

01 - Nov. 5

by Gareth Evans

The sermon calls Christians to understand their identity in Christ to effectively navigate and witness in a troubled world.

Duration: 27:21

Scripture: Matthew 5:14-16, John 6:35, John 13:3-5, John 13:34-35, John 14:1-3, John 14:16-17, Ephesians 1:17-18

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having the right vision in our lives as Christians. He starts by recounting the story of Elisha and how he prayed for his servant's eyes to be opened to see the armies of God surrounding them. The preacher encourages the audience to lift up their eyes and see that God is in control, even in the midst of overwhelming circumstances. He reminds them that this world is fallen and broken, but as Christians, we should not be surprised or dismayed by its condition. Instead, we should have a vision that looks upward, knowing that God will fulfill his promises and that the church, when it stands in Christ, will overcome the world.

Transcript

to declare who we are in Christ. One of the greatest tragedies I find in the Christian church are people who do not know who they are, and particularly when those people are men in the pulpit, that is a great tragedy. You see, when you do not know who you are and yet you're in an authoritative or a leadership position and you do not know who you are, you're not secure in who you are, the only way you can hold on to that position is by control.

It saddens me so much when I see churches and parachurch organizations that are pyramidal and structured with a man at the top called the pastor or the president or whatever it might be, who has to operate his church by control because it's a very precarious place, very insecure place to be at the top of the pyramid. And sadly, it's been my experience, and as you know, I travel and teach this at conferences and youth conferences and church conferences. It's a tragedy when I see the wounded people in the body of Christ, often wounded by insecure leadership.

I think of Jesus, and a little quiz time for you. First are the scriptures. Jesus, knowing that the Father had put all things into his hands and that he'd come from God and was returning to God, I'm quoting scripture to you, comma, can anybody tell me what comes after that? Quiz time.

I've asked this at pastors' conferences and all the times I've asked, it must now be well up in the 50s or so, I've only had two people ever reply to me correctly. Let me paraphrase those words again. Jesus, knowing who he was, being secure in who he was, comma, got up from the table, girded himself with a towel, and washed his disciples' feet, found in John chapter 13.

It is easy to serve when you know who you are. It is very difficult to be a servant when your identity is wrapped up in some esteem that you think you need. It is vital.

If you're gonna know God's anointed in your life, the first thing you have to grasp of your vision is know who you are in Christ. You are precious in his eyes. You're a redeemed child of the King.

He wants you, he sees you as a jewel that he can use for his diadem, a jewel that he can use for his kingdom. That's how he sees you. Do you see yourself like that? Because if you do not, if you have too low an esteem or too high a self-esteem, God cannot use you.

He's not gonna share his glory with you and your high esteem of yourself. Nor can he use you if you think too little of yourself. The second vision that we need is a correct vision as outward.

When you look at this world, a world that's in disarray, does it frighten you? Does it dismay you? I want to tell you the world is acting exactly as the world is expected to act. This world is a tired old creation, groaning and travailing in pain under the leading of blind men, waiting for the day when its creator will return, bringing with him the sons of men. That's this world, a tired, groaning, aching world.

Scriptures say this world groaneth and travaileth waiting for the manifestation of the children of God. Do not expect the world to be different. In the meantime, it's going to follow its own religion of secular humanism where God is put on a circumference and man is put on the throne in the middle.

And all of our governments in this land, in most Western countries, are secular humanistic religion. God has been banished to the circumference, man has become the arbitrator of morals, so society wobbles from one crisis to another. Does this surprise you? It does not surprise me one bit.

The world has always been like this. That's why the word of God tells us not to love this world. I was in Scotland a few years ago.

There was a prayer conference, couple of hundred people there, and it was held in the Church of Scotland. And the two presiding pastors and myself, we were the three convening this, their names were Peter and Ian, two Church of Scotland ministers. And that very day they'd had the synod of the Church of Scotland meeting where they had recognized or ordained homosexual men into the ministry.

And Ian and Peter were there at this prayer conference and Ian was so down, very distressed and stressed out. Whereas Peter was very positive in the day. So I went to Peter at the end of the evening and I said, Peter, what's the difference between you and Ian? You were both at the conference this morning at the synod, you both voted against this issue but was carried by the majority.

And yet you saw different attitudes. And Peter said these words to me, Gareth, when I came to Edinburgh 20 years ago, there were two Churches of Scotland in Edinburgh where you could faithfully take someone on a Sunday morning knowing that they would hear the gospel preached. Today there are 22.

It's a story of the glass half filled with water, is it half full or half empty? Ian saw it as the situation was half empty, the Church in Scotland was going through a terrible place, a terrible crisis, but he failed to see that this is the way of the world. And when the world gets blacker, the light of God should be shining brighter. Numbers don't bother me.

What bothers me are the Christians who are failing to shine as they should shine. The problem with this world is not this old world is that the Church is not being the Church. The world is being the world, I expect the world to be like the world, but I want to see the Church like the Church should be.

Because that's the Church is going to overcome in this world. The Church that Jesus said I'm gonna build that the gates of hell cannot stand against it. Is that the Church you want to see? That's the Church I want to see.

And yet so often I look at the world and I see the Church no different. Going from crisis to crisis, from problem to problem. We are called not to stand in the world to give witness of Christ.

We're called to stand in Christ and thereby be a witness to the world. We're called to be strangers in this world. The song of the Christian in this world should be this world is not my home, I'm just a passing through.

Song should be I am a stranger here. Do you know that song? Within a foreign land, my home is far away upon a golden strand. Ambassador am I of things beyond the sky.

I'm here on business for my King. That's the song of the Christian in this world. We do not belong to this world.

We're not of this world. Jesus said do not be surprised when this world rejects you. It rejects me, it'll reject you.

Do not try to compromise with the world. We need a vision that sees beyond this world. We need a vision that looks upward.

Jesus said when you see these things happening, lift up your eyes for your redemption draws nigh. So what is your inward look? What do you think of yourself? What is your outward look? What do you think of this world? And thirdly, what is your upward look? My upward look tells me that God will fulfill his promises. In the fullness of time, the scripture says he will gather all things together in Christ.

I'm reminded of Elisha the prophet. He was in the town of Dothan and the Syrians kept on sending their armies in to try to conquer the Israelites. And every time they did this, their plans were thwarted because some of the Israelites knew exactly what the Syrians were going to do.

The king of Syria called his cabinet together and he says to them, who's the traitor among you? We discuss behind closed doors what our plans will be, what our methods will be, but the enemy seems to know it all. Somebody's a traitor. And his counselors say, king, none of us are traitors, but there's a prophet in Israel and he knows the mind of the king of Syria.

So where is he? Well, he's in the city of Dothan. Go and get him. Now to get one man, instead of sending half a dozen SAS, you know, special service men, they send the entire Syrian army.

And they come to the city of Dothan and they surround this little city. And in the morning, Elisha's servant wakes up and he throws open the windows and to his horror, he sees the entire valley filled with the Syrian army. Oh master, master, what will we do? His circumstances were overwhelming him.

Elisha glanced at the window, then he said, oh God, open his eyes. Open his eyes. He could see his circumstances, they were overwhelming.

But when his eyes were open, he saw the mountains around was covered with the hosts of God. Is that your vision this morning? When you look at the situation in Nanaimo, you look at the situation in Quebec, do we lift up our eyes for our redemption draws nigh? Do we see the mountains surrounded with the armies of God? Because that's the reality, brothers and sisters. And if you're gonna know God's anointing in your life, you have to catch a vision of the fact that God is in control.

Our savior is still seated upon the throne. He has never been deposed, he will not be deposed. And when he leaves his throne, it will only be to come and gather this world into himself.

To make this world his footstool. Reminder of King David. They're waiting for many years before he could take on the throne after Saul, the madman was finally destroyed and killed.

David comes and takes his throne. He's waited many years for this, he had not tried to force the issue. Even though he knew that Saul was a madman and he had two options at least to kill Saul himself, he did not do that, he waited for God's time.

And then when he comes to the throne, his own son Absalom rises up against him. And Absalom gets the people, he has a politicking scheme, he sits at the gate of the city, talking to people, you don't need to see my father, let me give you counsel. Politicking the greatest evil in the church.

Did you hear what I just said? The greatest evil in the church, politicking, trying to get people to agree with you and manipulation. It's called the spirit of Jezebel. And that's what Absalom was doing.

And David, instead of wanting to fight his son, decided if that's God's will, I will abdicate the throne. And he writes Psalm 3, and in Psalm 3 he says these words, O Lord, how my enemies are risen against me. That's a circumstance.

But thou, O Lord, art my glory and the lifter of my head. We need men and women today, with their heads lifted up, knowing their bridegroom is coming soon. If you want to know God's anointing in your life, it's essential not only that you deal with the precepts of the Christian character that God wants to build in us, the things I've been teaching here for the last two months, it's essential also that you and I have a right vision.

A vision of who we are in the hands of the king. A vision of what this world is. And a vision of the great God we serve who wants to use us for his glory.

They are the kind of men and women whom he is prepared to put his anointing on. Just a brief message today. But we come to this communion table.

What a wonderful place to make our commitment to God. This is a place of covenant. This is a place of love.

This is a place of fellowship. This is a place where we stop and take stock. This is a place where Jesus said, when you do this, do it in remembrance.

Think upon me. Think upon the things I've asked of you. Think of the call upon your life that I want.

Think of who I am. Think of where I am right now. Seated at my father's right hand.

All of that is wrapped up in the communion table. So if you have the right view of yourself and the right view of the world and the right view of God, what's your view of the church? I do not just mean Departure Bay Baptist Church. I mean the Church of Jesus Christ in Nanaimo, in Canada.

What's your view of the church? Do you see it as a struggling organization led by men? It is. Do you see it as a hospital for six people? It is. That's why you and I are here.

If you're looking for a perfect church, please do not join it when you find it because it will no longer be perfect. But Jesus loves his church. He gave himself for her, his bride.

And he has declared that he will build his church even if you and I do not help him, but get in the way, he is going to build his church. And he's gonna build his church out of men and women who receive revelation from God like Peter, who respond to the revelation of God like Peter, men and women upon whom he can put his anointing. This morning as we come to the communion table, I invite you to quieten your hearts.

I invite you to mull over even the things I've said this morning and think back on the several weeks since I've been with you, now it's two months. Have you sensed within your eagerness to know more of God? I started off by quoting to you my favorite text, Paul's prayer to Ephesians, I pray that the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ will grant to you, the people of Departure Bay Baptist Church wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of himself. Are you hungry to know him more? Are you hungry to know his touch upon your life and anointing? Are you hungry to see your life impact eternity in the city? When you go to visit the sick in hospital, do you know your life can have anointing so that you speak into that person who's sick but you are impacting eternity because you're feeding them manna from, not manna but the honey from heaven.

That's what Christians are supposed to be. A light that brings shining glory into the presence of darkness. Think in these things, mull on these things and as you come to the table, I invite you to prepare your hearts by yielding again to the prompting of God's spirit and saying yes, yes, yes Lord I want these things.

When Jesus established this table, it was the night before he died. He knew he was going to die. He planned that evening, he called his disciples, he was the one who booked the room, he planned the evening, he planned that no girl would come to wash their feet.

It was no accident the last evening with his disciples when he instituted this meal. And at that meal he poured out to them his wonderful promises, his last will and testament that he was going to sign in blood on the cross the next day. My peace I give to you, not like the world gives, all the world can take away.

My joy I give to you that your joy may be full. I go to prepare a place for you that where I am you may be also. I will come again and receive you to myself.

In the meantime do not let your house be troubled, I shall send the comforter and he shall be in you, he shall lead you into the room. They were all the promises of that last night. Then he washed their feet and

he said do you to one another likewise.

We come to church, one of the reasons we come to church is to wash one another's feet. I trust whatever you came in here, whatever the circumstances were that you came in here, maybe the circumstances were heavy upon you as you leave here this morning, I trust that you will walk out with a lighter step. I trust you will feel yourself cleansed in some sense.

That's what this community table speaks about. And he said commandment I give you that you love one another. I'll repeat this every community service we have when I lead you I will repeat this.

It is a command brothers and sisters that is no option given. You're commanded to love one another. You're not like one another, you're commanded to love one another.

And thirdly he said if you're my disciples do what I tell you. Then he took the bread and he broke it and said this is my body broken for you. Take it.

And in so taking what you are doing is identifying with the body of Christ. Where is the body of Christ today? In Quebec the Catholics will tell you it's right here. But where is the body of Christ today? Look around you.

Look around you. This is the body of Christ. Look around you, Eve and Eric, first time we've met was yesterday.

We shared together with the body of Christ, is that not true? Body of Christ today is broken and scattered throughout the world. But it is the body of Christ that he loves and he gave himself for. And every time you and I take this bread we're identifying with the body of Christ.

Then he took a cup while he had supped. He said this cup is for you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

And every time you and I take this cup he tells us to take it in preparation until he comes. He tells us to take it by thinking upon him in remembrance. He tells us to take it in love.

He tells us to take it worthily. But every time we take this cup we are saying to the Lord I agree to the covenant. I agree to the covenant.

I will be a foot washer. I will be a servant. I will love your people.

And I will obey your word. I invite the ushers or those who are coming to serve if they would come forward and join me at this time. And I invite each of you to meditate upon these thoughts even before the bread and the wine is brought to you.

I'm going to ask you all to keep the bread and we will take it together. So just hold the bread in your hand as it is distributed and the wine and then we will drink it together afterwards. Is Peter gonna join us? So Jesus took a bread, he broke it, he blessed it, he gave it to them and said this is my body broken for you, take it.

Thank you. Thank you, Carson. Please.

■■■ ask the Lord to bless this bread as you take it please. Let us take it together. In this same manner also he took the cup when he's sucked, saying this cup is the cup of the new covenant in my blood.

Drink ye all of it. I invite you again to retain your cups until we share together. Al, would you ask the Lord to bless this cup to us please? Contemplate the warnings, the admonitions, the good advice that our pastor has shared with us this morning.

We pray that you will take it to heart and be seriously considerate of the commitment that we must make. Lord, we have done this in obedience to you, and we pray for mercy upon this cup and upon our lives in Jesus' name. Let's drink it together.

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