

Getting Back Our Zeal

by Richard E. Bieber

Richard E. Bieber's sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining our zeal for Christ and the need for continual renewal and repentance in our spiritual lives.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Matthew 5:8, Matthew 6:33, John 20:15, John 21:4, Revelation 3:14, Revelation 3:18-20

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Passionate Faith"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of maintaining zeal and passion for Jesus, drawing from the encounter of Mary Magdalene and the disciples with the resurrected Christ. He emphasizes the need for believers to continually testify of their encounters with the living Lord, or risk losing their vision and passion. The sermon highlights the danger of becoming lukewarm in faith, as seen in the message to the church in Laodicea, urging believers to return to a fervent pursuit of God's Kingdom and righteousness.

Transcript

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my

God and your God." Mary Magdalene went
and said to the disciples, I have seen
the Lord " ;....

John 20:15-18a

Every person who has had an encounter with Jesus alive
from the dead feels a pressure on their heart to tell
somebody,

"I have seen the Lord,"

They may not feel at liberty to talk about all the ins
and outs of what they saw, but they will testify to
Jesus with a certainty and with a confidence they never
had before.

Mary Magdalene had to tell the disciples that Jesus
was alive...weird and confusing as it might sound when
you try to talk about it. And soon the disciples were
driven by the same inner pressure to tell people what
they had seen with their eyes and had touched with
their hands. The crucified Jesus, whom they had
watched die, was walking around in a new kind of body
more alive than they had ever seen him. In time this
was to become the blazing obsession of their lives.

But what happens to people who have encountered the
risen Lord and spoken of it boldly to others but then,
after a while, the zeal cools down and they don't
talk about it much any more?

When this resurrection light within us finds no way
to express itself, it begins to die. It's either going to

be the driving passion of our lives or it's going to turn to stone within us. When Jesus, alive from the dead, ceases to be the well-spring of our whole life then our vision of him fades and becomes a negative thing...

like a pain,

a guilt weighing down the heart.

Shortly after the resurrection Peter and the disciples went back to Galilee and started fishing again.

They were being drawn back to their old life...they were already in danger of losing their vision. So Jesus came to them to renew the vision of the resurrection before it faded away....

Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any fish?"

They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some."

So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, for the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"....

John 21:4-7a

He was calling them back to the real fishing for human souls...back to the vision they were beginning to lose.

They bring their catch to land. Jesus serves them

breakfast, and after breakfast he says to Peter,
"Simon, son of John, do you love me more
than these fish?"

"Yes Lord, you know that I love you."

"Feed my lambs. Give them living bread,
talk to them,
tell them about me.

Peter, if you're going to keep the vision
you're going to have to keep following me,
feeding my lambs, tending my sheep. Come
on, Peter, follow me!"

Peter answered that call and he never again went back
to his fishing. He spent the rest of his life, until
the day of his own crucifixion, fishing for the souls
of men...telling people about Jesus crucified and
risen. And his zeal stayed with him right up to the
end.

And what happens to us when we meet the resurrected
Christ, spend a few years telling the world about him,
and then cool?

"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea
write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful
and true witness, the beginning of God's
creation.

I know your works: you are neither cold nor
hot. Would that you were cold or not! So,
because you are lukewarm, and neither cold

nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.
For you say, I am rich, I have prospered,
and I need nothing; not knowing that
you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind,
and naked. Therefore I counsel you to
buy from me gold refined by fire, that
you may be rich, and white garments to
clothe you and to keep the shame of your
nakedness from being seen, and salve to
anoint your eyes, that you may see.
Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten;
so be zealous and repent, Behold, I
stand at the door and knock; if any one
hears my voice and opens the door, I
will come in to him and eat with him,
and he with me.... "

Revelation 3:14-20

This is not a message to people who have never met
Jesus.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock,"
is a message to people who have met him and known him
but have turned away...they've become distracted,
they've shut the door, and
don't even know it.

We don't think of ourselves as people who have shut
the door on the Lamb of God. We don't consider our-
selves lukewarm. But we're a lot more comfortable

and settled in our ways than in those early days when we first started walking with Jesus. With our actions we are saying,

"I am rich, I have prospered and I need nothing,"

not knowing how wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked we are.

Today we're not standing at the empty tomb waiting to meet Jesus alive from the dead...that happened for most of us a long time ago. We're out on the sea of Galilee going fishing...we've shuffled our way back to our old life.

-- Our need is not a first-time vision of the resurrection.

-- Our need is:

Gold refined by fire that we may be rich.

White garments to clothe us and keep the shame of our nakedness from being seen.

Salve to anoint our eyes that we may see.

-- Our need is to get back our zeal before we lose it forever.

"Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire that you may be rich."

Gold refined by fire is the Kingdom. We need to get back to Kingdom life, which always involves,

-- the pain of refining fire,

-- the pain of repentance,

-- the pain of casting off the old life again
and again,
-- the pain of trial,
-- the pain of persecution,
-- the pain of being a speckled bird in this world.

The same Jesus who stood on the shore of Galilee, alive
from the dead, and called the disciples back to their
senses, is calling us to leave our lukewarm stupor and
get from him that fire-cleansed gold of a life that is
lived 24 hours a day in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

---- to us now.

"I counsel you to buy from me white garments
to clothe you and to keep the shame of your
nakedness from being seen."

The white garment of his righteousness,
his nature,
his blood,
his spirit,
his mercy.

"You are naked," he says to us. "And
you will be ashamed of your nakedness
when you stand before the Throne unless
you're clothed in me. Come back
to me."

Who of us can honestly say that our daily life has
been clothed in the Spirit of the Lord?

Our home life,

work life,

business life,

thought life,

our attitudes,

as we walk among people and deal with problems.

Lord, give us those white garments!

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

"I counsel you to buy from me salve to
anoint your eyes that you may see." -- Vision

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they
shall see God."

Vision...to see God as he is and to see the world
as it is comes to those whose hearts continue to
let go of the world and fix them on Jesus only.

He holds out the salve to us and asks us,

"Do you really want me to open your eyes?

Are you willing to walk in the light that

I give you? Are you willing to pay the

price of being able to see God as he is?

And the world as it is?

Then draw near and I will open your eyes."

The reason we have lost our zeal is very simple. We
shut Jesus out while we set about getting ourselves

comfortable. Our minds and our mouths may be full of
"Christian principles," but we have shut Jesus out.

So Jesus is knocking at the door and what we have to
do is open it and welcome him back into our lives.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock;
if any one hears my voice and opens the
door, I will come in to him and eat with
him, and he with me."

Revelation 3:20

He's knocking at the door we have closed, And the word
of his Spirit to each of us now is: Open it.

Open it.

"If any one hears my voice and opens the
door, I will come in to him and eat with
him and he with me.

"I will give her gold refined by fire that
she may be rich.

"I will give him white garments to clothe
him and keep the shame of his nakedness
from being seen.

"I will anoint her eyes with salve that
she may see.

"Those whom I love,
Those whom I love , I reprove and chasten
so be zealous and repent."

If opening the door means falling on our knees, God
help us to fall on our knees.

If opening the door means coming to an altar crying

for mercy, God help us to do it.

If opening the door means throwing away all pride

and self-consciousness, God help us to do it.

God help us to do whatever we have to do to open the

door. . . .

....Let's open it now!

....Let's open it now!

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