

From Simon to Peter #3 - Simon's Confrontation by Jesus Christ

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon explores Simon's transformative encounter with Jesus, highlighting the profound implications of his renaming to Peter.

Duration: 53:55

Scripture: Exodus 3:5, Matthew 16:18, Matthew 28:19-20, John 1:29, John 1:41, Acts 9:4-6, Romans 1:16

Topics: "Simon to Peter"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Simon, also known as Peter, and how he was brought to Jesus by John the Baptist and his own brother Andrew. The preacher emphasizes the importance of both realism and self-revelation in understanding oneself and others. He highlights that while John and Andrew played a role in bringing Simon to Jesus, ultimately it was only through a personal encounter with Jesus that Simon's life was transformed. The preacher also emphasizes the need for multiple individuals to be involved in bringing sinners to Jesus and the balance between the harsh aspects of the law and the representation of love and care.

Transcript

Before we come to our text this morning may I underscore the welcome that has been given by the Reverend George Lowe to friends that may be visiting us today. As usual we want you to know that we welcome you heartily and warmly in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Warmly I suppose is the appropriate term this morning.

We are beginning to experience your Canadian winters and I was afraid at one stage this week that I might be more croaky than I am today. But if I have to indulge in a sip of water now and again I'm sure you will understand the weakness and the frailty of the British fray. Well now we turn again this morning to the theme, the subject that we began to consider a few weeks ago.

We have entitled it from Simon to Peter. And our theme this morning the aspect of the subject we are going to consider briefly is Simon's confrontation by Jesus Christ. I want to read one verse namely verse 42 in that first chapter of the gospel recorded by John.

Jesus looked at him and said, so you are Simon the son of John you shall be called Cephas. Which means Peter. Apart from any direct divine action not revealed and not recorded in Scripture.

Two complimentary ministries have thus far been involved in preparing Simon for the third and crucial event recorded in the passage from which our text is taken. The exposition of God's law by John the baptizer and the expression of divine love by Andrew Simon's own brother. These are the two things that have been woven together to bring Simon to this particular point.

Together we must see this. Together John and Andrew have brought Simon to Jesus. You may say the text doesn't say that.

There's no reference to John no no. But it was John's dynamic ministry that so dealt with the innermost soul of Simon and indeed led Andrew to a knowledge of the Savior. That in turn Andrew was able to bring his own brother Simon into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we repeat the combined ministries of John the baptizer and of Andrew Simon's brother have now resulted in bringing Simon right out into the open. And there he stands before the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist's ministry had opened a deep wound in the soul of Simon.

Whether Simon was personally a disciple of John's is really irrelevant. Because in either case, whether he was, whether he was not, the impact of John's teaching, the message that John proclaimed has been conveyed to Simon via his own brother Andrew. And it is evident that his soul is wounded by the thrust of it.

But who knows? If John's testimony is true and if Andrew's testimony is right. Then the very one who is able to heal the broken-hearted may be there at hand waiting for Simon to come to him. Simon came, Andrew came you remember, to Simon and said we have found the Messiah, the anointed one.

Who is the Messiah? He is the anointed of the Lord. Of whom we read in the scriptures this morning in Isaiah chapter 61. Scriptures which the Lord Jesus Christ applied to himself in the synagogue in Nazareth as Luke tells us.

These are the words, the spirit of the Lord God is upon me. I am the anointed one says Jesus. The spirit of the Lord God is upon me.

Because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted. To proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison door to them that are bound and much else.

John and Andrew's combined action therefore have resulted in Simon's appearance before Jesus at this point. And here they confront one another. It's a dramatic moment this.

Here they confront each other. The sinner and the Savior. The seeking Savior and the needy sinner, conscious of his need.

Face to face. Eyeball to eyeball. Heart to heart.

Jesus and Simon confront one another. In what must be one of the profoundest and most pregnant moments in human history. Everything that has happened thus far in the life of Simon.

Everything I repeat by the providence and sovereignty of God. Everything has led up to this moment. And we will go so far as to say that everything that is going to happen hereafter will issue out of what happened now.

This is the mighty moment. Not only in the life of this sinner, but upon the issues of this moment hang the destiny of multitudes of men and women. Who throughout the years of time have become in due course debtors to the fact that Jesus Christ saved Simon Peter.

Now I don't know how you feel, but I'll tell you how I feel. I feel very much as if I were in the shoes of Moses by the burning bush. Summoned by an unseen God to take my shoes from off my feet.

For the ground on which we stand is holy ground. And it is with I trust due reverence and humility that I would like to lead you this morning and bid you come with me and examine the inspired record of this momentous event. Happily it's not left for the preacher to divide the text up this morning.

I do like this. There are times when it is necessary for us to try and divide a text in order to to elucidate its truth. But we don't need to divide this.

It divides itself into two. Listen to it again. When Jesus beheld him he said thou art Simon the son of Jonah thou shalt be called Cephas.

Which is being interpreted the Christ. I'm sorry I've given you the wrong text. When Jesus beheld him he said thou art Simon the son of Jonah thou shalt be called Cephas.

Which is by interpretation a stone. A stone or a rock. That word divides itself naturally into two.

A look and a word. A look of unlimited penetration and a word of unqualified prediction concerning the sinner in the Savior's presence. We are going to examine it in that way.

First of all the Savior's look of penetrating perception. As Andrew brought Simon into the presence of Jesus the evangelist tells us that Jesus looked at him. Now we tend quite naturally to gloss over that.

But actually what John tells us here is that Jesus did more than look at him. If you confer and if you examine the other translations you will find that they bring out this point. And it's necessary to see it.

It isn't Jesus looked at him he did that of course. But he went beyond that. Moffat translates he gazed at him.

Rue translates looking at him closely. And Knox's translation is this looking at him fixedly. Now why do they vary? I'll tell you why they vary because everything that they say is involved in the word.

Jesus fixed his eyes upon him. Jesus gazed at the man. Jesus looked not only at the man but into the man.

Jesus looked upon the man, looked at the man, looked into the man, as only God himself can look upon a man. That's what we have here. It's not as I'm looking at you good people now.

I do see you. And you see me. But it's not that kind of look at all I haven't got that capacity.

He looked upon, he looked into, he read the heart. You see nothing is hid from him with whom we have to do. And here the incarnate word manifests a characteristic also of the written word.

Of which we read in the epistle to the Hebrews that nothing is from him which is the word written apparently. Jesus looked at him. Other uses of the same verb serve to underline this point.

Can I just use one or two examples this morning because I think it's necessary to get this. If we miss this then we miss something which is vital to an understanding of the whole epistle. Mark tells us that when Jesus was approached by a certain rich man, who knelt before him and asked him what he must do to inherit eternal life.

Mark tells us Jesus looking upon him loved him. What did that mean? Well it certainly didn't mean that Jesus looked upon him and thought well now here's a nice specimen of a film. He was physically attractive and so forth.

Not at all. Jesus was reading the heart. Jesus was considering the motives.

Jesus was weighing in the balances of his mind what he alone could read. Something behind the surface, something beneath the superficialities, something inwardly in the soul of the man. Now here's another illustration of it which brings that out even better.

The same evangelist Mark stresses the fact that as Peter some three or so later stood in the high priest's courtyard while Jesus was being interrogated. One of the maids of the high priest came and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked on him and said you also were with the Nazarene Jesus. Now I'm not suggesting that that girl could read into Simon's heart as Jesus could read into Simon's heart.

But you notice the difference. There is a distinction. Seeing him, oh yes she saw him, that's the ordinary word for seeing.

But then she began to puzzle and she began to scrutinize and she began to examine as far as she could. And when she had really taken a jolly good look at Simon she said to him uh-huh she says you also were with the Nazarene. Now that's the word we have here.

But it represents the capacity of Messiah, Son of the living God, to look into the mind, to examine the heart, to scrutinize the soul, to search the deep recesses of a man's being and to read it as an open book. It's the look of thoughtful scrutiny. Now there are two things only that I want to note concerning that penetrating gaze of our Lord's.

One it was a look that expressed his knowledge of Simon. Now that's obvious in what we've said already but I need to underline it. If you had been in Simon's shoes you would have known that.

Any man that has passed through the throes of conviction of sin will have some realization of what that means. It is given to all of us as we enter into the kingdom of God at some point or other to be singled out. And we know in that moment that God sees us and God knows us and God reads us.

He knows me. I hope we all know something of this, discomfiting though it may be. But now here of course there is the physical presence of the Messiah which makes the whole thing the more obvious and the more realistic.

You may have seen a pale reflection of this kind of look. For example on the face of a physician or a surgeon. When not on his first examination of the patient when there may be a few things that are puzzling.

Though doctors don't always show us that they're puzzled and perplexed. They're a wonderful way of evading that and avoiding it. But it isn't that look when there are questions raised and there are issues that are as yet unresolved.

But now with x-rays in hand and all the tests completed. The physician or the surgeon comes back to the bedside. He examines the patient.

He looks at the diseased organ or whatever the case may be. And now he sees the whole thing fitting. He knows exactly the meaning and significance of all the symptoms.

He can fit it all in. And if you look at his face you can see yes yes he understands. He knows.

Jesus knew Simon. He knew him and he knows you and he knows me. And Simon recognized the fact from his look.

Not only did the Savior know his name and his pedigree. Thou art Simon son of Jonah. He could very well have got that from Andrew.

I don't know whether he did I can't tell you. But but he might very well have got all that from Andrew. But Jesus knew him in a different way.

He knew his heart. He knew the man of the heart. He knew his tendencies.

And may I suggest reverently that particularly at this point Jesus knew his uncertainties. Jesus knew how at this point Simon was torn with uncertainty as he compared and contrasted the teaching that he had inherited as a good Jew with the principles concerning the king and the kingdom enunciated by John the Baptist. Between the tradition of the fathers and the dynamic word of the Lord Jesus Christ with its more spiritual understanding of things.

Of John the Baptist I should say. With its understanding of things in a more spiritual way. And he was equally uncertain as to what he should make of Andrew and his bold confession.

John it is true has said that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the Lamb of God. Jesus is the sin bearer and the spirit baptizer.

But no one else seems to agree. No one else knows him as such. He's not over 30 years of age and and the people of the Jews are not going after him.

Now should Simon join forces with Andrew and make such a confession? Or should he not be as reticent as those around? The thing I want you to get my friend because it's so important for us. Jesus knew Simon. Now we shall have to point out the significance of this much and much more as we go along.

But the second thing I want to say at this point is this. Not only was it a look that expressed knowledge of Simon and of Simon's inner life and thinking and hoping and his fears and so forth. But it also explained at least in part Andrew's ring of certainty.

I suggest to you that when Simon heard Andrew's testimony in the first place. It seemed so premature. It seemed a little bit crazy.

Here comes Andrew bounding in and says to Simon, Simon, Simon we found the Messiah. How could it be? I'm amazed that the Bible doesn't record for us that Simon must have said some very uncouth things at that moment. Knowing Simon that the Bible doesn't say anything.

So we must be careful. That if he didn't say anything I'm almost sure. I hope I don't do Simon Peter an injustice.

I'm almost certain he must have thought a lot. Crazy notion. But with the eyes of the Son of God upon him.

I've no doubt but that he's thinking something like this. My word who else could look at me and look through me and understand me and know my thoughts are far off. Other than him of whom the prophets wrote.

And the testimony of Andrew begins to become credible. It may well be that this is none other than the Messiah. The promised deliverer of God.

A look of penetrating perception. Now the second matter here this morning is this. It's the complement of that.

It's what went along with it. The other side of it. The Savior's word of prophetic prediction.

So you Simon the son of John or the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas. Which is by interpretation Petros.

Which is Greek. Herak which is English. All meaning the same thing.

Aramaic, Greek, English. Cephas Petros Herak. The silence that prevailed as those holy eyes searched and scanned the hidden recesses of Simon's soul.

Was at last broken. Broken by a word that was electrifying in its significance. The one who seemed to know him through and through.

Assumes to have authority to change him and to give him a new name. Now when we started this series we said that this is something quite significant. A change of name in the Bible is something very significant.

It assumes that the person who suggests it has authority so to do. As for example a slave owner would change the name of his slave. You have that in the case of Daniel for example.

And the three young men of whom we read in the book of Daniel. They were Hebrews but they were given different names. They were not prisoners.

They were in the hand of a foreign power. Their names were changed. And this is very common.

And Jesus looking into the depths of this man Simon son of Jonah says I'm going to change your name. And he doesn't ask his permission if you please. He says you shall be called Cephas.

But behind that there is something even more. He is assuming according to the biblical usage. That he has the power to change Simon's character from what was signified by Simon to that which is signified by Cephas or Petros or Peter.

In other words he assumes or presumes as Simon may well have thought at that point. That he has the power, the authority, the ability, the grace and whatever else is needed to change his character. So that the unstable son of a dove, son of Jonah.

That's what Jonah means. The unstable son of a dove becomes the stable, solid, rock like Petra. Thus does Jesus substantiate John and Andrew's testimony with this claim to authority and ability.

Did not John say he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His baptism is not a baptism of cold or warm water that can only touch the skin. His baptism is a different thing altogether that can transform and penetrate and change.

Jesus is claiming to be the Messiah. He is substantiating the testimony of Andrew who said to Simon without the Messiah says Jesus I'll change you and I'm exercising my authority over you. I'm claiming you as my own.

Without any apology he assumes the right to make what he pleases of the man in front of him because he's the Lord. Oh my dear friends we need to get this. It's the Lord that stands before us.

The speaker at our missionary conference this year made something of this. And rightly so. He did not dwell upon it but he referred to it.

We do not make Jesus Lord. I know what is meant by that. We acknowledge him as our own Lord.

That's what is meant. But you see you and I don't make Jesus Lord. He is Lord.

He always was Lord. You don't make him Lord. You acknowledge his Lordship.

That's all. There's a world of difference. He's Lord here.

And he puts his hand upon Simon and he says Simon I'm going to change your name because you're going to become my own man. And I have the power and the authority and the ability so to do. Simon the past is over and done with.

The future is going to be quite different. I'm claiming you as my man. Christ's man.

I hope this morning service will mean something similar to some dear people here. On this cold first Sunday morning of December 1974. May it please the Lord of glory to stand and look someone eye to eye.

And say to a man or a woman a fellow or a girl look. I'm casting the mantle of my divine authority over you and I'll not let you be what you've been until now. I'm going to change your name.

And I'm going to make you mine. Because I'm the Lord. That's the gospel.

Now we must note two things concerning this. There is something in the background. There is something in the foreground.

What is in the background again is a repetition of what we've already noted. But we must bring it up. In the background stands the realism of our Lord in his understanding of Simon.

In the foreground stands the revelation of our Lord in his understanding of himself. His realism and his self-revelation. One the realism he assumes in relation to Simon.

So you are Simon. Or as the authorized version puts it and it's lovely here. Thou art Simon.

Underlying those words is the claim to a personal intimate knowledge of the man he has only just met for the very first time. Now you and I are in a position to recognize something of the startling significance of this. We've not known each other for long.

But here is a person that's been introduced to the Lord Jesus Christ for just a moment. He's just come into his presence. He never met him before.

And after these few brief pregnant moments the Lord Jesus says to him. So you are. I know you through and through.

You couldn't say that. You couldn't say you know me like that. I can't say I know you like that.

It's great to come to know you little by little. And it's enriching to meet the people who love the Lord and serve him. I'm delighted with it.

But you don't know me and I don't know you like this. And we never will. For no human eye can penetrate into the soul of another as the eyes of the Lord Jesus penetrated the camouflage of Simon's life.

The point is that the prophecy and the promise that follow these words are not made in ignorance. Now this is what I want to bring out. When Jesus goes on to say to him.

You are Simon son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas. He didn't say that in ignorance of what Simon really was.

He didn't say that in ignorance of the facts concerning Simon. He said that knowing all the facts. They do not represent the optimism of someone who has miscalculated the situation.

But the promise of one who knows everything there is to be known. Can I put it to you in one sentence like this. Our Lord does not promise the best because he does not know the worst.

Knowing the worst he never the less promises the highest. His calculation is based on the most realistic appraisal of man and he knew Simon. Now Simon will be tempted to doubt that over and over again.

You see we are always in the same situation. Haven't you gone through this? Christian people haven't you had this kind of temptation? You go on in life and you come to a point and you say oh Lord I'm such a failure. Haven't I been a bit of a surprise to you? Do you really love me still? Did you know what you were in for when you put your hand on me and called me? Haven't I been a little bit of a surprise to you? Are you sure you don't want to change your mind? Now we may not say that exactly but we mean it.

And we have a fear that the Savior who began the good work in us will abandon us half way through because we are a bit of a surprise to him. He didn't know us. His appraisal of us in other words was was inaccurate or incomplete.

Oh my good friend I want to come to you this morning I want you to get hold of this. Jesus knew Simon before he set out and before he made one promise to him. And in the full total knowledge the realistic

appraisal of what he was and would be he never the less said that he would be different.

He is not a physician who promises healing because his diagnosis is inaccurate or incomplete. His prognosis is unequivocal. Even though we know Simon through and through.

Let us take this to heart. Let us take this to heart. I'll put it to you in this way as I pass from this point.

Right at that moment as they confronted one another Jesus Christ knew that in order to save Simon there must be a Calvary. Simon needs a Calvary. There must be a resurrection.

Simon needs a living Lord. There must be an ascension. Simon needs a reigning Lord.

There must be a Pentecost. Simon needs an indwelling Lord. Nothing less can save Simon.

He knew that. You know my friend he knows all that about you this morning and about me. I don't care what kind of suit you wear.

If you're a man outside of Jesus Christ he faces you and he confronts you in our morning service and he knows that your sin is such without a Calvary you die. Without a risen Lord you perish. Without an ascended King of Kings and Lord of Lords you die.

And without the Pentecost that brings the reigning Lord to dwell within you, you cannot live the Christian life. He knows that. And he knows that about us all.

And yet he has arranged that the good news should be proclaimed to Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the outermost parts of the earth. To the Greeks and to the Barbarians. To men everywhere in all sorts of conditions.

The good news. Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy. Why? Because Calvary is over and done with and the work finished.

The resurrection is a fact and needs not be repeated. His ascension is real. He is enthroned at the Father's right hand and the Spirit is given.

Ours is a full and a completed salvation. Thou art a realistic appraisal of the man. Now my last main thought this morning is this.

Turn now from the Savior's realism as it related to Simon to his revelation of himself. To Simon and to us. Thou shalt be called Cephas.

But you say that's not a revelation of himself. That's a promise of what Simon will be. Yes yes it's true but this is the other side of the story.

Let me put it like this. If Jesus knew Simon's heart. Now those of you who read the Gospels well.

Will at this very moment be thinking of some of the manifestations of arrogance and pride and instability and oh what not. That are yet to be evidenced by Simon's life. Now if Jesus knew all Simon's heart and everything that was in it.

If he knew Simon's heart and soul. Knew it's hidden tendencies and evil propensities. Knew it's every latent mood and temper.

How can he proceed to make such an unqualified prediction or promise as he now makes. Because there is no qualification here. Jesus didn't say look Simon if you then I. He didn't say that.

There's no if here. Thou shalt be. But how can he make that.

How can he say that. Is it not somewhat precarious and dangerous. You know he may lose his character.

He may lose his good name by making a prophecy like this about a man like that. No. This is not a precarious prophecy.

Unequivocally not and for this reason. The Savior's prediction depended not upon what Simon was. But upon what he himself is.

And who he is. The Savior's prediction doesn't depend upon Simon being able to pass an examination that will give him entrance into the kingdom of God when he gets so many marks. Simon may be the roughest and the most rugged and the most lost of all lost men if we may thus speak.

But it doesn't matter. The Savior knew himself. He knew that he was Messiah.

He knew that he was Lord. And because he knew himself he can look into the teeth of Simon's most terrifying expression of evil and nevertheless promise that he will reign in glory in a future day. It's his knowledge of himself that enables him to make this prophecy.

Now the reformers from John Calvin down have been very fond of speaking of the messianic office as embodying in one person the combined ministries of prophet, priest and king. Only such a conviction about himself can explain the words of the Lord Jesus now before us. He is able realistically to examine and analyze the life of Simon Peter and yet redemptively to say to him, Simon you are going to be different.

He is able to say it because Jesus knows himself to be Messiah. On any other basis Jesus is shown to be a reckless promiser of things he cannot fulfill or may not be able to fulfill. That is why if we have time I would like to talk about the liberal approach to all this when they say that Jesus' consciousness of Messiahship is something that evolved.

Of course they've got to write out these early parts of the book of John, John's gospel in order so to establish a premise which is a false one. No, no, no, no. Right at the beginning Jesus knew himself and it's only because he knew himself to be Messiah he can say to a man like this look man you're going to be changed.

And I'm the authoritative one who can do it. And the consciousness of Jesus is the consciousness of one who is prophet, priest and king. Take them in the obverse order.

He knows himself to be anointed king. It's only a king that can rule over a man like this. Was it not written of him? He will be great and will be called the son of the highest.

And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there will be no end. And he knew himself to be king.

King enough not to fail. In the face of the most stubborn unyielding praise in Simon's character. Now if you can look ahead into the Gospels this is what you will see.

You will see the king dealing with a rebel now and again. Oh a man that has been changed but in whose hearts there are pockets of rebellion coming up in this way manifesting itself in that way. But he knew himself to be king.

Right at this stage the anointed king is speaking. He knew himself to be the anointed priest. Simon is a sinner.

As a sinner he is under the wrath of God. But Jesus Christ knew himself to be priest. High priest after the order of Melchizedek who would bear away the sin of Simon so that they could no more stand between him and God and God's purpose for him.

That's why he could speak like this. That's why he could prophesy. That's why he could predict.

It's not if or maybe but Simon thou art thou shalt be. He was the anointed prophet as well as priest and king. Oh my good people can I draw towards a close by stressing this.

There's only one who can at one and the same time be realistic and reassuring. In a fallen world I say realistic and face the issues of human sin and of individual need on the one hand and then come to us and say I've got good news for you. Despite the world, despite the flesh, despite the devil, despite all the evil influences of Lord I bring you good news.

There's only one who can be realistic and reassuring today. That is none other than the Son of God. He is the Messiah.

He is the Lord's anointed one. Anointed of heaven to be your savior and mine as well as Simon. Now I'm wrapping it all up.

Can I just apply it in two or three ways as we draw to a close. Where do we come to? Where do we arrive? In the first place let us notice that normally there will be more than one person involved in the bringing of a sinner to Jesus Christ. It took let me repeat John and Andrew to bring Simon to Jesus.

You may be one link. Someone else may be the other. But a question to ask is this.

Are you? Am I being a link at all? Notice next that there is a positive balance here. John's emphasis upon the harsher aspects of the law. What Alexander White used to call the dark lines in the Almighty's face.

John's emphasis upon the harsher aspects of the law and the judgment of God are counterbalanced by Andrew's representation of love and of care. It is not either law or love. It is law and love.

Don't let us separate what God has united. The law of God must be declared in all its solemnity and in all its eternity for eternal it is. But so must the love of God be canalized to the sin sick soul.

We must have an Andrew as well as a John. It is exceedingly important also that in our attempts to bring men to Christ we are even more certain of the Lord's power to save than we are clear of the need of the person we bring to him. Can I say one word about that? In recent years in theological circles the emphasis has been almost totally upon know your man.

You must know men. You must understand men. Now I'm not minimizing.

I'm not taking away from the need to understand people. Please don't please don't misunderstand me. But the emphasis has been almost completely in our theological colleges on this.

You preachers and you teachers in Sunday school, you Bible class leaders, you must know your people. You must be psychologically expert in this realm. Understand people's problems.

All right. So far. But I tell you one thing you need to know more.

You need to know the grace of Christ. You need to know that he is able to meet the need of the man before you irrespective of the complexities of his need which ultimately even though you be the specialist himself you cannot fully unravel and understand. There is only one that knows all the depths and ramifications of sin.

There is only one that understands man through and through. The thing I need to know as I look into the face of any man or woman, boy or girl who is a sinner is this that my God, my Savior is able to save to the uttermost this boy, this girl. And my last, very last word.

However much John and Andrew could do alone, the work can only be completed by bringing the man to Jesus himself. John could point behold the Lamb of God. Andrew could say come Simon.

But ultimately, ultimately Simon can only be changed when he's face to face with Jesus Christ. Now my friends, I have a very urgent message to bring to you in these closing moments. I want you to be Andrews.

Not so much John's sending men to Jesus Christ. But I want you to become with me involved in the task of bringing men to where Jesus is. But where is Jesus? Well in the first place he's at the throne of grace.

Waiting for us to bring men in our arms of concern and plead and pray and ask his blessing upon the word of the gospel. Will you do that? How many souls have you brought to Jesus at the throne of grace this last month? Sunday school teachers, Bible class leaders, heads of families, officers in the church, my fellow ministers and I. Bring him to Jesus. Bring him to Christ.

But wait a moment. Jesus Christ is where his word is proclaimed and where his people meet. For he said where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

You say what can I do? There's nothing I can do. I find it so difficult. I want to tell you something you can do by the grace of God.

Starting on the third Sunday evening in January and then continuing on every third Sunday evening in the month until June at least. We are going to have a series of guest services here in the office. By guest services we mean this.

We are going to make it possible for every member, every household, every friend of the church, every adherent to go out to your relatives that are unconverted, to your friends and to your neighbors and to say be our guest. Because you're going to hear good news. The service will be geared not to people who come here every Sunday.

It's good to see those who come morning and evening. We welcome you and we're always glad to see you and you must be here then. But these services will be geared not to the people who come regularly but to the people who as yet may never have darkened the doors of the church.

And you are going to be the Andrew to bring them along. They're your brothers and sisters. They're your neighbors.

They're your friends. You know them. Will you pray with me that first of all the Lord will show you who is the first Simon that you can approach and bring along.

And when you've prayed some time over this then may I suggest that you make a contact. Say something about the Lord and His grace. Bear some witness or other.

Hand over some decent literature or other that speaks of Him. Continue to pray. And then about a fortnight or so before the service is due, invite them for a little tea on Sunday afternoon.

And tell them that you're inviting them to be your guest at Knox Church on the Sunday night and bring them along. With your eyes not upon a man or upon men but upon God. And His promises that you're leaning upon and the prayers that you've offered to Him.

Expecting that He will confront men and women in the power of His grace and say to Mary or Simon, I know what you are and I know who I am. And I'm going to change you and transform you and save you. Will you do that? My friends, the times are serious.

For my part as Minister of the Word, I have to examine myself every week as to whether I'm toying with spiritual things. Playing with solemnities. And the time for playing is over.

It is gone. But I can't reach you, your relative. Neither can the staff of Knox.

I can't touch your friends. Neither can the staff of Knox. You can.

Are you concerned about their salvation? In the name of my Lord, who came to seek and to serve that which was lost, I beg you this morning, set to it now. And in the fullness of the time, may it please Him that all of us should see the fruit of our labors in men and women and boys and girls leap into life. Which is life indeed.

Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we have been in Thy presence, we believe. And there are some lessons that we have learned from Thy Word.

Some which relate to things happened yesteryear. But there are lessons that we have also learned about things that should happen now. And how they may and how they ought.

Grant us the grace to implement Thy Word to us. Draw us to Thyself. Help us to put ourselves actively upon the altar and at Thy disposal.

And may the grace of the Lord Jesus be with us as we become increasingly involved in bringing our loved ones to Jesus. We ask it in His name. Amen.

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