

Christianity on Christ Terms - Preaching

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon teaches that true Christianity requires personal responsibility in witnessing and understanding salvation as a relationship with Christ rather than a set of rules.

Duration: 35:44

Scripture: Isaiah 53:6, Matthew 5:20, Matthew 6:33, Luke 13:5, Luke 13:8, John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 13:5

Topics: "Preaching"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of simplifying the message of Christianity in order to effectively share it with others. He encourages listeners to mark their Bibles with key verses that represent the core teachings of Christianity. The speaker suggests using five white pages in the back of the Bible for this purpose. He specifically mentions Matthew 5:20, where Jesus states that one's righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees to enter the kingdom of heaven. The speaker shares a story of a woman who successfully shared the Gospel with a general by guiding him to specific verses that addressed his specific needs.

Transcript

We welcome you, we're glad you're here. Today, we have Pastor Mrs. Sternemann, who are in Minnesota for the graduation of their daughter-in-law, and Mr. and Mrs. McIntyre, who are in other ministry today. Jim, thank you so much for leading in the service this morning.

We're pleased you're here. The art show of the high school continues, and we are where the high school has placed us, in the auditorium. I am delighted that we're here.

I had anticipated being here next November, but we're here sooner than that. Of course, not all the seats are filled, but that's all right. It's a promise.

We're delighted that you're here. So happy to see with us today, visiting us, Ms. Martha Driver, who was for some years a secretary who assisted me in so many ways, and Ms. Pamela Allen, who is the international student's representative here in the Washington area, one who's labored so long and well. Pam, we're delighted you're with us, and we're so grateful.

Do you have a student with you this morning, Pamela? No. So happy that you're here with us. I had the pleasure of seeing Pamela in February when I was away from you, ministering at the headquarters of ISI

in Colorado Springs, a delightful week.

Well, we're here. The Lord is here, and he's here to minister to our hearts. Back in 1940, I think it was, 41 or 42, somewhere in there, I was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Little Falls, Minnesota, and I had a very strange inclination.

I'd been working in my study, I'd been calling, but about four in the afternoon, I felt the strongest impression, go to the Twin Cities, go to Minneapolis. At that time, there was the Founders Week Conference of Northwestern Bible School going on. I had not planned to attend, but I went, and I got there, and I sat down next to someone I knew who owned the bookstore at the Bible School, and I'd worked for him as a clerk in the store as a student, George Wilson, who's been the honored associate of Billy Graham for all these many years, his business manager.

And I said, George, who's speaking? And he said, oh, Pastor Fettle, he's called the Moody of Russia. The speaker that was announced couldn't be here. And just this afternoon, we found out that Pastor Fettle was going to speak.

Well, I sat there not knowing anything about him at all. There was nothing, no announcement. But I listened to him speak, and I knew the moment that he started to speak that the Spirit of God was on that man, that he had an anointing from the Lord.

He spoke with authority, he spoke with power, and everyone that was there sensed that here was a man, maybe a worm in the dust before the Lord, but a lion in the presence of the people who was standing there and giving forth the Word of God. And I'll never forget one of the things that he said that evening that's appropriate to what we're considering this morning. He said in Wanaque, one of his first visits to America, he was asked about one of the three churches of which he was pastor.

He was pastor of the Dome of the Velika in what was St. Petersburg, Salvation Temple in Riga, Latvia, and the First Baptist Church of Moscow. And he would go by train from one to the other and spend a week, and he made a circuit. And he had associates that worked with him.

But he was here visiting, telling, and somebody asked him about Dome Evangelica in St. Petersburg. Now the town is known as Leningrad. And they said, by the way, Pastor Fedler, how many ministers do you have at Dome Evangelica? Oh, he said, we have quite a few.

We have 600. Oh, 600. And how many missionaries do you have associated with Dome Evangelica? He said, 600.

And how many members do you have to support that great number of ministers and missionaries? Oh, he said, 600. You see, in Dome Evangelica, everyone who is a member of the church is a minister of the gospel. Everyone who is a member of the church is a missionary for Christ.

He said, let me tell you about one of our missionary ministers. And he gave her name. I don't know what to call her, but she was a charwoman.

Do you know what a charwoman is? She's the one who cleans out the offices after 5 o'clock when everybody's gone home. She's the person who comes and does the sweeping and the vacuuming and cleaning out everything, getting it all ready for the next day. That's called a charwoman.

Not anymore. They're called professionals here, and they get very good salaries. But back in that time, near the turn of the century, it was considered a rather menial task.

And she had never learned to read. But she had memorized large portions of the scripture. Now, from the little humble place that she lived to the office where she worked, she would go by horse-drawn streetcar.

And she would pray whenever she would get onto the streetcar to go from her stop downtown to where she would have to work, that there'd be someone there sitting alone next to whom she could sit. You see, her Bible had different colored ribbons. Now, mine has a purple ribbon.

But she had yellow and green and blue and black and all the colors. And each color stood for a verse. And her method of ministry was to sit down next to this person and take out her Bible and turn to them and say, I'm just a poor charwoman, and I have never learned to read, but would you please be so kind as to read this for me? And she'd open, Lord, what color should I give this person? And she'd select the color the Lord gave her, open it, and have them read it.

And usually they'd say, well, where did you learn a verse like that? Where did you get the Bible? And then she'd tell them about Dome Evangelica. And tell them what the Lord had done for her. And she was winning more people to the Lord than most of the other missionary ministers of Dome Evangelica.

Well, one day, one afternoon, when she was getting ready to go to work, and I remember she started when everybody else left, so it was in the afternoon, she got on the streetcar and she looked, and for some reason that no one yet had explained, there was a general sitting on the streetcar with epaulets and medals and all, a gold braid. And she said, oh, Lord, you've given me a big fish to catch this time. And she went over and sat down right next to the general.

She looked up and smiled, opened her book, pulled a ribbon, and said, Mr. General, would you please help a poor old woman who's never learned to read, would you read these? Because he'd already marked the verses she wanted to read. She knew them perfectly. But she wanted them read so he'd get into him, see.

Well, it happened that the Spirit of God guided her just to the verses for the problem he had at that moment. And he read them and he looked at her and said, where did you find these? And she explained the verses a little. Oh, he said, from our church, the Dome Evangelica, where Pastor Fendler ministers the Word.

We're having a special meeting tonight and we have a reserved seat just for you, General. It's at such and such a street at such and such a time. And won't you come? Oh, I'm so glad you will come.

And she got up and got off. She said, I got him hooked. I'm not going to do any more.

And so she gave him a card that she had about the church, gave it to him, a special invitation. It already prepared them for her so she could give them a special invitation just for you to come to the service. Well, when they got to the pre-prayer meeting that night, she finished her work in time to get there for part of the prayer meeting.

And she said, tonight I've invited a general of the Russian army to come to the service. And they all looked at her and said, you're going to get a general, all right. And will you pray that God will speak to his heart? So there was, oh, when the general came in, you know, sociably, comfortably, politely late, 20 minutes

late, he stood in the back and the pastor said, our honored guest is here.

Mr. Head Usher, will you please escort him to the seat of honor we've reserved for him? It was the only seat that wasn't taken in the church, right down the front row. So he came down, escorted by the head usher, and he sat down. And after he had sat down and they'd had special music, he said, we shall pray.

Let us all pray. We will kneel to pray. Got to get him on his knees, that haughty general.

And he said, everyone shall pray. So finally the general got around and he got down on one knee. And Pastor Fetler says, the scripture says, every knee shall bow.

Down went the second knee. And he prayed a sermon directed toward heaven and toward the general. And then he preached a sermon which was emphasizing what he prayed.

And it was true that as a result of that ministry, that general opened his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that's the purpose of the ministry of the church. Church, you see, where people gather as we are, is not where the Lord's work is done.

This is where the Lord's people are prepared for the Lord's work. Pastor Havilson, when he was at Fourth Presbyterian Church, said, as we are now dismissed for the benediction, you, the congregation of witnesses and ministers, will go for the service of the Lord throughout the hours of the week until next we gather. You are to be, and the pastor's responsibility is the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry.

I'm not to do all the soul winning. The shepherd doesn't give birth to the lambs. It's that he shepherds the sheep, feeds them, guides them to water and helps them.

But it's the sheep that are out witnessing, touching lives and influencing them for Christ. And the whole strategy of the gospel is that the ministry of the word of the pulpit of the church, as we know it in service, is the maturing of the saints for the work of the ministry. Now today, I'm talking to you about Christianity on Christ's terms.

Well, one of the terms of Christianity is that the one who said, come unto me and rest, is the one who said, follow me and I'll make you fishers of men. And you can't say the come unto me means me and the follow means you. The same one to whom he said, come and rest, said, follow.

And I'll make you fishers of men. And if you're going to come and rest, you've got to accept the responsibility to follow and be a fisher of men. But it's very difficult.

They made it hard. I had a course in personal work that I got an A.M. and one more course like that and I'd have never witnessed for the Lord again as long as I live. It was absolutely successful in stopping my mouth.

They made it so complicated and so difficult that unless you were a high grade IBM computer, you'd have never known how to have said anything to anybody else about the Lord. I want to make it simple. I believe in the KISS principle.

Keep it simple, stupid. And if it doesn't fit that way, if it doesn't work for me, if it can't keep it simple, I can't use it. So what I want you to do is to use these five, one, not all of them, just one of these five beautiful white pages in the back of your Bible.

Aren't they nice? Look at them. One, two, three, four, five. Maybe more, I better look.

I've been saying five, just five. Five white pages. Now all I want you to do is just take five lines at the top of one of them and I want you to put just Christianity on Christ's terms or whatever you want to do to identify it.

And I want you to have these verses and then like our charwoman friend in St. Petersburg, I want you to mark them in your Bible so that when you meet somebody and you want to witness, you won't be frozen as to what to say. Don't say anything. Let the Lord do the talking.

Let Him do the talking. After all, what did the Heavenly Father say when He spoke from Heaven? This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him.

But we've been so busy jabbering, we've never given the Lord a chance to be heard. What I want to do is to simplify it and just cut away all the brush so that if you're talking to somebody, oh, you know there are so many voices. Have you noticed? Low here.

Follow this way. Low this way, not that. Come after me.

On television, on the doorstep, on your doorknob, people coming with their literature. This way, that way. In all of this multitude of suggestions or invitations, don't you think it's marvelous that we can have someone who speaks with authority? Someone who you can't argue with? And somebody that's infinitely wise and all-loving? Oh, it's just so simple when you let Him do the talking.

Now, for instance, the first verse you write down on the white page in the back of your Bible is Matthew 5, M-T, period, 5, colon, 2-0, Matthew 5, 20. You turn to it, and what do you find? The words of the Lord Jesus in that wonderful portion we call the Sermon on the Mount. And what is He saying? Listen to it.

For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now, everybody you talk to already has a plan of salvation. Did you know that? Their plan of salvation consists of this.

There isn't any heaven, there isn't any hell, there isn't any God. That's their salvation. Or their plan of salvation is, there's a big scale in the skies and my good works go on one side and bad works on the other, and if my good works out way... They've got a plan of salvation.

Everybody's got a plan of salvation. Only thing is, most of them is wrong. So you've got to start somewhere with somebody.

And so here you start with the Lord, and He says, except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will in no case enter the kingdom of heaven. And do you know what they're going to ask you first thing? What they're going to say? What was the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? And do you know what you're going to say? If you want, you can write these down too. First, the Pharisees were fundamental in their theology.

They were fundamental in their theology. Because you're going to meet a lot of people that have a very orthodox background as far as theology is concerned. Secondly, the Pharisees were devout in their practice.

They fasted. They tithed. They prayed.

Is there anything wrong with fasting? No, anything wrong with tithing? No, anything wrong with praying? No. The Pharisees fasted. They tithed.

They prayed. The third thing about the Pharisees is they were missionary in their zeal or evangelistic in their zeal. It was said they'd circle the world to make a proselyte.

There was no journey too far difficult if at the end they could convert somebody to Judaism. So they were fundamental in theology, devout in practice, evangelistic or missionary in their zeal. And then the third thing was they were premillennial in their hope.

They were looking for the personal bodily coming of Christ to set up the throne of David. Now is there anything wrong with those things? No. What were the other people besides the Pharisees? Sadducees.

Sadducees did not believe in the inspiration of the Bible or the Torah. They didn't believe in the necessity of blood atonement. They did not believe in existence after death.

They did not believe in angels. They were the modernists of the day. And the Pharisees were fundamentalists.

Is there anything wrong with being fundamental in theology? No. Anything wrong with being devout in practice? No. Anything wrong with being evangelistic in your zeal? No.

Anything wrong with being premillennial in your hope? No. What are you uptight about? Anybody with normal intelligence and discipline and dedication can be all of those things, and Christ said that's not enough. You've got to have something more than a bundle of doctrines and practices and ideas.

You see, salvation is not a scheme and it's not a plan. Salvation is a person. And that's what he's trying to tell them.

Salvation is a person. He that hath the Son hath life, because life is in the Son, in the Lord Jesus. And so he says to the people of his day, hey, the scribes and the Pharisees, they're not bad, but they just aren't enough.

You're not going to get by with just that. You've got to have something more, something else, something other. So that's where you start.

You let the Lord do it. You don't want to say anything about their baptism. You don't want to say anything about their church, do you? You don't want to offend them.

But the Lord doesn't mind offending people if he can lead them out of death into life. So all you do is just take them to the Scripture and answer a few questions that you've been taught, answers to which you've been taught. What were the Pharisees? What did they have? Well, they were fundamental in their theology.

They were devout in their practice. They were evangelistic, and they were premillennial. And Christ said, that's not enough.

Well, what are you going to have? Him. Him. He's our life.

Salvation isn't a plan. It isn't a decision. It isn't a scheme.

Salvation is a person. It's a person. That's why Paul said to the church at Corinth in the second letter, 13 and 5, examine yourself whether you be in the faith.

Prove your own self. Know you're not your own self. How the Christ be in you, except you be reprobate.

So that's the first one line. Now the second, Luke chapter 13, verses 5 and 8. Luke chapter 13. So after you've taken them and you've talked for this a little, then you go over to the 13th chapter, and you let the Lord speak again.

Verse 5 says, I tell you no, nay, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. And in verse 8, and in verse 3, excuse me. Verse 3 and 5. I tell you nay, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.

Twice. Verse 3 and verse 5. In that one chapter, he said, you must repent. Now what's repent? Oh, what a marvelous opportunity this is for you to explain what sin is.

What's sin? Sin is a committal of the will to pleasing yourself. I'm going to do what I want to do. We've turned everyone to our own way.

All of sin. What's repentance? A change of mind about who's to be boss. A change from I'm going to do what I want to do to Lord, what do you have me to do? So you explain to the person.

So what's it mean to repent? Christ said, except you repent, you'll perish. He said it twice in three verses. Well, it must be important for him to repeat it.

Didn't want anybody to miss it. And repentance means a total change of mind from one thing to something else. 180 degree turn or right about face.

From I'm going to please me to Lord, what do you have me to do? Now we'd like to take longer on that, but we've taken time on that in the past weeks. Now I want you to go back to Matthew chapter 18 and verse 3. Matthew 18 and 3. You'll see that all of these various verses I'm giving you in the King James, at least are tied together with one word, except. Except your righteousness exceed, except you repent.

And here in Matthew chapter 18 and verse 3. And Jesus said, verily, verily, I say unto you, except you'll be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Well, what does it mean to be converted and become as a little child? Little children are teachable. Most people you talk to who have their own plan of salvation aren't teachable.

Let me give you an illustration. You'll remember up at Philippi when Paul was put into jail. And Philippian jailer is there sitting looking down on the dungeon.

He's in a little balcony place that he can see everything going on. And he's up there and Paul and Silas are in a cell with their shackles holding their hands against the wall. They're chained up.

And the people and the other men and other folks in this other cell say, what are you in here for? And Paul starts to tell them about Jesus and he was preaching Jesus. And who's Jesus? And he tells them who Jesus is and what he's done and all about it. And the jailer is there personally watching over it.

And I get a feeling that somewhere around, oh, 11 o'clock, Paul got tired of talking and so he says, Silas, heist a tune. Let's sing a little. And so they sing some praise choruses.

The hymn book of the believers, you know, are the psalms. I can hear Silas as he sings, The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? Well, the angel of the Lord is ready to come down and deliver Paul and Silas, but he doesn't want to break up a good praise service anyway, so he just waits until Silas is tired.

And then the angel of the Lord just sort of looks. And wherever he looks, the hinges, the locks begin to grate and screech as the tumblers come back. And then the doors begin to screech as they open, rusty as they are.

And the jailer sits there aghast because no one's opening these locks and the locks are opening and the doors are opening. Well, he's an honorable man. He knows what it is.

He knows that he beat that Jew who says he's a Roman citizen and he shouldn't have done that. And this one is tied in with God, this Jesus, who's apparently got power enough to open the locks without keys. So the jailer does the only sensible, honorable thing.

He takes the short sword out of his scabbard and he fits it between the leaves of his breastplate and he gets ready to fall on the table and plunge the sword into his side and take his life, save Caesar the bother of having to do it. And just then Paul says, Do thyself no harm. We're all here.

In other words, God didn't open the doors of this prison to turn a bunch of thugs loose on the city. That wasn't the reason. He opened the doors of the prison so he could open the prison of your heart.

And now what's happened? Here's this haughty, arrogant, proud jailer, a Roman soldier with his feathers in his helmet. Now they're askew. And what's taking place? A proud, arrogant, haughty Roman soldier is saying, What must I do to be saved? Now that's what it means to be converted and become as a little child.

I don't know what Paul said in those hours from six until midnight. I don't know what he said, but I know what he didn't say. He didn't tell people how to be saved.

And I've come to the conclusion it just doesn't pay to tell them how until they want to know they know why. And they want to know how to be saved. Let them give the invitation.

Let the sinner give the invitation. So what does it mean to be converted? Become teachable. You can tell the person you're talking to that.

Now, there's another verse you want to write down in that list. And I find that in John chapter 3 in verse 3. Where it says, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And you're going to have to explain to them that Christianity on Christ's terms means that a miracle takes place.

You can tell them about the five kingdoms if you want to. The mineral, the vegetable, the animal, the human, and the spiritual kingdom. You can tell them nothing comes from the lower kingdom to the higher kingdom by itself.

It has to be born from above. The little tendril of grass reaches down and brings up the mineral from the soil. The cow reaches down and brings up the grass.

Man eats the cow. God in His grace reaches down and brings man out of death into life. Oh, you can tell them that if you want to.

But what they got to understand is that they have to be born from above. That when they repent of their sin and savingly receive the Lord Jesus Christ, God in His sweet and wonderful grace and mercy performs a miracle. And you don't tell them when it's happened.

You wait and let them tell you when it's happened. You tell them how and they'll tell you when and that. But they've got to know.

So if you have these verses, then you can just talk to the person very easily. You don't have to defend it. Just let the Lord speak for Himself.

Let Him speak. Let Him give the message. Let Him give the sermon.

You don't have to defend anything that Christ ever said. Somebody came to Charles Haddon Spurgeon in England. And they said, Dr. Spurgeon, will you please preach a sermon defending the Bible? He said, that's ridiculous.

Who ever heard of such nonsense? Why? He said, the Bible is a lion. You don't have to defend it. Just turn it loose.

It'll take care of itself. You don't defend lions when they're loose. They'll take care of themselves.

And you don't defend the Scripture. All you need to do is preach it, proclaim it, teach it. Get it into the minds and hearts of the people.

It's the sword of the Spirit. Oh, how many there are. That have some plan of salvation today.

Oh, they've got everything. Perhaps church membership. Perhaps certificates of baptism.

Or whatever. Oh, they've got everything but Christ. Everything but life.

And they're waiting for you. You may be the best Christian they know. They may live with you, walk with you, work with you, talk to you.

But unless they know that you're concerned. Unless somehow you can get the word of Christ into their heart. They're going to go on stumbling in this darkness.

Devoid of life. Oh, I just urge you to recognize. That this not only applies to me and to you.

But those with whom we should share it. Over a cup of coffee. In a restaurant.

In our home. In the car. Wherever we can.

So if you've got your testaments and your Bible. Marked with these verses. You can just slowly take the person through them.

And let the word do its work. Heavenly Father. There's somebody out there this week for each of us.

Someone that we can reach and touch and influence for thee. Someone perhaps that's just waiting for us to indicate our interest. And our love and our concern and our desire.

They sense that we have something different and something real. And they'd like to know why it is we can go through certain circumstances. And why we're different.

And we need an opportunity to tell them. Lord, we just need a little help. So that we can let the Lord Jesus speak for us.

These are his terms, not ours. Thou will defend them. Thou will use them.

Thou will use them to pierce hearts and prepare people for grace. So to that end, Father, we ask that thou will seal the word to our hearts this morning. And make the memory of these moments we've spent together.

Precious to us and of praise to the Lord Jesus. We ask it in his worthy name and for his sake. Amen.

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