

The Gospel in Three Words

by Richard E. Bieber

The gospel in three words is 'Rise and walk,' which means living a new life with a new attitude and a new power from on high.

Scripture: Matthew 9:1, Luke 9:23, John 4:14

Topics: "Forgiveness And Freedom", "Following Jesus"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the transformative power of visions and forgiveness. He emphasizes that a vision becomes real when we start walking in it, just as forgiveness becomes real when we live as forgiven people. Using the story of the paralyzed man, he illustrates that salvation is not just a state but a walk, urging believers to rise and walk in freedom. Bieber challenges the notion that assurance of forgiveness is enough without a corresponding change in behavior, highlighting the importance of following Jesus in every aspect of life.

Transcript

On the Mount of Transfiguration Peter, James, and John were given a vision that scared them out of their wits, yet a vision which they would need to keep them going through the dark days ahead.

For a few minutes they saw the Kingdom of God as it really is. They got a glimpse of Jesus as he really is. Far above Moses, the lawgiver, far above Elijah the great prophet.

"This is my Son whom I love, listen to him. Pay attention."

What they saw and what they heard was burned into their souls up there on the mountain. But this vision did not transform them, and empower them, until they began to walk in it. To live it.

It was up to them to take this vision down into the demon-infested valley which followed, and begin living it. Walking in it. That's where the vision became a driving force....as they began to listen to Jesus, to pay attention and obey him as never before.

A vision becomes real, only when we start walking in it.

Today the same Lord offers to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, a vision which we all need: a vision of forgiveness.

"This is my Body, given for you,

This is the Blood of the New Covenant,

Shed for your sins."

And again, this vision of forgiveness does not become real in our lives, until we follow him down from the mountain into the real world, and live like people who have been forgiven, like disciples of the Son of God.

The forgiveness that we receive is not a mental state, but a walk. A new life with a new attitude, a new power from on high.

Once upon a time there was a church called "The Church of the Blessed Assurance." Every Sunday the members of this church would gather to sing songs of praise to God for their salvation. Then they would listen with serene pleasure as the preacher would bring them a message of strong assurance that their sins were forgiven, that all the wrongs in their past were covered by the blood of the Lamb.

Every Sunday they would emerge from their worship, fully assured that God loved them just the way they were. Life was good.

But after worship was over a strange thing would happen. The church members would melt back into the everyday world unchanged. Instead of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, they would live lives exactly like the folks around them who were not believers.

Why sweat it? God is merciful. My sins are forgiven.

Some of them were busy chasing money. Some were forever complaining. Some of the men treated their wives like slaves. Some of the women were forever belittling their husbands.

But when Sunday came, they all took a break from their everyday habits and found serenity in the Church of the Blessed Assurance.

And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. And behold they brought to him a paralytic, lying on his bed, and when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sin"---he then said to the paralytic---"Rise, take up your bed and go home" And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Matthew 9:1-8

Notice the first thing Jesus says to the paralyzed man:

"Take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven."

This is God talking to a suffering man. This is the gospel. "Your sins are forgiven, you are clean before God." The scribes, experts in Hebrew Law, are shocked by Jesus' audacity in forgiving this man's sins.

"Who does he think he is? Only God can forgive sins!"

But now Jesus has a lesson for those scribes---and for us. Being forgiven....being saved, is not a state, it's a walk! Salvation is not a set of beliefs, it's a walk!

This man isn't just going to lie there and rejoice that he's forgiven. He's going to get up and walk, like a man who has been set free.

"Rise, take up your bed and go home."

The scribes cannot believe what they're seeing. This paralyzed man, who had to be carried there by his friends, gets up, picks up his pallet, and walks out through the crowd.

Now here's the point that many are missing these days:

The words, "Your sins are forgiven" are always followed by "Rise and walk".....

If the forgiven soul does not rise up and live like a forgiven soul, that forgiveness never took hold! Like the seed that fell by the wayside and was picked up by the birds, it did not bear fruit.

In the Church of the Blessed Assurance they kept hearing, "Your sins are forgiven." But no one ever told them to rise and walk! So they are like a paralyzed man who never gets up off his bed.

Their old attitudes, old habits, old resentments, old fears, keep them bound.

No one ever told them to get up and follow!

"If any one would come after me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me."

Matthew 16

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 8

"Follow me."

There is only one way to follow Jesus, and that is to walk with him, follow in his steps, do what he does, do it in the same spirit that he does it.

The way we treat our wife, our husband our child, our neighbor.

The way we treat the stranger in shabby clothes.

The way we handle money.

"If you have not been found faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches?"

The way we handle the truth.

Assurance that our sins are forgiven is meaningless, if we're forever twisting the truth and making excuses.

The way we pray.

How can we walk with Jesus and pray like wimps?

The same Jesus who forgives your sins also commands you to rise and walk. Don't just sit there! Don't just lie and think about it.

"Rise up and follow me!"

"Get under my yoke!"

"Walk with me!"

"I'll show you the way. I'll help you. I'll lead you in the paths of righteousness for my name's sake. My rod and my staff will comfort you in times of trouble.

But you have to walk with me."

When we get under the yoke and walk with Jesus, he leads us to specific people. He guides us to do specific things. He sends people across our path who need a helping hand, who need to have their feet washed with a little encouragement.

There is a person you know, who today --- this very day --- would be blessed by a simple phone call. --- "I was thinking about you. Just thought I'd call and see how you're doing."

Tim Horton's is a great place to take someone who needs a change of scenery and a chat. We could go on thinking about people who could use a little boost. But God himself will bring them to our minds.

The Spirit will also remind us of a reconciliation that needs to happen, an attitude that needs to change. And with every step we take to do what he is calling us to do, our walk gets stronger.

Coming together on Sunday to worship is good. In fact, I believe it's essential. But the place where we do our walking is out there in the everyday world.

So when we gather in church and approach the Lord's Table to commune with him in the bread and wine, the Lord Jesus has two commands for us:

First: "Your sins are forgiven. I washed them away in my blood. I have made you clean in the presence of my Father. Believe it....believe it!"

But our Lord has a second command for us as we eat the bread and drink the wine: "Rise and walk. Get up off your pallet and start showing the same mercy to others that I've been showing to you. Make sure that the forgiveness you have received at my Table doesn't choke you, because you refuse to forgive your sister, your brother. I will help you. I will help you to do the Father's will. I will help you to forgive, but you have to walk with me."

"Wait a minute," you say. "That's all very nice in a sermon. But how can I rise and walk, when I'm weighed down with a ton of problems. Why, when I get up in the morning, I wonder how I'm even going to make it through the day."

Whatever burden is weighing on your soul, whatever fear is holding you back, whatever scary circumstance you may be facing, these things are like those invisible chains wrapped around that paralyzed man.

Those chains are meant to be broken.

So today, as the Lord Jesus assures you that your sins are forgiven, "This is my body, given for you. This is my blood shed for your sins," he gives you the gospel in three words: "Rise and walk." In those three words is unspeakable power, coming from the Lord of Lords.

Take hold of those words, and suddenly, the chains of fear, guilt, anger, worry, snap like burning flax. The Spirit of the Lord empowers you to do what you could not do before. As you struggle to get up and walk, the fear melts away, the bitterness dissipates.

You are free. You can do it, as you walk with him.

Hopefully this church is not THE CHURCH OF THE BLESSED ASSURANCE. Hopefully this is THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY WALKERS. We are being empowered to walk the walk.

We may stumble. We may falter.

Sometimes we're confused.

That's why we come together to receive from the Lord new strength and vision.

But every time, he sends us forth with this life-giving word:

"Your sins are forgiven! Rise and walk."

"I will lead you to springs of living water and flood you with my power as you bring life to others in my name. Just get up off that pallet and start living!"

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