

# Book of Acts Series - Part 16 | Unrecognized Blessings

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit in guiding the church and sharing the good news of Jesus through effective witnessing.*

**Duration:** 45:42

**Scripture:** Acts 13:16-17, Acts 13:32-33, Acts 13:38-39, Acts 13:42-43, Acts 13:46, Acts 13:52

**Topics:** "Book Of Acts"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of starting with a common ground when sharing the gospel. He uses the example of Paul preaching in a synagogue and starting with Jewish history to connect with his audience. The preacher also highlights the two great promises of the good news of Jesus. He then discusses the role of the Holy Spirit in directing the affairs of the church and encourages believers to listen, yield, and obey the Spirit's guidance. Finally, he emphasizes the importance of recognizing and listening to the voice of Jesus amidst the distractions of life.

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## Transcript

We've been studying the book of Acts for a number of months now, and what we wanna do now is pick up the story at a critical moment of missions, missionary movement. What is missionary movement? Missionary movement is when you take the gospel from where you are to another place that's never heard the gospel, or has rarely heard the gospel. Now last week, we talked about Cornelius' house.

This Italian soldier, officer, and Peter went to his house, and that was the word of the Lord going to Gentiles. What are Gentiles? Gentiles are anyone who's not a Jew. So we're almost all here Gentiles.

As we study the book of Acts, this is the history of the Christian church, little snapshots of it. We come to not only the gospel going to the Gentiles, but we go to the conversion of the biggest persecutor of the church, which conversion we studied already, which was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, persecutor of the Christians, and he became a believer in a dramatic appearance of the Lord to him on the road to Damascus, which is in Syria, which is where all the killing is going on right now, among other places, unfortunately. Now we pick up the story that Saul has joined the church in Antioch with his friend Barnabas, and Barnabas and Saul are in this church, and dramatic things happen in Acts 13, the first three verses.

Let's just look at it. There's no way I can do this legitimately and with integrity without reading a good number of verses to you today, so let's start. In the church at Antioch, which is also in Syria, then Syria, and directly north, near the Mediterranean, directly north of Jerusalem just about, there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, which means black, he came from Africa, Lucius of Cyrene, Mannan, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, that's the king, and Saul, who in this chapter is gonna have his name changed to what? Paul, Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul.

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. What a dramatic moment that must have been. Somehow through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a word was spoken which resonated with the group of leaders and congregation that Barnabas and Saul were singled out to go and do a work that the Holy Spirit had called them to do.

So this is not dead old church, this is live Holy Spirit church. The Holy Spirit's still speaking, moving. So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and they sent them off.

So now they're gonna be sent off, and let me just stop here and make this point. We're gonna pick up the story now as they go into what we now call Turkey, the country of Turkey. They went to the island of Cyprus first, which is in the Mediterranean.

And now they're gonna go to Turkey, and they take with them a young man named John Mark who wrote the book of Mark in the Bible, one of the gospels. My point here though, I just wanna reiterate it. Do you notice how important it is that the Holy Spirit directs the operation of the Christian church? The first two missionaries that went out didn't go out because they did a computer printout or got software of where we should go and who should go.

There were no personality tests given. It was the Holy Spirit tracking Saul, Tarsus, and Barnabas, and now saying, those two, I want to go to do a specific work. This is the way the Christian church is still supposed to be run today.

It's not supposed to be run by human intelligence, although we're to use our brains, but our brains are so limited. We're supposed to depend on the power and wisdom and movement of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is supposed to direct operations for the church.

He's the one who puts people in charge, puts people down, directs people out. Always, brothers and sisters, please, be open to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to you, whether it's a short-term mission trip, whether it's a ministry you're supposed to do in the church, whether you're supposed to help celebrate recovery, and help Deacon Angel Zapata and his wife, whether you're supposed to sing in the choir, whatever it is, be open to the voice of the Spirit. Don't go by what you like and what you feel.

Try to get the mind of God. How many say amen? More mistakes are made in church when we do things according to our understanding and not by the direction of the Holy Spirit. Well, you say, I don't believe God does that anymore.

That's all spooky, supernatural, crazy stuff. No, it's Bible stuff, and the Bible doesn't change. God doesn't change in this regard.

The Holy Spirit is available if we wanna listen to Him and if we wanna follow His directions. Or we can make it a corporation. We can make church an institution.

We can direct services and program them with no ability to change and follow the direction of the Holy Spirit, and we're gonna be the ones that suffer from that. Let God lead you in everything you do in life. Do I get a witness? Can we all put our hands together? Let God lead you.

Let God lead you. Imagine the confidence, imagine the confidence Saul and Barnabas had on that journey if someone would've stopped them and said, yo, what's up with you, where are you going? And they were, well, we had an idea we thought we'd like. No, it was God sent us to do this, and if God sends you to do something, who do you think's gonna back you up when you're doing it? Oh, of course He will.

God will do that. So now they get through Cyprus and all that, and now they're gonna make their first trek into Turkey, and now the gospel's gonna go to Turkey, which is called Asia there and other names. Let's pick it up.

From Paphos, Paul and his companions sail to Perga in Pamphylia. This is all what we call Turkey, where John, that's John Mark, left them to return to Jerusalem. Anyone know why he left them? He got afraid.

They must've had hints of persecution, and John Mark said, I'm outta here. And this became later a contention between Paul and Barnabas because Paul didn't trust John Mark for a little while and said he'll turn back and won't stay with us on the trip of what we're supposed to do for Jesus. So from Perga, they went on to Pisidian Antioch.

That's not Antioch like in Syria, the church they came from, but in Asia or Turkey. On the Sabbath, what day would that be back then for the Jews? Saturday. On the Sabbath, they entered the synagogue and sat down.

That was their typical approach. Go to the Jew first, all right? After the reading from the law and the prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them saying, brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak. They had never been there before.

They were visiting, but they were recognized. Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said, men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me. Men of Israel, that would be Jewish people.

You Gentiles who worship God, remember last week we learned that there were Gentiles who couldn't take the 10,000 gods and the immorality of the Roman Empire? They didn't agree with that whole religious system. So they were drawn to the monotheism of the Jewish religion, one God with commandments of purity, et cetera. And these were called Gentiles who fear God.

And they would come to the synagogue and be a part of the congregation. Now his sermon, the God of the people of Israel chose our fathers. He made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt.

So now we're gonna get a little history of the Jewish people. Let's see if you know this history. He goes from Abraham down to Jacob.

He bypasses that. He says fathers. And then now they ended up in Egypt and they became slaves.

With mighty power, he led them out of that country. He endured their conduct for about 40 years in the desert. That's that wandering, right? He then overthrew seven nations in Canaan.

Canaan is the land of Israel. And he gave their land to his people as their inheritance. All this took about 450 years.

After this, God gave them judges. That's after Deuteronomy, calls Joshua then judges after they took the land until the time of Samuel the prophet. Joshua judges Ruth and then we get first Samuel.

Samuel the prophet. Then the people asked for a king and he gave them Saul, son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin who ruled 40 years. After removing Saul, he made David their king.

He testified concerning him. I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do.

From this man's descendants, David's, God has brought to Israel the Savior or the Messiah, Jesus as he promised. Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance. What John is that? John the Baptist.

He preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. He's the one who came before Christ. As John the Baptist was completing his work, he said, who do you think I am? I am not that one.

No, but he is coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. And that was the job of a servant to untie the sandals. So what he's saying is, I'm not even worthy to be the Messiah's servant, the one who's coming after me.

Brothers, children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus. Yet in condemning him, they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath.

Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead.

And for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know, this is later on in the sermon, that through Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him, everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from the law of Moses.

Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. I'm offering you forgiveness of sins. Through him, everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

End of story. And then he warns them, be careful. Don't mock, don't turn this away because God is doing something marvelous and you better pay attention to it.

So what do we learn from this as we study through the book of Acts? All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable. So now we have to say, how can we extrapolate what happened back then and apply it to our lives? What's the point? The first point we learned is that God's purpose is to direct the affairs of his church through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is ascended to the right hand of the Father.

He's not with us physically. He sent the Spirit. And the Spirit is the one now who carries out the designs and purposes of God as the church is filled with the Spirit, listens to the Spirit, yields to the Spirit, walks carefully before the Holy Spirit, and obeys his directions.

Number two, I just wanna say something as an aside for those of you who wanna witness to people and talk to people. Do you notice an interesting thing that Paul did? He started in that synagogue, and this is

the first full sermon we have he preached. He started where they lived.

They were Jews, so he starts with Jewish history. He says, you men of Israel and you God-fearing Gentiles that are in the synagogue here in Antioch in Pisidia, which is in Turkey. So let's review things.

Let's talk about some things. You remember God made a promise to Abraham, and then the people ended up in Egypt. But you remember God delivered them with a strong right arm.

And then this, and then they possessed the land. And then God overthrew the nations and gave them the land. But he endured before that 40 years of their nonsense and their rebellion in the desert.

And then he gave them judges after they possessed the land. And after the judges, he gave them the first prophet as it was, Samuel. And after Samuel, they didn't want Samuel, they wanted a king.

And he gave them a king named Saul. But that wasn't the king who really had a heart for God. So God raised up this young boy who eventually became king by the name of David.

He had a heart after God's own heart. And what did that mean? He will do everything God wants him to do. You know, I prayed that last night and this morning.

I wanna have the spirit of David in me, which was the spirit of Christ. I wanna do everything God wants me to do. How about you? Notice, this is why the voice came from heaven over Jesus and said, behold, my beloved son in whom I am.

Why was God well pleased with him? Because he did everything God wanted him to do. Why was David so special? Now, he broke down at times. He wasn't perfect, there's no one perfect except Jesus.

But he had a heart that he wanted to do everything God wanted him to do. Just think today if we all would just live like that. God, I only wanna say the words you want me to say.

I'll go to any poor person, I'll go to any struggling person you send me to. I'll say what you want me to say. I'll give what you want me to give.

I'll just, I'll go, I'll say, I'll be quiet, I'll pray, I'll study. I will do whatever you want me to do. See, everyone is being controlled today here.

Everybody in this building, you're controlled by something. By your thoughts, by peer pressure, by your culture that you grew up around that has made certain patterns in your mind. By selfishness, by lust, by jealousy, by anger, by hate, by love.

Everyone here is being controlled by somebody. Nobody has like, I'm gonna do whatever I wanna do. No, you're gonna be controlled by whatever path you're directed to, by whatever impulses are controlling you.

And God says about David that David had a heart after his heart because he would just do what God wants him to do. That he would do what God wants him to do. Isn't that a simple way to live? Just think you can stop all your worrying and everything and every day we get up and just say, God, help me to do everything you want me to do.

How many are with me, say amen. You want me to be quiet in a certain conversation because I'm not supposed to talk, I will be quiet. When someone says something that gets me really upset and I can feel

myself ready to go off, I hear your voice saying, be still.

I will do what you want me to do. I will travel where you want me to travel. I will stay home where you want me to stay home.

Just think how simple that makes life. Because that is becoming a real, true disciple and follower of Jesus Christ. He will do everything God wants him to do.

So he meets them, notice brothers and sisters, and then talks about the fact that the promise was made that David who sat on the throne, one of his descendants would be the king of kings and the Lord of lords, the Messiah, the promised one. Messiah in Jewish scripture, Hebrew, is the counterpart of Christ. When we say the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ is the Greek word that's the counterpart of Messiah.

That's the promised one, the deliverer, the savior. So notice psychologically that he meets them, not talking about Greek philosophy because they might not know that, he meets them where they are. That's very important as we talk to people.

You have to meet them where they are. If they don't know the Bible, a thing about the Bible, and you start telling them about the history of the building of the tabernacle and how Moses collected the stuff and how they built the brazen altar of offering, they're gonna look at you and go, what are you talking about? Now if you talk to another person who's filled with scripture, a Jewish person, you can then reason from that. But my point is to talk to people, you have to meet them where they are, not where you are.

A lot of people fail in witnessing because we're too selfish. We want people to think the way we think. They don't think the way you think.

They don't think the way I think. No, but when I grew up, they didn't grow up like you. Let it go.

They're not from Trinidad, don't you get it? They're not from Brooklyn like I am. They're not from wherever. You have to meet them where they are, and you have to try to find some point where it's their loneliness, their pain, their job, their whatever.

You have to meet them where they are. And the more we live in a culture now that is more paganized, shall we say, and less Bible knowledge, they say 1,200 people stop reading the Bible in America every day. And there's very little Bible now, hardly preached in churches.

It's like massive thinking, wealth, prosperity, follow your dream, and all that stuff. And very little evidence given from the word of God. People don't know the Bible.

So you gotta be, ask God for wisdom. How can I engage this person in a conversation with something that will relate to them? And then get it to Jesus. Get it to Jesus.

So let's just analyze that sermon as we put this all together. He started with the history of Israel, why? Because he was in a synagogue. You're not gonna talk about the New York Yankees if you're in a synagogue in Turkey.

You're gonna talk about something they would understand and go from there. And then he got to the two great promises. I wanna go back to something else he said, but let's get to the two great promises that he gave that are part of the good news of Jesus.

Notice he gave people good news. As you analyze this sermon, we just heard the whole sermon, although there was a warning at the end, which we didn't read. Notice he gave people good news.

I didn't hear that growing up in church, did you? I didn't always hear good news. The gospel that I got was mixed with a lot of other stuff. And this is what has weakened the gospel.

We just heard a gospel sermon. Did you notice what Paul said? We heard it. And he got there.

Through that, I skipped one part where he talked also about the fact that, listen, he's the descendant of David. David died and didn't come out of the grave. This is the promise about that was fulfilled in Jesus.

You will not let your holy one see decay. David died and saw decay, but this was fulfilled in Jesus who was raised from the dead. Good news.

People don't need bad news. They already have enough bad news. People need to hear good news.

No, but how do you know they'll live for God? You gotta get people squirming and all of that. You do what you want. I'm just going by the Bible here.

He offered them good news. Jesus didn't come to condemn people. He came to save people.

And a lot of church has more, a lot of church life now has more condemning and judging than it has good news in it. Now, there are some people who are so into good news, they give you no news. They don't preach Jesus, and they don't preach how to be saved.

But this is about good news. When you witness to someone, talk to someone, you meet them where they are, you try to understand their mind, their heart, what they're struggling with. I have found one of the best ways to reach adults and talk to them who are anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-whatever, is just talk to them about their children, because they're all worried about their children.

And then you can point them to the one who can keep their children, and then keep them, and then save them. Wherever God directs you, you have to meet people where they are, and you have to give them the good promises of Jesus Christ. And now, let me leave you with those.

You say, well, that's simple, I know it. Well, let's review it anyway, because it's in the Bible repeated. It must be we can forget.

Paul said, if you believe in Jesus, you will have all your sins forgiven. I declare to you forgiveness of sin. Notice, he didn't know all the people in the synagogue.

What right do you have to say to everybody, you can have your sins forgiven? How could he say that? Because that's the offer. Why would God offer that? Because he loves us. He wants you to be forgiven of your sins.

If you wanna cling to them, if I wanna cling to them, if we wanna justify our sins, if we wanna rationalize our disobedience, then you're gonna fight them off, or try to. But the offer is, notice the assumption, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And now, he preaches to them, you can have forgiveness of sin.

To everyone, yeah, do you know everyone, Paul? Do you know their names? No, but I can tell you, God sent me to give you this message. If you believe in Jesus and give your life to him, you can have forgiveness of sins. Now, you know that all of us in this room have sinned.

If anyone hasn't sinned, please see me after the service in my office, I'd like to talk to you. We've not only sinned, we've sinned repeatedly. We've not only sinned against some commandments we were vague about, we've sinned against things we knew were wrong.

We've not only sinned just once or twice, in some cases, we've sinned repeatedly, over and over. We've not only sinned before we knew Jesus, we've sinned after we've known Jesus. And that sin creates a blockage between us and God.

It distances us from God. No, it says, God's ear is not deaf, he's not deaf, his arm is not short, it's your sins that have separated you from God. And when we're Christians, what sin does is it breaks fellowship with God, and we lose intimacy and fellowship because until we deal with that, there's just a strained relationship.

It doesn't mean he doesn't love us, but sin is a nasty thing, sin is a nasty thing. And people in society don't like to be told that they've sinned, that they're wrong. And the more, many times, intellectual we get and more educated or more money, we don't like to be corrected about anything.

And this is why the gospel has tough sledding even in Jesus' day. He ended up on a cross, not on a throne. They didn't celebrate him, they killed him.

And why did they kill him? He said that, why you hate me is because I have to witness that your deeds are evil. Now, if you're here today and you say, I've never sinned, then you don't need Jesus, but you're mistaken. If you say, I have sinned, but I'm gonna try harder, then you're gonna miss Jesus too.

The only people Jesus helps are the ones that stop and say, Lord, I have sinned, have mercy on me. I have sinned. And that's what he was offering them that day in the synagogue in Pisidian, Antioch.

I am offering you forgiveness of sin, and in keeping with that, I, Jim Cimbala, as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I proclaim to everybody here, you can have your sins forgiven. If you hide them, you hold on to them, and all of that, then I can't help you, God Almighty can't help you. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us.

And what a good feeling it is to be clean on the inside. Can we just put our hands together and say amen? Now notice, notice what's involved in this also. How many sins are forgiven? All sins.

What kinds of sins are forgiven? All sins. If you had five abortions or no abortions, if you've lied 100 times or 100,000 times, if it's racial prejudice, immorality, if it's stealing, if you've killed someone, it doesn't matter what you've done. God offers through Jesus Christ forgiveness of all sin.

You will not get that from society. You will not get that from even your friends. A lot of people who are your friends are only your friends until you do them wrong.

And then they will turn on you. Am I right or wrong here? God is the one who offers pardon from sin. I go a lot to a Louisiana State Penitentiary called Angola in Louisiana near Baton Rouge.

The average sentence is 91 years. You have murders, double murderers, rapists, repeat felons, violent felons. That's all you have in that prison.

And one of the interesting things about that prison to me is it's kind of sad when you leave and it's harder on the Christians that are there. Out of 5,300 inmates, they now estimate because of what God has done through the gospel, 1,500 are new believers. And now what's hard for them is they've been forgiven of their sins, but they realize they did the crime, now they gotta do the time.

So they got double life sentences and they're as clean as you and me. Double murders, drive the car, second degree murder, whatever. It doesn't matter what you've done.

Oh, aren't you happy for the grace of God? Can we say amen to that? Doesn't matter what you've done, how many times you've done it, Jesus came for the forgiveness of sins. His name shall be called Jesus and he will save his people from their sins. That's what we're to tell people.

You can have your sins. Get out of here, I haven't sinned. I don't, look, I'm not God, I can't change you.

I'm just supposed to tell you through Jesus you can have forgiveness of sins. Who are you to judge? I'm nobody to judge. I'm just delivering a message to you.

Through Jesus Christ you can have your sins forgiven. If you wanna deny you have sins, if you wanna hide your sins, then even Jesus can't help you. No, he can't.

He couldn't help anyone who didn't humble themselves. That's why he wept over Jerusalem. Said how many times I would've gathered you and helped you, but you wouldn't let me.

You mean you can fight God off? Seems to be that way from the scriptures. The second thing he said is a legal thing. So let's just talk a little legal talk here.

The second promise was this. Through Jesus you can be justified in a way that the law would never let you be justified. What does that mean? You can be in right standing with God just by believing in Jesus in a way the law could never let you be justified.

How did the law work? The law was commandments. Like we have a criminal code. And if you break the criminal code someone's gonna come after you.

And then you're gonna have to pay the penalty for breaking that. The law was given and it showed that God was holy because he kinda showed a lot of his character, his holiness through that. Don't kill, don't steal, et cetera, don't lie.

But the problem was that although the commands are good they don't have any juice in them. They don't have any power to help me obey them. They just show me who God is.

They show me how holy God is. What I'm left with is struggling to try to obey them. And we've all broken God's commandments.

In fact, sometimes God's commandments when you hear don't do it, it stirs you up to do it. Am I right or wrong? I was once a kid, what, six years old, five years old, and my mother was leaving, going to work, and she said, I've just made some cookies. They're on the kitchen table.

Don't touch them until I get home because they have to cool off. The minute she walked out that door a voice said to me, go to those cookies. Come on, have we not all gone through that? The Bible says that, that the law actually stirs up, prohibitions stir up things.

So none of us can stand before the judge. There's not one of us. If God is the judge, which of us can stand? What are you gonna tell the judge? Even if they defended you, there's too much evidence against you.

You did the crime. So no one could be justified. That's why there's no real peace and joy in the Old Testament because animal sacrifices couldn't cleanse the conscience, couldn't really make you right with God in the way that Jesus does.

So look, brothers and sisters, here's the good news. Jesus died on the cross and the sins that you and I have committed were put on him in some mysterious way. And then God punished him for the sins that I committed so that now I can't be judged for those sins because Jesus already paid it for me.

So now God can't judge sins twice. If I put my faith in Christ, God accepts the sacrifice of Jesus and I am now in right standing with God. I can walk into God's presence today.

You can, too, and we can have open fellowship and we have a right standing with God. Why, because of our track record? No, because of Jesus. The devil will always try to make you look inside at how you've been doing lately.

If you look there, you're dead, you're chopped meat. You don't look in, you look away. You look to Jesus.

You say, Satan, I overcome you through Jesus Christ. This is called grace rather than law. Law is you do the crime, you do the time.

Grace is someone else has paid the price for you. That's the good news of Jesus. Everybody here, you can have your sins forgiven and you can be accepted by God, not because you've been a good person.

Did you know something like 82% of all Americans say they believe they're going to heaven because they live a good life? 82%. What are the churches telling people? If you just live a good life and try hard, as long as you're not a degenerate and some criminal, some street person. That's the way Americans think.

It's not the truth of God. We all need to be forgiven and we all need to come into right standing with God through faith in Jesus Christ. But here's what I want to leave you with.

Paul gives them that good news and I give you that good news. And if you need forgiveness of sin today, I'll certainly count it an honor if I could just pray with you so that you could receive that forgiveness. Or you could receive it right now while you're just sitting there.

I want to declare to you, choir, and all of you that you can have right standing with God, never because you've lived a good life. Nobody's going to heaven because they've lived a good life. You go to heaven because you've been born again through faith in Jesus Christ.

Pastor Simba, if you preach that, you'll promote sin. You'll promote easy living. No, just the opposite.

If you preach the law, you end up with sin. Read the Old Testament. They had the law and the thundering and all the warnings and they all lived horrible lives.

It's when God changes you from the inside that things really happen in your life. But here's the mysterious thing to me. I've just been pondering it for hours.

Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth and Paul says in that sermon, they didn't recognize him. How could that be? He spoke and his words were the words of God and they didn't hear him. In fact, they didn't even pay attention to him.

In fact, he would be speaking crowds of people and some would come by and hear a few words and go, I got no time for this. And that was the Son of God speaking. That was Jesus speaking.

He's pointing you to eternal life. He loves you desperately. He's about to give his life for you and you don't have time for 10 seconds to listen to him? How could that be? I mean, Paul says it in one sentence.

He came and they didn't recognize him in Jerusalem. Who didn't recognize him? First of all, the religious leaders didn't recognize him which shows that you can have religion and be far from God. You can go to church every Sunday and not have a clue what this is all about.

It means you could, we're all so susceptible to deception and closing out the voice of God and taking in every other crazy voice that's out there. The crowds didn't pay attention to him. They didn't recognize him.

He didn't live the lifestyle they thought he should live. He hung around with low-life people. He had a friend named Simon the leper.

What religious leader has his friend called Simon the leper? That's ridiculous. He married Magdalene who he cast out evil spirits from and others ministered to his needs. He was with publicans and sinners and he was always rooting for the underdog and that wasn't their picture.

So the point is, ladies and gentlemen, Jesus was on earth speaking, reaching, loving and people were five feet from him. People bumped into him on a road and they bumped into God in the flesh and they didn't know it. I mean, that's bizarre.

And I started praying about that because it transfixed my attention. And I feel like God was showing me that Jesus is still speaking to people and they don't recognize him. Did you know there's some things going on in your life right now? It's Jesus, but you don't get it.

You know that pressure, you know that problem, you know that uneasiness, you know that feeling of what am I gonna do? That's all Jesus trying to get you to turn to him. Things are happening all the time. Jesus didn't just speak back then.

Now through the Bible, through meetings like this, through the Holy Spirit, through relatives, through friends, through whatever, Jesus is speaking. Jesus is speaking right now. And you say, no, I don't haven't heard him.

No, no, no, he's right there. You just haven't recognized it. If I could just get you to stop, don't you realize that's Jesus? That's Jesus, not wanting to hurt you, wanting to offer you forgiveness of sin, wanting to hug you, wanting to direct you, wanting to love you.

I mean, if he gave his life for us, would he wanna hurt us now? Does that make any sense? But can he get our attention? That's why Jesus said, beware of the cares of this life. They can pull you away and you don't hear the voice of Jesus. You hear the voice of politics.

You hear the voice of angry politics. You hear the voice of entertainment world. You hear the voice of make more money, the career, education, all these voices, and you miss the voice of Jesus.

And that's the only voice that can give you peace. The only voice, if you'll receive it, is, oh, he can speak through so many different ways. Did you know one day I was driving home from Atlantic Avenue, the first building we were in? Chrissy, my daughter, was about four years old, and maybe Sue, my second one, was just born at home.

I was living in New Jersey then. There was a lot of bad stuff going on, or pressure, and just crazy things happening. And the church had a handful of people, no, couldn't pay the bills, just, I didn't know how to preach, I hadn't gone to Bible school.

I'm going through all this, and I'm like, my sermons were so bad, I fell asleep while I was preaching. And that's not a good sign. And I'm driving home with a lot on my mind, and Chrissy was laying across the front seat, and had her head on my hip.

And I'm driving, and I'm driving, and I'm thinking, and I'm not watching the speedometer, and I'm just driving, and I'm just, just so distracted, I'm driving, and she's sleeping, and I'm just driving. And suddenly, I mean, I must have been out of control, but you know sometimes you get so distracted, you don't know what you're doing? And Chrissy just picked up her body, like out of nowhere, her head came forward, and she spoke toward that window and said, Daddy, stop, you're going too fast, and then went back down. How would she know I'm going too fast? She's four years old.

Jesus is speaking to her. Jesus is always speaking. Don't you get it? If you just listen, he's speaking.

He wants to help you. He wants you to stop struggling. He wants you to stop fighting.

Come on, I can't tell you how he's speaking, but I know he's speaking because he speaks to me. He speaks to a lot of different ways. He speaks through a verse.

How many have ever read a passage of scripture, and then you've read that passage like 10 times, and one verse just jumps out at you, and your heart starts to beat? How many have ever had that happen? And you see it like, I never saw that verse that way. How did that happen? It's Jesus. It's Jesus.

Jesus speaking to you. Jesus speaking to me. Oh, I want all of us to listen to Jesus, and not ignore him, and not lose him.

Did you know what? You can come to church and not hear Jesus. You can just have church. Praise God, have church.

Have choir church, have loud church, have white church, have black culture church, whatever. What good is it if you don't hear the voice of Jesus? Through the word, by the spirit, through the preacher, through the music. But what good is the music if you don't hear Jesus? And why I like to hear them, because when they're at their best, I hear Jesus talking to me.

How many know what I'm talking about? Just say amen. I hear little whispers. I hear encouragement to praise.

Let's close our eyes, bow our heads. I declare to you the good news that you can have all your sins forgiven. You can go to bed and sleep like a baby tonight, through Jesus.

I want to tell you that you can be in right standing with God, and have nothing to cover up. And you'll be just as righteous as King David, or Peter, or Paul. Not because of your track record, but because of Jesus.

But I also say to you, if Jesus is speaking to you, listen. Listen. Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest.

Donna had Jesus speak to her on a ledge when she was ready to take her life. She sent this minister up. He's nobody, but he was Jesus.

It was Jesus talking to her, saying, I love you. You don't have to do this. I got a plan for your life.

You are loved. You have value. You have worth.

I don't believe all the negative things people have told you. That was Jesus. That wasn't me.

That was Jesus. Oh, Jesus, we praise you. Jesus, Jesus, there's something about that name.

If you're here today, and one of three things. You want forgiveness of sin. You want to be sure that you're right with God.

Or you want to get right with God. Joining this church won't do it. Coming in this building, a Catholic, being Episcopal, trying to live a good life.

Drop it all. God's final word to us is Jesus. Jesus.

Jesus. Is there anybody here who would say, Pastor, I need Jesus this morning. I don't even care how you need him.

I'm not gonna go into all the possibilities. I'm not that gifted. But you just, while I was speaking, you felt Jesus speaking to you and saying, I have more for you.

I have more for you. I'm talking to you. I'm reaching out to you.

I want to do a new thing in your life. If anyone feels that way, I don't care if there's two of you or 200. Just get up out of your seat.

I don't care if you come into church for 20 days, 20 years, or if this is your first time ever in a church. What does it matter? Jesus is still the one you need. Just get out of your seat and say, I'm gonna respond to the voice of Jesus speaking to me.

And just come and stand right here in front of me. Everybody, for the next 30 seconds, just close your eyes and open your mouth all over the building. Just tell Jesus that you love him.

Tell him, just thank you for dying for me. Thank you for shedding your blood for me. Thank you for loving me.

Thank you for being patient with me. Thank you for going after me when I ran away from you. I thank you, Jesus.

I praise you, Jesus. Let your name be glorified, Jesus. Jesus, I ask you to help save, forgive, restore, encourage all the men and women, this young man who I hold by the hand, that have come forward, Lord.

Let them open their heart to you, Jesus. Not religion, not a church, but to you, Jesus. Let them have a personal relationship with you, Jesus.

Let them walk and talk with you, Jesus. Let their trust be in you, Jesus, not in their own strength, not in their own righteousness. We throw all of that away, and we just throw ourselves upon you, Jesus.

You are the best friend we've ever had. You love us better than we love ourselves. You've been kinder to us than we've been to ourselves.

Can we all give Jesus a hand, clap of praise, everyone in the building?

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