

So You Want Revival?

by Erlo Stegen

Erlo Stegen's sermon explores the necessity of true revival through the living water of Jesus, emphasizing the importance of confronting sin and seeking genuine spiritual fulfillment.

Duration: 1:20:07

Scripture: Matthew 7:21-23, Matthew 10:39, John 4:13-14, John 4:29, John 7:37, John 8:32, John 8:36, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Revival", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

This sermon reflects on the journey of a preacher who struggled with the depth of his commitment to the gospel, likening it to leaving home like death. The preacher's quest for true revival and the living water of the Holy Spirit is highlighted, emphasizing the need for genuine transformation and the revelation of hidden sins before God. The importance of encountering Jesus, who exposes our secrets and offers true freedom from sin, is underscored through the story of the woman at the well in John 4.

Transcript

John 7, from verse 33. From verse 37, on the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water, we will read thus far.

I remember when the Lord called me to leave home to preach the gospel. It was very difficult to me. And I remember saying to my older brother from Tunzini that leaving home was like death.

Leaving my father's home was like a corpse leaving the home. But something I did say was, if I must leave to go and preach the gospel, I am determined never to play around with the gospel. I want to preach the gospel just like Jesus did, whether in the temple or the mount.

I want to speak the truth. I don't want to play around with the faith. Because, leaving home was extremely difficult for me, and so I determined to preach the truth, to shout it out right until the end.

At that time, revival was a special topic to me in my heart. I tried to read every book about it, about the working of the Holy Spirit. And I read fervently about men of God through whom the Lord worked, and I said, Lord, this is what I need.

I was young at that time, and I took the Bible literally as God's Word. And I would pray, Lord, this which you say in your Holy Word, in the Bible, I want it to be accomplished in my life. I said, Lord, I don't want to

just play with church, baptizing people, dishing out the Lord's Supper, and all this regular churchianity, but not knowing, not having the Lord.

Now, to shorten the story, I remember back in 1966, I was so frustrated, troubled in my spirit. I would be praying day and night that God would come down from heaven, that the Lord would work by His Holy Spirit, and pour out His Holy Spirit. And I remember being so anguished in those days.

For in the beginning, the Bible had been sweeter to me than honey. For the promises I found in the Bible were marvelous. For instance, where the Lord said, if my words abide in you and you abide in me, you can ask what you wish it will be done for you.

That filled my heart with great joy. Like in John 14, 12, where he said, verily, verily, he who believes in me, he will do the works that I do, even greater, for I go to the Father. I took that literally as the truth.

I said, Lord, I believe in you. Therefore the works that you did, I should do, not because I am anything, but because you go to the Father. What can one say of the promises like John 16, 20, you haven't yet asked anything from the Father in my name.

For anything you ask of the Father in my name, he will do. I said, Lord, that is so wonderful. So more precious than riches, than the things of the world.

I said, Lord, such promises surpass everything else. And so I'd been preaching the gospel for 12 years among the Zulu people. But after those 12 years, I was disappointed.

For these promises were not being fulfilled in my life. And one day at Mapumulu, I remember, we were in meeting inside a cow shed that had been adapted for our prayer meetings. We cleaned it up together with some of the prisoners from the local jail, and we sent the dung outside and made it clean.

And there we met. For we didn't have a meeting place. We just had a tent.

And so it was in between tent meetings, I would have a tent to evangelize for a long time, then take it down, move to the next area. And in between, I went then to Mapumulu. One day, while in a service in that building, I said, Brethren, let me ask you, who of you in our midst believes in Jesus? All of them lifted up their hands.

I said, well, that's wonderful, I'm so glad to see it. But I followed on by saying, there is a problem, though, to me. For Jesus said, if we believe in him, as the scriptures say, rivers of living water will burst forth from his innermost being.

Not one river, but many rivers. And I said that if you have a river that goes into a desert, it can change the desert into a garden. But I knew I'd been preaching for 12 years, and there was not living water.

And I remember back in 1954, 1955, we were there in Namibia, where we visited a certain relative there. And he told us, he said, there is no country as we know it. There is no country as wonderful as our country.

At that time, it was called South West Africa. Then he said, I want to go out with you, I'd like to show you something. For at that time, there were many riverbeds, but no water in them.

But he said, though I have just bored a hole in the front of our garden, and we found a lot of water. And he said, let me go with you and show you. And he said, he filled in a glass of water for me from that, and said, Erlo, drink of it.

And as I took it to drink, in my mouth, I realized it's just undrinkable. It was full of salt and many minerals in it. I just spat it out.

And then he told us, he said, when we found this water, we were so delighted. We could have flowed with joy. But the moment we drank of it, we realized it's undrinkable.

And he told us how his wife was so disappointed, he said, don't worry. I can make sure that we can use this water for a good vegetable garden on our lawn. In our garden.

In our yard. And there were many flowers in the flower bed, and he said, we will pour water on them. We'll use it for that.

And there were also flower pots inside the house. But as they began to water these plants, all the planted things wilted and died. And then he said, well, if we can't use it in the garden, let's use it for washing our clothing then.

And he said, when we tried that, we discovered that all our clothing, and especially the linen, was ruined with this mineral water. And when he said that, I said to myself, Olo, you've been preaching the gospel for 12 years. But the water that comes out of you is not living water.

It's just like this ruinous mineral water. But Jesus was speaking about living water. I said, Lord, that's me.

I believe. I preach the gospel. But when the people receive the word, instead of coming alive, they die.

So back to this little meeting in that car shed in Mapumulu, I asked them who believes, and all of them lifted up their hands. And I said, good. And then I said, now tell me, Jesus went on to say, he who believes in me, out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.

So I asked them, is this living water flowing out of your heart, out of your innermost being? Not one put up their hands. And I realized that I'd been preaching the gospel for 12 years. I'd been preaching for 12 whole years, preaching the word, preaching the gospel, but I do not see any rivers of living water.

I asked them, how long is it that you have been Christians? Are these rivers bursting forth from inside you? Living water, which brings life, not which brings death. They were stuck. And I remembered how I had said at the beginning, Lord, if I do preach the gospel, I want to preach the truth, that which brings life.

I was deeply troubled inside me. And I said, I am busy with the gospel all the time, yet I don't see the fruit of it. And I said to myself, my brothers are all successful in businesses and farms, earning money, but I'm busy with something that does not work.

I said, better that I stop. No one is troubled like I am, I said. For I'm busy with something that bears no fruit.

And I was wrestling inside this struggle, crying to God day and night. Now the story is much longer, I'm just making it a short summary. In 1966, I was visited by my oldest brother who had a business there at Mapumulu, a shop.

And I stayed in his home. And I preached the gospel. But I was crying in my heart saying, Lord, wouldn't you pour out your Holy Spirit, wouldn't you work among the people.

It was about two o'clock that night, that following morning, and I was in an old part of the house. And I woke up at that time of the morning, and I was wet with sweat. I had no fever, I was not sick at all, but it was the struggle inside me.

My pajamas were wet. My pillow was wet. And I turned it around.

I had my Bible there. Which I had put next to the bed. So it was quite a low bed.

Now it's many years ago, but I remember it vividly till today. I remember how on my left and behind me there was a wall. And I reached for my Bible which I had put next to the bed.

I switched on the light. And I took the word and read. I just opened it.

It was in John chapter four. Where it says in verse four, verse seven. A woman from Samaria came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, give me a drink.

For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, how is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, give me a drink.

You would have asked him and he would have given you living water. The woman said to him, sir, you have nothing to draw water with and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? He said to her, are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.

Jesus said to her, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again. Jesus said to her, if you drink of this water, you will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. The woman said to him, sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water. Jesus said to her, go, call your husband and come here.

The woman answered him, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, you are right in saying I have no husband. For you have had five husbands and the one you have is not your husband.

What you have said is true. The woman said to him, sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.

Jesus said to a woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews.

But the hour is coming and it is coming to an end. But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and the truth. For the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.

God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. When I opened the Bible that night and read in this chapter, I did not read all the verses that I have read for you now. I noted that Jesus was thirsty as He went to that well and sat there while His disciples went to buy food in town.

And when this woman came, Jesus asked her to give Him water. And she said, how can you ask me, you being a Jew and I being a Samaritan, for at that time the Samaritans were like a mixed race and the Jews shunned them. You see, apartheid is not something recent.

It has been there from ancient times. But let me say something that I actually did not see that night. It was not the custom for women to go and draw water during the heat of the day.

They would go in the morning or during the sunset hours. They would not go and fetch water at that hour because those who were pure kept themselves apart and would go when it was not during the day and they would stick together and shun a sexually immoral woman. It was not like today, but at that time those who were virgin girls would keep themselves apart.

They would discriminate. And so we cannot go with you to fetch water, so a loose woman would go during the heat of the day alone. So it would have been round about lunchtime.

So here is Jesus asking for water from her. And so she was astonished and said, how can you ask me, you being a Jew and I being a person of a mixed race because there was separation between them? And she said, so how will you get the water yourself for you do not have the utensils to draw up from this deep well? Then he said, woman, if only you knew who you were speaking to, you would ask of him to give you living water. That is when she said, how can you draw water, you do not have the utensils.

And then he said, if you drink of this water, you will get thirsty again, but if you drink of the water I give you, you will never thirst, no, for all eternity. For the water that I would give you would become a well inside you, a well which springs up for eternal life forever. I heard God speaking to me then.

And the woman said, give me of that water that I will not have to come here continually to draw water. And that was the very picture of my life, spiritually speaking. For we would hold meetings, revival meetings, and I would be blessed for that short time, but after a while, after a few weeks or months, again, I would feel the need to go and get more of it.

And I said, Lord, this water of which you speak, that is what I need, that I would not be thirsty again. I remember that when I preached to the people, for instance, the boys, the young men, they would be going off to the shops. They would be going off to the shops to buy magazines with naked pictures inside.

And I would say, but Lord, they say they are believers. They have accepted Christ as their personal Savior, but here they are thirsting for the things of the world. And I would say, Lord, my preaching is not helping them at all, because they would admit their sin, but then they would go back to it again, confess their sin, and yet go back to it again.

For Jesus said, he who drinks of the water of this world will thirst again, but he who drinks of the water that I give will never thirst again forever. So the woman said, give me of that water that I won't have to come and draw continually. And so that was the very picture of my life.

I would go to a meeting and I would feel refreshed and revived, but it would be gone very soon after that and I would need to go back again. It was drinking and being thirsty. Drinking and thirsty again.

And the Lord met me that night in showing me the picture of my life, that I was also one to go to meetings, I was blessed, but then it would dissipate. A few weeks later it was gone, or a few months, and I would need to go and drink again. I woke up that night wet with sweat and I was thirsty.

I said, Lord, I thirst for this water. Not just the physical water, though I was thirsty, I was thirsting for His water. And I realized then that if a person truly becomes a believer in Jesus, he'll drink from the Lord and that which he drinks will become a fountain welling up within his own being forever.

And so the woman said, give me of this water that I won't have to come and continually have to draw water here. So Jesus said, go and call your husband. I was confused by that.

I thought, but Jesus is speaking clearly about water. Now He's referring to a husband? Didn't Jesus understand her question? Is Jesus now just going off on a tangent, speaking about something else? Saying, go and call your husband? And she replied, I have no husband. And the Lord said, indeed you speak the truth.

For you have had five husbands and the one that you're with right now belongs to someone else. And I realized then that that is what is necessary for true revival for this water. You need to name your husband, so to say, those things that you've been sinning with.

Your life must be straightened out. If you truly want revival, your life must be straightened. So when Jesus answers her request about giving this water, He says, but go and fetch your husband.

In other words, He puts His finger on the nerve, the very problem that was the crux of the matter. We don't like that. I remember once preaching in the area of Durban in a certain denomination, and the pastor there called me, or came to me, and he said to me, tell me, if you preach, do you ever touch on the subject of sin or not? And then he went on to say, you know, recently I tried it out.

I just mentioned the subject of sin, and I saw the congregation becoming stiff and uncomfortable in their seats, and I thought I'd better leave it. And I thought, well, what is he preaching? I thought, well, what is he preaching? Surely the Bible is so clear about sin. It says you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, et cetera.

It was the Presbyterian church, and he said, now I don't touch on the matter of sin anymore. My congregation doesn't like it. It was a white congregation.

And he said, I saw that the people were extremely uncomfortable when I touched on the matter of sin. But Jesus spoke very directly. He spoke right at the heart of the matter with this woman and said, you are right.

You don't have any husbands. You've had five, and the one you're with is not yours. You see, people don't like to hear about sin.

You can speak about eschatology and this and that, but not to touch upon sin. A certain thing happened in Germany, an amazing thing. There were three men of very high positions.

Now, some mischievous young men, at that time, they used a telegram because there weren't cell phones and email like we have today. And they sent three telegrams to these three. And they wrote very brief words.

All is revealed. Everything has come to light. That's all.

That was all. The first one got his telegram, committed suicide. He shot himself.

The second bought himself a one-way ticket to a foreign land and disappeared forever. The third left Germany. We don't know what their secrets were.

However, when they read these words addressed to them, all is revealed. They thought, sent maybe from a girl, and they thought, well, now I'm done for. These mischievous boys did it as a joke, a prank.

But these three men disappeared. If you get a telegram, everything has come to light regarding you, what would you do? For there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed. Jesus said, do not fear men.

For they might kill your body, but after that, they can do nothing to you anymore. But he said, I show you the one to fear. Fear God, who can kill both body and soul in hell.

Let me use another illustration to show how people prefer their sins to remain hidden. They never want it to be revealed. There was a king in Persia, and his prime minister was a Jew.

This king was great friends with the prime minister. They were inseparable. Very close.

They really were very great friends with each other. But something happened that caused them to lose this friendship, this closeness. And the king was so upset with his prime minister, who was a Jew, he did not want to see him again.

So the king spoke to his counsellors, and said, I don't know what it is. We don't get along anymore with my prime minister. We just don't want to see each other again.

The counsellors said, oh king, that's no problem. What is a problem? Is that the whole nation still loves the prime minister. They said, king, we will give you a plan.

Speak to your Jewish prime minister, and tell him that you give him one year, during which he has a plan. He has to teach your dog to speak. With the threat that should he fail in teaching the dog to speak, within a year, he will be put to death.

But the whole nation was shocked, and they wondered what had got into their king. And they heard of this demand that the prime minister had to teach the king's dog to speak. And they said, because the dog can't talk.

The whole nation was anxious, but the king wasn't. He was quite at ease. After three months, when nine were left, the people began to ask, can the dog speak yet? And it was said, no.

After six months, can the dog talk yet? It was said, no. After nine months, is the king's dog speaking yet? It was said, no. The dog would be with the king all the time, even if he would go overseas and go to Paris and places like that, the dog was there.

Even in the hotel, the dog would be there. And finally, there was just a month left. They asked the prime minister, is the dog talking yet? He said, no.

And they said, but aren't you anxious, aren't you troubled? And the prime minister said, no, there's still 30 days, and in 30 days, a lot can happen. And when it was very close, just a day left, that the dog should be

brought to see whether it could speak. The king then called the prime minister and asked him, tell me, is my dog talking yet? And the prime minister said, okay, something awful has happened.

The king said, what? He said, the dog has learned to speak. And it speaks nonstop, okay. It speaks when, it doesn't matter who's around, it just keeps on speaking.

But shamefully, but what's scary, oh king, is this. This dog is speaking all the secrets of and the shameful things of the king. It's talking about everything you've done, oh king, when you were in Paris, how you went to the red light district.

It's speaking about those things. It's just talking all the things, and it just refuses to keep quiet, it just speaks to anybody. The king was angry, was furious.

He said to the prime minister, kill the dog. He said, oh king, do not be worried at all, I killed it yesterday. Because I didn't want it to reveal your secrets, oh king.

See what touched the king, was the speaking of the dog. He was afraid that this dog is really speaking all his secret things that he had done. Jesus said, there's nothing secret that will not be revealed.

If you meet with Jesus, you are meeting with the one that brings everything to light. If you meet with Jesus, you are meeting with the one that brings everything to light. It makes everything transparent.

If a person says, I have accepted the Lord, and yet they've still got their secret sins. I say, no, you've never met with the Lord, because if you meet with the Lord, he reveals all. If you meet with Jesus, read in Hebrews.

Read there about the living word. Jesus said, nothing that is hidden will remain not revealed. Everything will be revealed.

You can't accept Jesus. Keeping quiet with your sins, for Jesus is light. He reveals you and shows you up.

The woman of Samaria met with Jesus. She actually didn't know who he really was. Jesus spoke of water.

When she said, Lord, give me of that water, that I won't have to come continually to draw water from the well. You see, you can smoke any brand of cigarette you will crave for another one. You can use drugs, but you will crave for more.

If you are drunk with alcohol, you will get thirsty and want to drink it again. But the one who gives you the living water, you will never get thirsty. Even if you meet with a whore.

Only meeting with Jesus who reveals everything, and then forgives you and washes you in his blood, freeing you from the bondage of sin. Jesus says, he who sins is the slave of sin. But if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

If you meet with Jesus, he will reveal your sins through his Holy Spirit. So if you say, Lord give me of this eternal water, he will say, go and fetch your husband. He will touch upon the very point, the heart of the matter of sin.

When the woman heard this, she ran back to the town, telling people, come and see whether this might be the Messiah, for he has told me everything I have ever done. Has it dawned upon you yet, or are you still

in darkness? If you say you have met with Jesus, can you tell people, come and see the one that told me everything I have ever done, or has Jesus not done that for you? You need to check whether you have the right Jesus or not. Test and examine yourself.

What does it help if you say, I'm serving the Lord, but when the Lord returns, he will shake his head and say, depart from me, for I never knew you. Let us bow our heads.

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