

Feeding 5000+

by Norman Meeten

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual transformation and the need to understand the gospel in order to experience spiritual renewal.

Duration: 1:07:48

Scripture: Mark 6:31, Mark 6:43, John 6:1-14, 1 Peter 1:13

Topics: "Miracles"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of responding to the word of God without argument. He highlights the repetition of certain events in the Bible, such as the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000, to convey the essence of the gospel. The speaker suggests that these stories hold profound truths that can transform our lives if understood by the spirit. He also discusses the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch as an example of effective evangelism, emphasizing the simplicity of sharing the message of Jesus.

Transcript

So many people here tonight. Praise God, I hope you haven't just come to see me, although I'm delighted to see you. Bless the Lord.

It seems a long time since I was last here. I was trying to work out how long ago. Probably nearly two years.

18 months, two years ago. Praise the Lord. It's not deliberate, it's just how it is.

I think I've been three, almost four times around the world since I last saw you. I'm so grateful to all of you who pray for me regularly. I sometimes wonder how I can keep body and soul together, but one of the explanations is the undergirding of the Lord's people.

It's not a one-man business. It's a corporate involvement and commitment. It's very wonderful how the Lord is increasingly opening doors of opportunity everywhere, to the point that it's impossible to meet all the requests and all the demands.

I've just come from France. Maria Marie Therese sends her love to those of you who know her. I was there all last week for the conference in Dinan in Brittany, and there were three young couples there in particular.

Monsieur and Madame Hombert's daughter and son-in-law, whose little boy had a tumor in the hip, was given about five percent opportunity or possibility of recovering from, I think, about 18 hours of surgery. He looks like a butcher's block. He's been shocked about so much, but just recently they've removed all the plates, and he looks well and strong.

Playing football has grown tremendously in the last year. Unbelievable. And all of that has served to drive that young couple to the Lord in a way that they've never known before.

Pierre said to me on Sunday, he said, Brother, until two years ago, I have to acknowledge that I had never been born again. He said, brought up in an evangelical family, learned all the language, did all the right things, behaved in all the right sort of ways, but came to the realization that when it came to a point of crisis, I didn't really know him. He's a very, very clever young man, a research scientist, with a tremendous brain on his, in his head, sitting on his shoulders, but he realizes that it's all absolutely useless in the face of that sort of extremity.

And he's found God. And two other young couples, his younger brother and his wife, wife only being the Lord for a couple of years, came up from Mulhouse on the Swiss border. They've sold everything, house, the lot, because they want everything that they are and everything that they've got to be the Lord.

They want you to come to England to learn English so that they can go to the Birmingham Church Workers Program next year. One of the qualifications is that you have to be able to speak English. They don't at this present moment, so we're trying to gear up a situation.

They've got one small baby, Timothy, absolute beauty, eight months old, but they're living in two rooms. They've sold everything so that all that they possess is available to the Lord to equip them for what he's got for them in the future. And another young couple, an elder in a fellowship down there, that's going through great trauma, it's because they've got all preoccupied with the demonic.

There's a man called John down in Exeter. If you talk to him about the devil, he'd say, who's he? Amen. He'd come to the Lord out of Christodelphianism.

Lovely brother. This young man is an elder in that fellowship and finding it very difficult, and they said to me on Sunday, we've never in all of our lives imagined that the gospel could be what it is, not only spoken, but lived. In fact, Pierre said to me, in fact, I was talking to him, I said, brother, do you know, when I was a little boy, God told me that I could be just like Jesus.

And I said, I was so scared to believe it that they didn't dare tell anyone what I thought, in case they thought that I was a heretic or a blasphemer. Pierre looked at me and he said, the Lord told me exactly the same thing when I was a lad. Hmm.

So, if the gospel can't accomplish that in our lives, beloved, we might as well be Hindus, or Buddhists, or Muslims, or join the Baha'i, or one of these outlandish citizens of religion. The gospel, by the power of the Holy Ghost, reproduced in you and me, cannot bring into being the manifestation of Jesus in your life and my life. Then we're wasting our time, that is my conviction.

Hallelujah. And of course, it's not what you are, it's not what I am, it's what he is and what he's done, and by his Spirit has made unconditionally available unto every one of us. All that we have to do is believe him, and trust him to outwork it, outwork it in every part of our life.

Jesus was far more interested in living than ever he was in religion. Praise his name. He didn't say, I've come that you might have religion.

I often say to people, India, I haven't come to change your religion, I'm not interested in your religion. People who call themselves Christian on the basis of religion, beloved, are no better than the Hindu. The biggest enemy to the gospel in India is compromised Christianity.

People who call themselves Christians and live as if they were pagans. They're Christian in name, but never have been Christian in nature. Oh man, Jesus didn't come to give me religion, he said, I come that you might have life, and life more abundantly.

And there are a few people, beloved, who know what it means to live. Majority exists. It's an endurance to which we work our way through day by day.

Oh man, he's come to give us life. Isn't that wonderful? Ah, you're alive, really alive, in the sense that the Lord intends us to be alive. Oh man, now I want to read to you a very, very familiar scripture tonight.

It's in Mark's gospel chapter 6. I could have read it in John's gospel chapter 6. Now that should indicate what I'm going to read, because if you know what's in John's chapter 6, then you should know what is in Mark's chapter 6. I often ask people, what's in John chapter 1? What's in John chapter 2? What's in John chapter 3? What's in John chapter 4? What's in John chapter 5? And so you can go on. I'll find out whether you read the Bible, or whether you just plead upon the crumbs that the preacher gives you, because that's all that he can give you, because time runs out on him. I can't remember when I last got through a sermon that I really wanted to preach.

I generally just get launched, and then look at my watch, and find it's time for everyone to go home, and I have to stop. Amen. And I doubt if I could get much further than that tonight.

But if I can only whet your appetite, create a thirst in you for God and his word, you can go home, beloved, and subject yourself to the same lovely teacher that I know. And he's promised to teach you all things, and lead you into all truths. You don't need any man to teach you.

That's wonderful, isn't it? All that the preacher can do is articulate what you already know. And either you will say yes, or you will say no. I made reference to dear Hester Whitty a few weeks ago.

I think it may have been in the summer conference. I remember when she first heard Mr. North preach in Darjeeling, everything in her head said no. She said, that's true violence for everything that she's ever learned, but something might be done in here saying yes, yes.

And of course, that's where the spiritual man thinks, as a man thinks it in his heart. So he is. He's the eggheads who have all the problems.

Oh man, there are the sort of people who want to sit it all through their reason, and rationalize God out of existence. And of course, if it doesn't add up to what they preconceived, they just dispense with it. You and I, beloved, have to come in absolute abandonment to him, and open up our inward man, and say, seek Lord for thy servant here.

And sometimes, beloved, he will say things to you that will revolutionize your whole life. A single word, sometimes, will upset your spiritual abacus. You won't know whether you're coming or going.

Instead of being that ecstasy bloat, you'll be brought to a place of absolute despair. Of course, if you haven't come there, you haven't even begun. I don't know if you've ever despaired, really despaired.

Glory to his name, of yourself I'm talking about. What's in John chapter 6? Come on, tell me. The bread of life, that's the best answer, brother.

The first part of the chapter is the illustration of that statement, and the latter part of the chapter is the exposition of it. Our brothers obviously found the key to the whole chapter. I am the bread of life, or I am that living bread.

The meaning of the five thousand, beloved, is the illustration, it's the picnic. Of course, we all love the illustration because we love picnics, don't we? And what a fantastic picnic it was. Five thousand men plus women and children.

There never was such a picnic, praise God, and that's why everyone loves it. But it was only the illustration of the truth that Jesus was going to expound to them, of which he was the personification. That's what John chapter 6 is all about, and that's what Mark chapter 6 is all about, or a part of it, a second part of it.

We've got another record of the story of the feeding of the five thousand. You do know that it's the only miracle that Jesus performed that is recorded in all four Gospels, and that should give you a clear indication that it's more than important. Of course, added to that you've got the record of the feeding of the four thousand, which virtually deals with the same great spiritual principles.

If you read something in the Bible once, beloved, it should be enough for you and me to respond to it and obey it implicitly, without argument. If you've still got an argumentative disposition in your heart, beloved, then you need God to deal with you very radically. It's enough for God to say something once, but when he gets on saying it, bless the Lord, why does he say it so many times, and why has he allowed scriptures like this to be recorded again and again? Because John tells us at the end of his Gospel, if everything had been recorded that Jesus had said and done, there wouldn't be enough books, libraries in the world to contain the books.

Why does he seemingly waste space repeating the same event again and again in the Scripture? Why? Because it embodies, beloved, the very essence of the Gospel, and because in it we will find truth, beloved, that if we understand it by the Spirit, it will do more for us than we ever bargained. It's not just a Sunday school story, it's not just a picnic, it's not something that happens once upon a time, hoping that we'll all be happy ever after. It may not be, beloved, unless you really give yourself to what it's all about.

I believe that in this lovely story of the feeding of the five thousand, we have some of the most profound things that Jesus ever revealed, demonstrated, as well as taught, for you and I to understand. Amen. Let's read Mark's edition of it and I shall probably go into other versions of it before the evening's out, if we ever get there, but let's read.

Verse 31, And Jesus said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

And the people saw them departing, and many knew him. And then it put thither out of all cities, and out went them and came together under him. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people and was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep, not having a shepherd.

And he began to teach them many things. And when the day was now past, then his disciples came unto him and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far past. Send them away, that they may go into the country, round about, into the villages, and buy themselves bread.

For they had nothing to eat. Jesus answered and said unto them, Give ye then to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred penny worth of bread and give them to eat? He says unto them, How many loaves have ye? Go and see.

And when they knew, they say, Five and two fishes. And he commands them to make all sit down by company upon the grass. And they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties.

Nice and tidy, isn't it? That accommodates me. I'm a tidy person. And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven and blessed and break the loaves and gave them to the disciples to sit before them.

And two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all drink and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments of the fishes.

And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men. Amen. Now as you will follow me carefully, you will discover, beloved, that in the early part of the reading there was a statement that appears three times.

I hope you concentrate. Again, repetition. You read the writings of the Apostle Peter, he never apologized over repetition, just saying, Remember, remember, remember.

Of course, he hadn't learned the song which was related to the Wombles. Remember, remember, remember. The Hebrew Epistle warns us, doesn't it, about letting a thing run out of a lethal, letting the great gospel of God's salvation run out of a leaky vessel.

Here's the statement, verse 31, a desert place. Verse 32, a desert place. Verse 35, this is a desert place.

Hmm. Has that verbalized, beloved, things that you have known and experienced? Has that described your present state and condition? It's a desert place, barren, dry, seemingly lifeless, hopeless, desolate, friendless. It's a desert place.

You know, so often you and I associate the desert with things that are negative. That's because we've been preconditioned by reading the book of Exodus. Because they spent 40 years in the desert because of their waywardness, their sinfulness, their unbelief, their rebellion.

They didn't need to live in the desert for 40 years. It's been estimated, beloved, they could have got from Egypt to the land of promise in 11 days. They wouldn't have had to hung around very much, but they could have done it.

But they didn't, because they didn't believe God, and therefore they tromped around in the wilderness year in and year out. But even that desert, beloved, which was so barren, which was an experience which was a result of their sin and their waywardness, has tremendous a blessing associated with it. Manifestations and demonstrations of God's power, and God's grace, and God's love, and God's mercy, and God's forgiveness, and God's care of going before them and following after them.

Hallelujah! He fed them, did he not? Turn into Psalm 78 for a moment. Psalm 78, where the psalmist is reiterating these phenomenal experiences. Let's just read a bit.

It says in verse 11, they forgot his works and his wonders, that he could show the marvelous things did he in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt and in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea and caused them to pass through. He made the waters to stand as in heat birth.

In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all night with the light of fire. He clad the rock in the wilderness and gave them drink, as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock and caused waters to run down like rivers, and they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most high in the wilderness.

And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lunch. Yea, they spake against God and said, can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smoked the rock and the waters gushed out and streams overflowed. Can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for his people? Therefore the Lord heard this and was wrath, as so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel.

But they believed not God and trusted not in his salvation, though he had commanded the cloud from above and opened the doors of heaven and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food. He sent them meat to the pool, and he caused the east wind to blow in the heavens, and by his power he brought in the south wind and rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered clouds like as the sand of the sea.

And he let it fall in the midst of their camp round about their habitation. So they did eat and were all well filled, and he gave them their own desire. And so it was on and on and on and on, barrenness, emptiness, rebellion.

Contrasted, beloved, with God's stardom, largeness of heart, he opened heaven and rained it upon them. Blessed be his name. Wasn't all negative.

Negative from man's point of view, but from God's point of view, blessed be his name. What a difference. Look at another scripture in the old testament.

Jeremiah, the wonderful chapter. What chapter is that? Now all you agitated people, be quiet now. What is the most wonderful chapter in the prophecy of Isaiah? Huh? 31.

31, that's right my brother. It contains the finest definition of the new covenant in the old testament that you will ever read anywhere. But look how it opens up.

Chapter 31. At the same time saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus saith the Lord.

The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness, even Israel. When I went to call it into rest, the Lord hath appeared of old, saying unto me, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel.

Thou shalt again be adorned with thy fabric, and shalt go forth in the dance of them that make Mary. Found grace in the wilderness. I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness have I

drawn thee.

Look at another scripture. Isaiah 35. Often say this is one of my favorite chapters in the old testament.

If I had to lose all the bible I'd be very happy with Isaiah chapter 5, for it embodies all the truth of the gospel. I could preach to you for a few hours on it. It's wonderful.

Look at how it opens up the wilderness. In the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall blossom. Rejoice and blossom as a rose.

It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice, even rejoicing. In the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto us, and the excellence of Carmelin shall. They shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.

Verse 6. Then shall the lame leap as an hart, and the tongue sing. For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert, and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. In the habitation of dragons, or jackals, where each lay shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

All the magnificence of it. The wilderness, beloved, is not just a place of baroness, it's a bed, it's a covenant with life, and with blessing for those who've got eyes to see. Glory to his name.

Of course, this great prophetic utterance of Isaiah has a wonderful fulfillment in the New Testament. Turn with me into the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 8. You know what? You know I say, that's Chapter 8, don't you? Come on, tell me before you peep. Acts Chapter 8. What's that Chapter 8 all about? Huh? No, it's not about Saul.

He's here for Enoch, that's right. Amen. He was the one who went down into Samaria.

Remember, there was a desert for a man to go through, beloved, in the realm of the Spirit. It was Samaria. It was the most alien, unfriendly place for any Jew ever to go.

We see that illustrated by Jesus, don't we? But Jesus didn't hold them at arm's length. Although there was a time recorded in Scripture when Jesus needed a bed for the night, they wouldn't give him a house. The disciples said, well why don't you do what the prophet did of old, call down fire upon them? Now they've got their right chapter, they got their right verse, they got their right prophet, they were evangelical.

They might have even claimed to be charismatic or Pentecostal. They got it all right. You would have thought that Jesus would have rebuked the Samaritans for their lack of hospitality, because the Scripture bids us to be hospitable, but he didn't.

He rebuked the disciples, those who got it all right. He said, you don't know what spirit you are of. I didn't come to destroy, I came to save.

There was nothing anti or malicious or bitter in the heart of Jesus, even when the Scripture talked about God being angry. You mustn't interpret it in the way that you know anger. The anger of God was motivated by the love of God.

There was nothing malicious in it, nothing at all. Glory to his name. It had lying behind it like man's highest good.

That's why he's spoken of as our chastiser in the Hebrew epistle. It's because he loves us, because he's our father, and he won't allow us to go on in our delinquency and our waywardness. He will take us to task and chastise us because he loves us, and if he didn't love us, we'd be bastards.

That's what the Scripture says. Jesus loved the Samaritans as much as he loved the Jews. There wasn't an atom of nationalism in him.

Glory to his name. That's why you can read John chapter 4. You know what John chapter 4 is all about, don't you? That wonderful encounter of Jesus with the woman at the well, Samaria. You know there was a derelict blood that she was.

If you think that you've got problems, do meditate upon John chapter 4 for a little while, and work out how long the conversation took between Jesus and the woman before she was totally and completely emancipated, both from her sin and all the demons that had riddled her and ruined her. I was recently in the Cameroons, and I was talking to a dear woman. If you think you've got problems, listen to this, beloved.

Amen. She was going through the mill. She told me that she got 299 brothers and sisters.

Her father had 41. He was a king. If you've heard some of the horrific things that she had to go through, beloved, looking at her, you wonder how she was saved.

Glory be to God. Every time I find myself in the scripture, beloved, I become aware of the grace, and the mercy, and the goodness, and the love, and the generosity, and the largeness of God's heart towards me. And here we find in Acts chapter 8, beloved, Philip, the evangelist, commissioned of God to go and preach the gospel in Samaria.

And what an amazing evangelistic campaign it was. Devils were cast out, people were healed, folks responded to the Lord, and were baptized. It was phenomenal.

Amen. Then God came and spoke to Philip. He said, go to the desert, God has issued a strange command.

He was a successful evangelist. He could have argued they needed him there. They needed to be built up.

They needed to get it all organized. Of course, modern evangelism, beloved, would have put up a skyscraper and got all the private. No, they wouldn't have filing systems.

They'd have computerized. Everyone would be in the box, beloved. Jot and tittle.

Everything would have been regulated. It would take ages. You know, I rang up to get a plane confirmed this morning.

I could hear this same on the phone with her computer. It took her longer, beloved, to find out whether my ticket was confirmed by computer than it would if she'd turned over a page and looked in the book. When I went to the bank the other day, I wanted a hundred francs, ten.

Ten francs for the pound. She did it on her calculator, and her friend came and checked it, and they were both wrong to their own disadvantage. I'd done it, beloved, in my head, and I'm not a mathematician.

I'd done it in my head before they'd even begun. But they needed a computer, because they can't count anymore. Now, I've got to be in my bonnets about computers.

You'll have to forgive me. Bless the Lord. But dear old Philip, beloved, if you read this lovely scripture in Acts, chapter 8, you won't find him arguing at all with God.

He didn't say, Lord, they need me. Lord, you've called me to be an evangelist. Why are we going to evangelize in the dead? Cactus.

Bandits, perhaps. Not much else. Lots of sand.

All the scripture says is that when God spoke in, he went. Like Abraham. That's a good example in the Old Testament, when God told him to go and sacrifice Isaac.

He didn't argue, but he went. You see, that's the disposition that God's looking for in you and me, and that's why most of us never get anywhere, because we keep on arguing the truth. We try to work it all out.

We rationalize it. We try to find a reasonable explanation. But there isn't one.

God will decide again and again. There isn't a reasonable, rational explanation for the things that God has told you to do. If you think that there is, brother, you've never heard God really speak to you.

Not that God's irrational. The most rational being that there ever was, and ever will be. Amen.

But man thought God thought, and God thought God. Man thought, said the Lord. I'm so glad, brother, that we can't reduce part of the limitations of our intellect, or some of us will be in a pitiful state, because we were amongst the missing when the brains were given out.

I was, anyway. I got three O-levels, and I only got those after I left school. All my boys are far more educated than I am.

What a struggle that was, too. I'm so glad the Holy Ghost came. He promised to teach me all things, and lead me as authors, and that set me free from my sense of inferiority, because I hadn't made the grade when I was at school, didn't get to university.

Oh, I was ambitious. I would have loved to have gone to Oxford, but it was about as remote as the school was. Amen.

But you see, the simplicity of Philip the Loving was that he simply went. Let me ask you both, have you done the last thing that God told you to do, or are you still arguing about it, trying to work it out? See whether it fits in with your preconceived ideas, or whether you're going to be careful. I want to tell you that you won't, unless you go in the power of God's Word.

You're sunk before you start. Lots of people have problems over guidance. Guidance isn't a problem, but the simple answer to guidance is to do the next thing he tells you to do.

It's one step in front of the other. My word is a lamp under your feet, and a light under your bath, and all that you need is enough light to show you the next step, and then the Scripture says you will never fall. Jesus says you will never stumble.

Glory to his name. It's as simple as ABC. Why do preachers make it so complicated and difficult? I remember my dear dad, the last thing I ever said to him.

I preached in our house, the first and last time. Amen. Last time I ever met my dad alive.

I remember when I said, I preached on that lovely Scripture, vessels unto honour and meat for the master's use. I went through the lovely truths related to the fact that you and I have been created to be vessels to contain a treasure, clay pots for Scripture causes, made from dust, and to dust we will return. I remember my dad coming to me afterwards.

He recorded it. He wasn't very clever with these things called recorders. They were new inventions in those days, and he'd forgotten to turn the volume up, so it was all a whisper.

My mum told me she'd talked him a number of times after that, with him on the floor with his ears blue, listening to this again and again. He said to me, he said, boy, and I always knew I was in his good books when he called me boy. When he called me Norman, I knew I was in trouble.

He called me Joe, which was my family name, and I had a coat of many colours when I was a boy. Perhaps that was prophetic, too. Sent from America during the war, from a city called Washington, and I lived in a village called Washington down in the south of England, and that's how I got a coat of many colours, every colour of the rainbow.

Of course, only one somewhat, you know, as bold, as brass as I am. Artist, you see, would have worn such a disgusted garment if I did. I loved it, loved it.

Amen. But my dad said to me, he said, boy, why has no one ever told me that it was so simple? That spoke volumes to me. Those were the last words I ever heard my dad speak to me.

Boy, why has no one ever told me that it was so simple? God spoke to Philip, and the scriptures simply said he went. Now, we're not told how long he was out there in the desert. Could have been days, could be weeks, could be months, could have been years.

We're not told, and don't allow your quizzzy minds to try and work it all out. We're just told that he went and he waited out there in the desert, and in the fullness of time, beloved, away over on the horizon, there appeared a cloud of dust. Now, you and I know what the cloud of dust was all about, but he didn't.

You and I know that it was the Tantor of Ixchica, or Queen Hendeysi of Ethiopia, who'd been up to Jerusalem on business, bought his monarch on his way home, sitting up in the chariot, reading a little tourist picture that he bought, which will give an indication of how wealthy he was in his own right. He bought a copy of the book of the prophet Isaiah. It would have cost him a small fortune.

Many a synagogue couldn't even afford it. There he was perched up in his chariot, and as the cloud of dust came towards the evangelist sitting out there in the desert, the Spirit of God, ah no, before that he saw, beloved, that this was a man of some tremendous importance. Writing because he wasn't alone, he would have been accompanied by an armed guard, because it wasn't the safest sort of territory for which to ride, even in the East Day.

But then he heard the Spirit of God speak to him again, and the Spirit said, go and join thyself to that chariot. Madness! A man, wild-looking man, rushing through the desert, that either had been mad or

abandoned, but on the north of the man in the chariot, he turned to see it was raised his finger and he would have been chopped down, dead. Never entered into Philip's mind, beloved.

He didn't worry about being chopped down, because he was already dead. Amen, that's the explanation, beloved, of his childlike obedience. He died to all his own opinions, died to all his own ideas, died to all his own security and safety.

All that he was concerned about, beloved, was obeying God, and doing what God told him to do. And the scripture says he ran. He ran to do the will of God.

He didn't need some poor tired missionary home from the field to preach a few missionary sermons, to try and ginger him up, beloved, to get some vision, to go out and do a little bit of work for God. He was gone like a shot out of a gun. And he came alongside the chariot.

Glory to God. And he heard the man reading. He was led as a lamb, done before his shearers.

So he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away. Who shall declare his generation? Amen.

Do you know where he was reading from? Yes, you ought to know. He told me from the beginning of his life. Glory to God.

She told me she's one month older than Mr. North. He's gone as fit as a fiddle. Isn't that wonderful? That's God's goodness.

Isaiah. Amen. He said, do you know what you're reading? The man in the chariot said, how can I? Don't the man think of himself or some other? But I was a word of invitation.

Philip was up in the chariot, perched down beside the Ethiopian unit. Beginning at the same scripture, he preached unto him, Jesus. There's a simple principle of evangelism, brothers.

Begin where people are. Someone once said her name was, I can't remember her name now. She was the founder of a community, a missionary community down in Sussex called St. Julian's.

What was her name now? Floris Orshawn. That's right, I read her biography. Must have been at least 30, 35, 40 years ago.

Getting on and running 60. That's what they say in India, running 60. In other words, I'll be 60 my next birthday.

Hallelujah. She said, so often we try to take people from where they are not to where they don't want to go. Let me say that to you as you go.

So often we try to take people from where they are not to where they don't want to go, instead of beginning with them where they are and leading them graciously on to where they need to go. Amen. Do you have you that ability, brothers, by the grace of God, to take someone up where they are? If you sit on a bus in the morning, you probably won't find someone reading the book of the prophet Isaiah.

You'll probably find them reading the daily newspaper. I want to tell you the front page of any daily newspaper is the most magnificent platform, beloved, for evangelism that you could ever find, because it

is a contemporary definition of sin. You don't need a Bible to convince you that sin is a fact, beloved.

Just space, the present world, Bosnia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Africa, China. We were in China a couple of months ago, but I had someone ask me today, how did you get on in China? It was wonderful and horrific, devastating. Wonderful to see what God is doing, and he's doing remarkable things in Xi'an, where still, he's in the Lord in Xi'an.

They baptized 18 people that week in one college. A little bit of what's happening in China. Some people have estimated 10,000 people are coming to the Lord today.

Whether that's a true statement or not, a factual statement, I can't verify. But probably the church in China, beloved, is the fastest growing church in the world today. And if ever there was a desert, if ever there was a place of barrenness and opposition and difficulty and hardship, it could be China.

The doors of China aren't exactly open, but they're ajar. Amen. You know, then the elderly table said, if you find that the front door is closed, if you look hard enough, you'll find that the back door is open.

Jesus didn't say go into all the world and preach the gospel for every creature, but he swung in his cheek. He meant what he said, beloved. Political legislation do not close the doors and negate the word of God.

All that God needs, beloved, is people who have the audacity to believe that he means what he says, and the courage, beloved, to get out and do it. To be prepared to hazard their life, and that's what Philip did, beloved, he hazarded his life as he came alongside that chariot. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

So, often we try to take people from where they are not, from to where they don't want to go. You'll find people, beloved, reading the newspaper. The contemporary, it's contemporary history.

The documentation, beloved, of the tragedy of humanity. Sin. And I tell you, you don't need a bible, beloved, to convince you that's a fact.

The newspaper tells you day in and day out. On the international level, on the national level, on the local level, on the domestic level, and if we have an atom of honesty in ourselves, but on the personal level, we don't need to feed anyone else, beloved, we've only got to face the reality of our own nature. Glory be to God.

Philip of the Ethiopian eunuch hadn't gone very far down the road when he saw a little pool in the desert. He said, what doth hinder me from being baptized? He said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And almost with all the words, rather his mastodon was out of the chariot, and Philip was burying him in that pool.

Praise God. As he came up out of the pool, beloved, he fulfilled this great prophesy of Aishai. He was the first magnificent black rose ever to bloom in Gaia's system.

I don't know if you've ever seen a black rose. I tell you, though he's every feature, armed men rising up at the water of his deck, with the view of the moorings glistening like diamonds in the sun. As he roamed out of his deathly grave, beloved, in resurrection living, the first great Ethiopian believer, the first African man to ever confess the name of the Lord Jesus of Britain.

He did not evangelize Africa, beloved. It was done before any of us were born. It was all accomplished through a faithful man who was prepared to hazard his life for the sake of another.

So, I mean, that's the great prophesy. The desert shall blossom as a rose. It shall blossom abundantly.

Beloved, how do you come back when you believe that? You say, my situation's desert. It's so alien. People are so anti.

It's all so hard and little, Lord. It's impossible. There's no hope, any success, in the situation where I live.

Well, I want to tell you, beloved, that that's a tailor-made situation for you. Glory to his name. Led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted.

Do you want to be led? We've already seen the scripture on it. Jesus led as a lamb done before years. Do you want to be led? We can be romantic about truth, beloved, instead of realistic.

I mean, I want to be led, beloved, in saying that I know what I'm saying. Jesus was led up into the wilderness to be tempted. And what did it prove, beloved? That he was indisputably the Son of God.

He went into the desert full of the Holy Ghost, and he came out full. He didn't deteriorate one single scrap. All that the devil did to him, beloved, was to prove that he was all that he was.

And of course, that's where he bound Satan. That's why he had no power over him, praise God, until he reached the Calvary, and then he demolished him. He annulled him, the Hebrew epistle says.

He annulled him who had the power of death, that is the devil, in order that he might deliver men and women who had been all their lifetime in bondage to fear. You've had a lifetime problem, beloved, and there are, oh, all of us have. We've all had a lifetime problem.

But if you think that your problem has longer standing than anyone else's, beloved, God's outdone you. Amen. He sent to deliver, deliver for those who have been all their lifetime in bondage.

Don't think that you're too hard for God to deal with. Don't think that your sin is bigger than his ability to forgive. You may feel barren, you may feel empty, you may feel like a great void.

That's the platform upon which God can prove to you, beloved, all that he wants to be. Isn't that wonderful? Glory to his name. Let's go back into Mark chapter 6. I haven't made a start yet.

All right, the clock's behind me, but there's one up there as well, unfortunately. All right, I'm not going to keep you here all night. I'll stop when the clock goes just past quarter past nine, all right.

I don't think we ought to begin. Oh, that should have got you all warmed up on the inside, beloved, out of the doldrums, looking away from yourself under Jesus, stopping your lamentations. Poor me.

That's why you identify so easily with Jeremiah. That's how he started out. Poor me.

Jeremiah was a delightful prophet, but he suffered from a disease called melancholia. I suffer from the same disease, as it happens. Amen.

That's why it's a miracle, beloved, that I'm not in a lunatic asylum tonight. That's how real Jesus is to me, and I'm not kidding you, beloved. I studied psychology for three years to try and find out what was wrong with me, only to be told that I was incurable.

I didn't need anyone to tell me. You don't need anyone, beloved, to tell you. I can't tell you anything that you don't know.

I said at the beginning, the only thing that the preacher can do for you, beloved, is to articulate, to put in words, things that you already know. I can't tell you anything that you don't know. That's God.

That's why God ultimately has to bring you and me, beloved, to a place of absolute honesty. And of course, we only come to a place of honesty when we are confronted with the truth. I see a woman who met Jesus at Sychar's well.

She had to tell the truth. When Jesus said, go and fetch your husband, she said, I haven't got a husband. He said, no, that's right.

You've had five fellows, and the fellow you're living with isn't your husband. In fact, she spoke truly. Why? Because she was standing in front of the truth.

And that's why when she went home, she said, come see a man who told me all things that I ever did. Is not this the first? Now, he'd only told her one thing, that the fellow that she was living with wasn't her husband. But she knew that he knew everything that there was to know.

He didn't have to tell her anything else. She knew. He put his finger right on it.

He knew everything about you, but he knows everything about me. Oh, man. He won't drag you through a system of psychoanalysis, beloved, trying to make you relive your past.

He doesn't do things like that. He'll come and face you up with yourself in the light of himself, beloved, and then set you free, if you'll believe him. Wonderful.

Oh, glory to his name. The desert place, they said, they were pack of pessimists. They didn't believe Jesus.

You'll read on through the Scripture, beloved, you'll find that they didn't. That's why they had such a rough passage until the Holy Ghost came, why there was such miserable failures, because they didn't believe him. But oh, how things change in this desert-like situation, the desert place.

Let's look at some of the truths. Verse 34, it says, and Jesus, when he came out to store much people, Jesus came. Read Mark chapter 1 and you'll find that phrase again and again, Jesus came, Jesus came, Jesus came.

And you'll discover, beloved, every time you read that statement in the Scripture, amazing things happen. Jesus came. Jesus doesn't come, beloved, without hope.

I'm so glad that he came. When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son. Wonderful.

He came, lived on the earth, showed us what God was like, and lives as a man, to show us what every man could and should and must be like. Died to make all that was true in him available unto you and me. He didn't just die to deal with my sin and emancipate me from the power of the wicked one.

He died to release the Spirit that lived in him, beloved, to come and live in you and me, to make all that was true in him as a man, true for you and true for me. That's how I know, beloved, that I can live the life

that Jesus lived as a man. Jesus is God's normal man, and you can be God's normal man until you know Jesus, you're so normal.

You'll probably be mad with me. People don't like to be told that they're so normal. I know more than the Pharisees like to be told that their father was the devil.

Oh, they said, Abraham is our father, we are the children of God, lots of people live under that delusion and assumption, beloved, that they are the children of God because God is their creator. I want to tell you, he's not your father, beloved, until you've joined to Jesus, his son. He's not your father.

Jesus is your father, he's the devil. You don't like things like that, do you see, we don't like home food. God won't pop you off with some half-baked explanation, beloved, he'll tell you the truth straight.

I'm glad I came to the north of England, beloved, they talk straight in the north, I come from the south, you see. Well, they never tell you the truth, they coach it over like a sugar pill, you know. Oh, men, Yorkshire, they call a spade a spade.

Blunt, to the point of being rude sometimes, to the maury fiend. Hallelujah. Jesus came.

That's what we need, beloved, to become consciously aware that Jesus has come, not just as the incarnate son of God to live amongst men, to die, to emancipate us from what we were, to release the spirit, to reproduce in us the life of Jesus, but he came again a second time on the day of Pentecost. That's the true second coming. We're waiting for the third, or you might even suggest that it might be the fourth.

Jesus has already come twice, and if you have a personal experience then you're in the third time, and you're waiting for the fourth. Isn't that wonderful? I'm sorry if that's upsetting you. I'll just be all over again.

You see, a lot of people talk about the second coming. Well, they're behind the times, beloved, they've missed the boat, they haven't understood the truth. Jesus has come by the spirit.

Hallelujah, that's what happened on the day of Pentecost. The spirit of God came to reveal Jesus in me, to revolutionise my life. And then there comes a moment in time, beloved, when I realise what I am, and my need of him, and I open up my heart and he comes to me, personally, individually.

Glory be his name, baptise me corporately into his body, and then fill me with great expectation, maranatha, come Lord Jesus, come. Hallelujah. Jesus came, he saw much people.

He didn't just see them, beloved, externally. They wanted that. I don't think that they were dressed to kill.

You know, lots of people think that they can impress people by getting dressed dark on. We read right back in the Old Testament, don't we, when Samuel was looking for the second great king of Israel. You know his name, don't you? Come on, tell me.

Who was the second king of Israel? David, that's right, Saul. Because he did what he was told not to do. David, when Samuel was looking for Saul, God said to him, I am not looking, I won't look on the outside appearance, I'll look on the heart.

Now David was of a goodly countenance, but he wasn't a qualifying character, beloved, according to man's estimations. Because when Samuel went to find him, he was presented with every other person in

line. And when they came to the end of the line, beloved, they didn't know what to say because he wasn't there.

And then they all scratched their heads and thought for a moment, well have we got any more? Well, did I have another son? Have we got a brother? Have we got a cousin? Ah yes, David, that fellow out there with the sheep, he was a bit like Gideon, you see, the least of all his sons. Sheep farmers today, beloved, are rich, important people. Shepherds in the day of Jesus, beloved, were the scum of the earth, the least of the least.

Gideon was of the same ilk. Amen. It's wonderful that God begins there, isn't it? You read at the end of 1 Corinthians chapter 1, God takes those which are not to bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.

I think that's wonderful, I love those last verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 1. I'm so glad that God started everything because if he hadn't, I would have been left out. Glory to his name. And when David appeared, beloved, God said, he said, anoint him.

God sees you, God sees me. Hebrews 4 says he divides between soul and spirit, he did wherein that the thoughts and intents of our heart and declares that we're all naked and open before him with whom we have to do. You can't cover up, beloved, you can't pretend, you can't be lost.

Verse 6, it said in the sand and thinks that things aren't as they seem to be. Devastating though it may be, beloved, God sees you and me exactly as we are. Where you're sitting now, how does he see you? I can only see what you want me to see.

We have a tremendous ability both to put on a face. My boys say I have a favorite expression, it's not your actions, it's your way, it's your reaction. We all know how to act, we're born actors, that's what education is all about, beloved, it teaches us how to behave.

Amen, but that's not the real you, that's not the real me, beloved, it's the things you do before you have time. That's what gives you away. What's in your heart comes out of your mouth.

You see, that's the sort of terminology that Jesus used, in the same way he said, by their fruits you shall know them. Amen, there's an infallibility about that statement, beloved, you can't alter it. The fruit is the inevitable manifestation of the seed or the root.

It doesn't even matter if you believe in miracles, beloved, you can't alter that. You plant a potato in the garden and pray everybody won't produce plums. Oh, it won't, beloved, because God does not violate his own law.

I'm not talking about the legal system that was revealed under Moses, I'm talking about the laws and principles that govern the nature of God. God cannot break from them because he denies himself, if he does, miraculous only the extenuation, beloved, of those great laws. Blessed be his name, that's why sometimes he does something like that, and other times, beloved, he'll work it out over a period of time.

Blessed the Lord. God knows us, and gives you power to kid other people. God's not mocked, beloved, God's not deceived.

Read that in Galatians chapter 6, he knows us through and through. Blessed be his name, and that's why many people go over in the wilderness, that's why they're derelicts and barren, why everything's gone dry on them, because somewhere along the line they've moved out of that place of reality. And what perhaps once seemed real and vital and wonderful has all gone dead.

Isn't it wonderful to be in the presence of God who is utterly honest, whose integrity is indisputable, a God who cannot lie, whose word is immutable, incontestable. You can trust him without a shadow of doubt. I was reading in the Psalms this morning, I wonder if I can find where I was reading.

It's up in the hundreds, I'm almost getting along in the book of Psalms. You read your Bible, beloved, consecutively, consistently. It's a wonderful way to read it.

Yes, here it is. Was it in 112 where I was this morning? Verse 6 says, surely he shall not be moved, talking about the righteous man's righteousness, avid resemblance, his heart is fixed. No, the rest is not there, the one I need.

It must have been yesterday or the day before. We won't bother to stay there. There's a word that came to my heart which again confirms the utter integrity of God.

The fact that you can rely upon him and trust him and believe him and find him true. I wish I had all night, beloved, to talk to you about God's faithfulness, God's integrity. Not because I've read about it in a book, even called the Bible, but because I've known it, discovered it, found him to be indisputably true.

So, you have to get beyond saying the Bible says, and God help me, beloved, if I ever say anything to you that the Bible doesn't say. But you have to get beyond that. Anyone can say the Bible says.

That's the explanation, beloved, to dead evangelism, evangelicalism. That's the explanation to Pentecostalism, beloved, that's got all the huff and puff and blow but none of the power and life. That's the explanation to many things that have gone wrong in our own fellowships over the years because we've lost sight of the reality and the vitality of that original word that God spoke into our hearts.

We've lost sight of it. Amen. Has come all alive again and again and again.

Amen. Any man thirsty, any man, Jesus, talking to people out in the desert, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink and out of his belly will flow rivers of living water. This he spake of the spirit which was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified, beloved.

He wasn't just inviting us to have one sip and think that that was satisfying. Our experience which we harp about, beloved, and talk about until it's ancient history. He's talking about a relationship into which he brings us, beloved, where we constantly drink of him all the time.

That's the testimony, beloved, that he's come not just once upon a time but he's come again and again and satisfied my heart and met my need and satiated my inward being and kept me all alive in him. Glory to his name. It's wonderful.

I'm not interested in what God did you, beloved, 40 years ago or 20 years ago or a year ago or even a week ago. What has God done for you today? How real is Jesus to you at this moment in time? Has he looked down into your heart and my heart? Has he seen it, beloved, in sweet communion, unbroken? Wasn't it Maria, the wife of Hudson Taylor, who said with her dying lips, the past 25 years not a cloud has

come between me and my Saviour. I remember seeing a film.

You showed it here, didn't you, brother? And I remember I originally saw the film down in Rourke, the youth camp. Remember Jenny went out of the room and spent half of the night sobbing at the realization and wonder about what God did to her and I to know all the time, not an experience once upon a time but a present, constant, continuous reality. Is that what he sees, beloved? He saw the people.

He saw their need. He saw their sorrow. He saw their heartache.

He saw their sin. He saw their motive. He knew exactly, brother, that all of them were going to take off as soon as they got what they wanted.

I want to tell you the majority of people have come to Jesus for what they can get out of him, not for him. They all took off, beloved, only the 12 remained and they didn't know where else to go. People haven't changed.

But that's why some movements get such great followings, beloved, because they're looking for things. They're looking for healing. They're looking for deliverance.

They're looking for all these. Now you have all these things. Jesus said, if you put me first, I'll take care of all these other things.

But you see, people get the calf before the things, before they want him. Oh, then are you perhaps prepared to have him, beloved, without any of the things? Are you prepared to have him, beloved, and trust him for the things? He knows our hearts. He knew their hearts.

Glory to his name. But the wonderful thing, is that despite what he knew about them, he still went on loving them.

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