

The Epiphanies

by John McGregor

John McGregor's sermon emphasizes the importance of encountering Jesus in various aspects of life and deepening our relationship with Him throughout the new year.

Duration: 38:39

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 10:1-4, Luke 10:17, Luke 18:1-5, Luke 23:34

Topics: "Epiphanies"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on Luke chapter 10, specifically the first four verses. Jesus appoints seventy-two others and sends them ahead of Him to every town and place He is about to go. He tells them that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few, and instructs them to pray for more laborers. Jesus warns them that they will face challenges as they go out as lambs among wolves. The preacher emphasizes the importance of surrendering control to Jesus and allowing Him to lead, as demonstrated by the disciples' obedience and the report of the demons being subject to them in Jesus' name. The sermon also references Luke 24:27, where Jesus interprets the scriptures concerning Himself to two men who were walking in sadness and defeat. The preacher encourages listeners to set aside their own desires and rights and fully surrender to God, acknowledging that only He can fix the issues of the human heart. The sermon concludes with a story about a young preacher seeking more power, and the response he receives from an older preacher.

Transcript

Thank you, Al. And thank you all. And on behalf of all of us as staff, we would just say we love you, appreciate you so much, and we're grateful to God for each and every one of you.

It's a powerful thing to be part of the family of God and to be able to walk together. And, well, with this much white hair, I've done that for a while, but I can honestly say we feel the sense of your love and your grace and your care. And I think that's true for Judy and Brad and myself and our families, and we're so grateful, so very grateful for you.

Well, figured it would be hard to preach with a lump in my throat, but we're going to spend a few moments in the Word of God. And if you have a Bible, you'll want to go to Luke chapter 8, the Gospel of Luke chapter 8. And my opening text this morning, although we'll move around a little bit in the Book of Luke primarily, will be Luke 8, 22 through 25. And I'm excited about a new year.

How about you? Hey, all right. Luke 8, 22 to 25 says, One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, Let us go across to the other side of the lake. So they set out.

And as they sailed, he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. And they went and woke him, saying, Master, Master, we are perishing.

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. And he said to them, Where is your faith? And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, Who then is this that he commands even winds and water? And they obeyed him. Father, thank you for your Word.

Thank you that we can worship you this first Sunday of a new year. And, oh, our Father, we pray that you would speak to our hearts and strengthen us in these moments, that your Word would be precious, and your Spirit just touching and speaking to our hearts. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. I was thinking about tradition. You know, every family has their own traditions for Christmas, for New Years, and so on.

And there are some church traditions that go along as well. The mainline churches have sort of a church calendar that follows a traditional pattern. There's the weeks of Advent, and then after the season of Advent there comes 12 days from the 25th of December through to the 6th of January.

And January 6th starts a season called Epiphany. And some of you are shaking your head and saying, Yeah, I understand that, Pastor. And it traditionally deals with the Magi coming to see the Lord Jesus and to adore Him and expresses and teaches to us that He is a Savior not just for the Jews but for the Gentiles also as those kings come from the East and so on.

But there is another meaning to the word Epiphany which I also love. It can be defined this way. A sudden realization or comprehension of something.

And isn't that a good prayer request for a new year? That throughout the days of this year Lord, would You show us more of Yourself. Would You give to us encounters with You things that we have not seen and known for there's more of You and there is so much more for each of us no matter where we're at in our walk with the Lord. And so I wanted just in the few moments this morning to cause us to think about these kind of situations as you see them.

And there are many of them in the life of the disciples of the Lord Jesus. And that's what we are called to be. To be disciples and to make disciples, right? And as you think about some of the instances I mean if I go through them all we could just stay till next Sunday morning.

But we'll just touch on a few of them this morning and think about times when the disciples saw something in Jesus that they had not seen before. And oh how I pray for my own life and for yours and for our families that through the days of 2011 we will see the Lord in different ways and in wonderful ways as He works within us and within us as a family of God too. So here in this section Jesus has said we want to go to the other side of the lake.

Good. Let's get in the boat and go. Put it in B for boogie and get on out there.

We had the privilege in 1999 of being in Israel and seeing a Jesus boat. A boat that they had brought out of the sand that was buried around the time that He would have walked in the land. The size of it is bigger than I would have thought and the strength of it is weaker than I would have thought.

So when I think about the boat I go back to think about that Jesus boat and the disciples in there with the Lord journeying across the waterways. Now how would you feel? You've done what the Lord said. Right, Nicole? Take me to the other side.

You're in there. You're just pulling hard. I didn't hear that.

And there comes a storm and in the storm the boat starts to fill up. Isn't it great to have faith when you're on dry land? But oh, as you watch the water level rising that could be a challenge, couldn't it? That could really be a challenge. Now the disciples knew Jesus.

They had watched Jesus work. They were aware that this was not an ordinary man. They knew the things that He had been doing and how He had been preaching and the miracles and so on that He has been performing.

But Jesus is asleep in the boat. You ever feel that way? Lord, where are you? He's asleep in the boat. And one of the things that I love about it as you look at the life of Jesus you see entirely His humanity.

He's been busy serving the Father and He's exhausted and He's asleep in the boat. Anybody ever slept on a waterbed? You know that can happen. And so they wake Him up.

We are perishing. And I think they're waking Him up to say, hey, the boat's filling up. It's called an awakening, brother.

And I think they were saying, listen, can you take the pail and help us bail this thing out? But isn't it wonderfully interesting as you look here, not only is their expectancy wrong, but He does the complete unexpected. I love the Lord Jesus because walking with Him there need not be a boring day. He can certainly do the unexpected.

It just sort of pops right up there at you, doesn't it? I wonder what they must have thought when Jesus stood up and just said, shh, well, I don't know if that's what He said, but I know He calmed the storm. What are they seeing? Not just the miracle worker, not just the teacher that they have watched. What kind of man is this that even the wind and the waves obey Him? They're seeing the Creator.

He who created it in the midst of it just saying, you know, God, they're seeing a Savior. And I wonder in the storms of 2011, is that not the desire of our heart as well, that the great Creator would be manifest day by day in your life and in mine and in all the storms that may come The Creator is still there in charge. I didn't ask the team this morning to sing He Reigns, but it's pretty fitting because He does.

Listen to the words of Isaiah 43, 1 through 7. But now thus says the Lord, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel, Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Sheba in exchange for you, because you are precious in my eyes and honored. I love you.

I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I am with you. I will bring your offspring from the east and from the west.

I will gather you. I'll say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold. Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth.

Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made. Did you hear that last verse? Everyone I created and formed for my glory. There's the purpose for your life and mine for 2011.

We were not created just to willy-nilly sort of dangle along and beat our way through some problems and so on, but created to glorify him. And oh, you know, as a little boy, I learned that in church, had to repeat it, the shorter Westminster Catechism. What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Didn't mean a thing until the night that I met Jesus Christ and he saved me. And then it all fit together. Oh, our purpose is to glorify him, to worship him and to praise him.

But you see what's happening here to the disciples. They're seeing something of Jesus that is new. And in this new year, what a blessing to set our hearts and say, Lord, let me see you this year.

Let me see you, Jesus. One of the things that I often will pray just in my own walk with the Lord, simple as it is, is just to say this. Lord, I don't want to just know about you.

Please, God, let me see you at work. Let me know your touch and your presence. Let's go over a couple of chapters to Luke chapter 10 and just the first four verses.

After this, the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them ahead of him two by two into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

Go your way. Behold, I'm sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no money bag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.

Here he's sending them out. In verse 17 of the same chapter, they come back. The 72 returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.

Now, these 72 knew about Jesus, and they're given a commission to go out and to speak and to teach and to preach and to heal and so on. And as they obey the command, don't you love the report that comes back? Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name. You see, when we walk in obedience to what the Lord has asked of us, we begin to see some things again, don't we? In a different way.

Here they are going out. I can picture it in my Irish imagination. Brad, you want to go with me? You got anybody else to go with? He said two by two.

Let's go, buddy. What do you think they're going to say in this time? I got to quit picking on him. I mean, in humanity, there must have been, will this work? But in obedience, there is the blessing of God.

And there is that sense where they come back, you catch the spark of excitement. They have seen what God can do. His power was more than they anticipated.

That's a whoo-hoo kind of moment. Sorry, I'm just as excited in 2011 as I was in 2010. And should the Lord tarry and I linger to 2012, it'll still be there, I think.

When they come back, there is that sense of, Lord, we've seen something more of you. We've encountered the power of your name. You weren't even walking there physically with us, Lord, but just in the power of your name, those forces of evil dissipate.

Oh, dear church, think about it. Think about it in these days when there is so much out there that can frighten us and that can scare us and that can tell us, be quiet. It's not politically correct and so on.

Even the demons were subject to us. In your name. No wonder scripture says every knee will bow and every tongue confess to Him.

Now I wonder, wouldn't it be wonderful this year to encounter the power of His name? I love what Jim Cimbala said one time in a seminar that I was in. He was talking to worship leaders and he said, I want to encourage you to sing songs with the name of Jesus in them because it's at the name of Jesus that the demons flee. It's at the name of Jesus that lives are touched and changed.

Wow, at His name. What about the dark things that we experience as people press upon us and things oppressive come against us? Lord, at Your name, even the demons flee. I better go quickly or we will be here till next Sunday morning.

Let's go to a third scripture here in the Gospel of Luke. Chapter 18. And just the first few verses.

And he told them a parable to the effect that they always ought to pray and not to lose heart. And he said in a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. There was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, give me justice against my adversary.

For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice so that she will not bear down on me, beat me down by her continual coming. I'll stop right there. Here's another instance where they see Jesus in a different way.

And what is it that they are seeing? They are seeing a persistent intercessor. And oh, how we need that, don't we? The persistence to keep on keeping on. They see Him teaching principles of prayer.

Not only persistence, but determination. And oftentimes as we pray, we pray for a while and say, it's not going to happen, so I'm just going to quit. But the Lord would have us pray it through and pray it all the way there.

We see coming in a righteous cause. Give me justice, says this lady. There's only one source of supply.

You see, all the way through the Gospels, the disciples get a different picture of Jesus time after time after time. And oh, how our lives need to be just like that. Pressing on in to the Lord.

In Luke 19, 45 and 46. Again, let me just take a moment to read those two verses. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, It is written, My house shall be a house of

prayer.

But you've made it a den of robbers. What are they seeing here? They've known this man. They've walked with him.

He's never responded with violence. And yet, as he goes into the temple, he just cleans house. This is one of the Irish moments.

They're seeing the Holy One consumed with raw passion for the temple. No room for that which is impure. It's not that those things were wrong.

They all needed to be there. It's just how they were positioned and how they were worked. He is here, the sanctifier.

Will 2011 be a year when I can meet Him and go deeper with Him? And as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, we believe in that, do we not? The deeper life. And it is a progressive walk where He gets more of us day by day and week by week. I'm so glad it's progressive and how I thank God for His work and His Spirit.

And if you are a believer, you are the temple of the Holy Spirit. What is it that He wants to do in you? Sometimes, you know, as believers, we know and understand what the Word of God says. But we want to do something different.

And there are times when we need to see the Lord Jesus just say, cleanse it. Clean it out. Start again.

Come again to the cross. Are you seeing? Oh, listen, I must rock and roll right along here. Let's go to Luke 23 and verse 34.

And I promise we'll just look at a couple more scriptures and then I will quit. And children, you're absolutely amazing. You're so good.

And I'm so glad that you're here with us this morning. Luke 23 and verse 34. And Jesus said, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

And they cast lots to divide His garments. They were looking for Jesus to be that king to put away the Roman Empire and establish the kingdom of God. But here they're seeing the sacrificed one.

The one who's establishing a kingdom that's far above any earthly kingdom. And he's establishing it in this, could we say, weak way? Not the spears and the swords and the bombs and the bullets, but the nails and the truth. The sacrificed one.

Forgiveness. He's extending it. Did they deserve it? What do you think? Not a chance.

Do we? No. I've been thinking in these days about the person of Jesus. Just as you begin to see him as the savior, the sacrificed one.

Something changes in our hearts, doesn't it? It melts away all those hard things. And it brings us softly again to the place of an undeserving one. It was completely unexpected.

The soldiers who pounded in the nails didn't expect it. The disciples didn't expect it. But there it is.

Father, forgive them. There's no bitterness. There's no resentment in this statement as Jesus is making it.

He's free from all unjust or unfair thoughts. He's not there taking the nails saying this just isn't fair. When you see him here, does it not make us ask the question, why do I carry and harbor these kind of thoughts? These are the things that enslave us.

The bitterness. The hard-heartedness. The fact that I cannot give up all of my rights because somebody would walk over the top of me.

So what? It won't matter in eternity. There the sacrificed one becomes the King of Kings. And there's real freedom in Christ.

Listen, there is nothing, nothing in human relationships that the Lord cannot fix, that he cannot cleanse, that he cannot clear. The issue is the human heart. And am I willing to set my heart and my life and my rights down and say, God, I can't fix it, but I'm yours.

I used to love the preaching of Paris Reedhead. He's an old Alliance Divine missionary from some time back. You can catch one of his sermons on the revival hymn if you download it off of the web.

One of the things he's talking about is how a young preacher came to him one day and said, listen, I have a pretty good program. Church is going pretty good. I just need more power.

Can you tell me how to get more power? And Paris says to him, well, not really. He said, listen, you know, I got a radio show. I got it all together.

Things are going good. I just need more power. How can I get more of the Holy Spirit? And so Paris said when he looked at him, he reminded him of somebody himself when he was younger.

And so he said to him, you know what? Have you got a car? Yeah, he said, I got a car. He said, well, you got to let the Lord drive the car and sit in the passenger seat. No, he said, that won't do because you'll reach over and take the wheel from time to time.

That's not going to work. Listen, maybe you should sit in the backseat, put your hands over your eyes and let the Lord drive the car. And he said, no, you know what? That's not going to work because you'll be tempted and you'll open your eyes and then you'll reach for the wheel.

No, that's not going to work. He said, listen, I tell you what you got to do. You got to get out of the car altogether.

Go around to the trunk, open it up, get yourself in, throw the keys out to the Lord, close the lid and say, Lord Jesus, you drive. You see, isn't that just what we need for the sacrificed one? Last verse, Luke 24, 27. You see how they see him in all of these different ways as we look through Scripture.

Different than expected, different than anticipated. Luke 24 and verse 27. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

These two men are walking along sad and lonely and defeated and Jesus draws near and look at what he does. He's the one who is the living, risen Lord and he speaks Scripture into their hearts and into their lives. Scripture.

Beginning at Moses and the prophets, he goes through and teaches them all about him. And my friends, he still wants to speak into your life and mine today. And that's where I want to close this message with a simple challenge.

Would you this morning be willing to say not to John but to Jesus, Lord, I want to meet you in your word every day of this year. I want you to change my life, Lord. I want you to change my heart, Lord.

I want you to change my home, Lord. I want to see you and I want to know you. You see, that's really the work of the Spirit of God in discipleship, isn't it? So let's just bow our heads for a moment and close our eyes.

And as we go to prayer, he is the awesome God. But oh, how desperately we need to ask him just to draw near to us as individuals and to say to him, Lord, I want to see you in your word day by day this year. Because, Lord, I can't change my weight.

I can't change my relationships. I can't change myself. But, Lord, you can change all of that and more.

So instead of relying at the beginning of this year on the things that I can resolve to do, Lord, I just give myself to you. And this morning, just as we're at prayer, or as we're going to prayer, if you would say to Jesus, I want to see you in your word. Open it up for me, Lord, every day.

Why don't you just take a moment right where you are, acknowledge that need to the Savior and just stand in a short moment of commitment to him just right where you are. The disciples of old saw him in different roles and ways. And is not that still the need of our heart this very day? Dear Heavenly Father, as we stand in your presence, we acknowledge our need to be changed into the likeness of Jesus.

And we acknowledge that we have no power to do it. And so we come to you and surrender this morning and ask you, Spirit of the living God, fill us afresh and anew. Open our eyes that we might see him, the one who loves us, day by day in Scripture and grow strong in the love of God.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. As we remain standing, let me just mention the ushers will hand you a little handout this morning as you leave. And that's designed to help in quiet time and staying in victory with the Lord Jesus through the days of the year.

Worship team, would you come back and just do He reigns. And I'm sorry, I actually preached 35 minutes. Filled with God's holy fire Every tribe, every tongue, every nation A love song born of grateful choir Glory, glory, hallelujah, He reigns Hallelujah, He reigns Let it rise above the four winds Caught up in the heavenly sound Let praises echo from the tower of cathedrals To the faithful gathered underground Of all the songs sung from the dawn of creation Some were meant to persist Of all the bells rung from a thousand steeples None rang truer than this Cause all the powers of darkness Can't drown out a single word And all the powers of darkness Stand on up, they just heard Cause all the powers of darkness Can't drown out a single word He reigns It's all God's children singing, glory, glory, hallelujah, he reigns, he reigns.

It's all God's children singing, glory, glory, hallelujah, he reigns. God you do reign. Lord you reign on this earth and some days we, you know, whether we like it or not, Lord, you reign.

And God, as we go into our lives, as we leave this place, Lord, there is nothing that can remain on our minds greater than that. That is the perspective of the kingdom, that you reign supreme. And nothing can mess with you.

Nothing can hurt you. Nothing can thwart you. Nothing can stop you.

That is good news. We like it. Jesus, we love you.

Protect us as we go. Remind us of your kingdom and how you reign in our lives. Help us to be transparent and humble, to come with you, to let you reign in certain parts of our life where we haven't maybe let you reign ever before.

Because it is about the heart, as John so eloquently spoke this morning. Change our hearts, Lord. Change my heart.

You're not done with me. You're not done with us. Reign in this place.

Reign in this heart. Reign in our hearts. Reign in our lives.

Reign in our relationships. Reign in how we love one another. Reign in this city.

Reign in this country. Reign in this world. Thank you, Jesus.

In your mighty name. Amen. As you prepare to go, just know that he reigns.

If you need prayer for anything, come up here. There's elder staff will be available, pastors. Maybe there's something in your life where you've never let him reign before.

Maybe now's the time to come forward and give that to him and let him sit on that throne and see what he can do with it. Have a great week.

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