in it, and bringing it alive and bringing eternal stuff out of it. Now that brings me back to where I started. There's such thing as holy moments.

Wouldn't it be good if the time we've got together here had a qualitative difference about it from ordinary time? And had some of the sort of qualitative difference about it, those hours from 1030 to 1230 on November 24th, 16 whatever it was for Blaise Pascal. That's the reason we need times like this. So let's ask God to make the hours that we've got together qualitatively different so that the water can flow.

Let's bow our heads together.

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