

Reform or Revival, Which Shall It Be

by Richard Siple

Richard Siple's sermon emphasizes the urgent need for a spiritual awakening over mere political reform in contemporary society.

Duration: 1:05:33

Scripture: Zechariah 3:9, Zechariah 4:6-7, Zechariah 4:10-11, Zechariah 4:14, Zechariah 5:2

Topics: "Reformation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Zechariah, specifically chapter 4. He highlights three important questions asked in this chapter: 'Who art thou a great mountain?', 'Who has despised the day of small things?', and 'What are these two olive trees?'. The preacher paraphrases these questions to address the world's problems today, emphasizing the brokenness and hopelessness of the world. He shares a story about a little boy who drops a cracked pitcher of milk, symbolizing the brokenness of the world. The preacher also references Harry Morehouse, an evangelist, who encounters a little boy in a similar situation. The sermon concludes with a mention of Joshua, the high priest, and a prophecy about the coming of Jesus Christ and the removal of iniquity in one day. The preacher expresses the hope for an awakening and a transformation of the world through God's power.

Transcript

Vemidji, I've heard a great deal about Vemidji and about what happened here during the Sutera Crusade and I always get excited and my heart gets stirred and warm and overflowing when I hear about God's working in any place. God is working in many places around the world today but we are still waiting for the one thing that none of us have seen in our lifetime and that's a great awakening and it hasn't come in our lifetime. The last great awakening of the kind that we're thinking about that swept across North America is 1905 and so we're due.

About every one or two hundred years God and his great mercy to a lost world brings an awakening and he has to find people who can believe it and who can lay their lives at the foot of the cross and be ready for God to use them and if he can find those people no matter who they are, where they are, what they are, he'll take them and use them as channels for that great awakening. I just want it to come in my lifetime and every year that goes by and I get closer to heaven I get excited about heaven but I'm going to feel just a little cheated if I get to heaven and I didn't get to be part of the awakening. If that happens I'm going to say Lord you sure about this? Don't you think I should go back for a little bit? But we just expect it

to happen in our lifetime.

Please open your Bibles tonight to Zachariah. I'm going to do something I very rarely do in a church service. I'm going to read two chapters from the Word of God tonight but they're very short ones really about the length of one ordinary chapter.

Zachariah 3 and 4. Reform or revival? Which shall it be? Zachariah 3 and 4. And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke you oh Satan. Even the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you.

Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him saying, take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, behold I have caused your iniquity to pass from you and I will clothe you with change of raiment.

And I said let them set a fair miter upon his head. So they set a fair miter upon his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by.

And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua saying, thus saith the Lord of hopes, if thou walk in my ways and if thou keep my charge then thou shalt also judge my house and shalt also keep my courts. And I will give you a place to walk among those who are standing here. Imagine God saying, I will give you a place before the throne in heaven.

That you can stand where those are standing before the throne in heaven. You can claim all that God has to offer. What a challenge to any man.

Hear now Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee, they are men wondered at. For behold I will bring forth my servant to branch. That's Jesus Christ.

For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua, upon one stone shall be seven eyes. Behold I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. That's the kind of an awakening we're looking for.

It may not happen in exactly one day but it will seem like one day. Because in a short time it will take for God to change the face of the world when that awakening comes. And that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall you call every man his neighbor under the vine, under the fig tree.

Chapter 4. And the angel that talked to me came again, and waked me as a man that is waken out of his sleep, and said unto me, What do you see? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and the seven lamps thereon, and the seven pipes to the seven lamps which are upon the top, and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked to me, saying, What are these, my Lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Do you not know what these are? And I said, No, my Lord. And then he answered and spake to me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain, and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. Moreover the word of the Lord came

unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house. His hand shall also finish it, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts has sent me unto you.

For who has despised the day of small things? For they shall rejoice and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel. And those seven, they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth. Then I answered and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again and said unto him, What are these two olive branches? This is the third time he's asked this question.

Which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Do you not know what these are? And I said, No, my Lord. And then he said, These are the two anointed ones, or literally these are the two sons of fresh oil, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth. Recently I was greatly disturbed by an article in Time magazine.

The cover picture of the magazine had a picture of Pat Robertson of the 700 Club on the cover, and in large print the words were, Gospel TV, religion, politics, and money. Religion, politics, and money. Inside the article that followed, I read about Christian TV that in 1985 Christian TV received one billion dollars in offerings, and that Pat Robertson of the 700 Club alone had 16 million TV viewers.

The article also, before it was finished, a very large section in Time magazine said that Pat might run for the Republican nomination for president, and if he did he would run on a ticket of moral reform. And at that point I had no desire to be critical of my Christian brother, and I don't at this point at all, so please don't misunderstand what I'm going to say, because that is not my purpose. It's not my purpose to criticize any servant of Christ, and so that is not my purpose tonight.

But I was thinking about everything that was included in that magazine and I had just barely laid it down when I picked up a newspaper and had an article about a new novel that had been written by Canadian author Margaret Atwood. She's a very famous novelist in Canada. She had written a new novel entitled The Handmaid's Tale, and I wouldn't even begin to tell you what it's about.

I haven't read it, but I read some reviews so I have an idea of what's in the book. It's filthy beyond expression. But the reason that I was so disturbed by the article about this particular novel is that the book implies and raises the fear that fundamentalist Christians will eventually take over the United States with a super biblical Puritanism and the installation of a theocratic form of government that would become a fanatical religious dictatorship.

And that book is having rave reviews all across Canada. It is being sold by the thousands, it is being talked about and discussed and read and believed. And that book pictures a takeover of fundamentalist Christians through the polls and forcing of Christian standards into the laws of the land and forcing that down upon the people of the United States.

It's quite a picture. The book of course is ridiculous and was written to sell, as all Margaret's books are. Nevertheless, I do believe, and I want you to listen to me carefully now, this opening night of this school on revival, I do believe political moral reform without grassroots spiritual awakening could result in religious oppression or a reaction of violent persecution against Christianity.

And that is exactly the kind of thing that's stirred up by this book. Intense reaction against evangelical Christianity. Of course, since that came out, we have all lived to see the tremendous exposés that have

come out in the news media about those who are leaders in the public eye in evangelical Christianity.

I was so thankful recently as I was at our large worldwide conference in St. Paul, Minnesota for our denomination and the opening night Dr. Billy Graham was introduced and our president introduced him as at least one man in the public eye with nothing against his name. Amen? I was just so relieved. But since that time, many of those who have been looked to as possibilities for changing our world of today and bringing about a complete reform in North America and changing its laws and bringing back righteousness have been exposed in great sin.

I am astounded to see Jerry Falwell of the moral majority trying to save the Baker Empire. And again, that's not a criticism of Jerry, I just think it's a mistake for him. That's my personal opinion.

It's nothing against him as a man of God. I think it's a mistake. You know what I think God is trying to do? I don't have to recount for you tonight all of the men of God in the public eye who have fallen in the last few months.

And before that, Joyce Landorf was a casualty. And before that, the Bishop of Bourbon Street was a casualty. And since then, George McDonald is a casualty.

And the list goes on and on. And now, of course, President Reagan, who has been thought of, I think, by many evangelicals as the Savior of the Church, as the one who was going to stand for righteousness and the one who was going to lead reform in North America and help the evangelical church to bring back in righteousness and renew our nation, is now in deep trouble and facing accusations that I have no idea whether they are true or false. But his integrity and the standing he has had before the American people is slipping away.

And you say, what has happened? I have looked at all this and I have prayed deeply because my heart is so burdened for what I believe is coming. Listen, there's a wave coming. There's a tide rising.

There's a wave coming. There is a great awakening coming to North America. And God is determined to bring it.

And I believe before he can bring it, he must remove from the minds of God's people any idea that they can depend upon anything of this world or anything of human flesh. And he must get them back to God alone and to the cross of Calvary and the cleansing blood and the power of the Holy Spirit, where they will look to God and cry out and pray and seek his face until God does what only God can do. And no one else can do it.

And I am getting excited. I am not glad because of these terrible things that are happening. I am not rejoicing over those things.

I preached a sermon on this, scandals in the ministry recently, and my heart aches over it. And I have prayed for the men that are involved in it. My heart bleeds with them.

I have a personal letter from George MacDonald and from his wife, one from each of them. And I don't have time to read them tonight. It would break your heart to listen to them.

A man and woman who love the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts and who confessed their sin and cleaned it up and put their lives on the line for God and are now dragged into the mud again. But what I

see happening is I see God in his love and mercy for North America saying, I am not going to allow the evangelicals of North America to think that there is any way that the world can be saved today without the old way that's always been saved, and that is by the mighty power of God. And man will not be able to do it.

He never has been able to do it, and he will not be able to do it now. I believe in Christians in government, and I believe they can work for moral reform. And if I didn't believe that, I wouldn't have spent four hours with the cabinet of our province just a couple of months ago.

There were 23 of us pastors who met with the cabinet for four hours and talked about what we thought ought to be done in our province. And that was a very exciting time. All the liberals were down on this end.

I don't know how it happened. And all the evangelicals were up on this end. And the liberals spent more time than they were supposed to with their presentations, and all they did was talk to the government about how they spent their money.

And then we got to the evangelicals, and it was my turn. And the premier was sitting right across from me, and cabinet ministers, a member of my congregation, and others that I know well by name. And we had a good time.

And I said, listen, men, I want you to know that all of us on down the end of this table are not one bit interested in all this talk about where you spend your money and how you spend it, because we don't think money has anything to do with the problems of this province. We believe the problems in this province are moral and spiritual. And we want to talk to you about the moral problems here and about the spiritual problems.

And I was so excited because the Minister of Social Welfare got up, and he turned to a pastor, I won't tell you what church he was from, but who had talked a lot about money and how they ought to spend it. And here's the Minister of Social Welfare, and he stood up and he said, you know, I'll tell you how I feel. He said, I'm a member of the church of that brother who was just talking.

And he said, I'll tell you how I feel. He said, I feel like that I have two hands. And he said, there are two needs out there.

He said, the people have financial need and they have spiritual need. And he said, because I'm working for the government, I have this hand tied behind me, and all I'm allowed to use is this one. And he said, brother, you're supposed to be using the other one.

You see, there is a hunger, there's a tremendous hunger. And I have cabinet ministers and politicians sitting in my church on Sunday morning with their eyes full of tears taking notes, because they know that there's only one thing that can save North America, and that's a mighty moving of the Spirit of God. That's the only thing.

Now, what is an authentic spiritual awakening? What is it? First, I want to take a page out of history, and then I want to look at this passage of scripture we've read tonight. A page out of history. In September 1857, a man of prayer, Jeremiah Lanphier, started a noon prayer meeting in the upper room of the Dutch Reformed Church consisting in Manhattan.

That's in New York City in Manhattan. In response to his advertisement, only six people out of the population of a million showed up. But the following week there were 14, and then 23.

And when it was decided to meet every day for prayer at noon, by late winter they were filling the Dutch Reformed Church, then the Methodist Church on John Street, then Trinity Episcopal Church on Broadway at Wall Street. In February and March of 1858, every church and public hall in downtown New York was filled at noon. Did you hear what I said? Every church and public hall in downtown New York City was filled at noon for prayer.

Every one. Horace Greeley, famous newspaper editor, sent a reporter with a horse and buggy racing around the prayer meetings to see how many men were praying in one hour, during the noon hour. He could get to only 12 meetings, but he counted 6,100 men in prayer.

Then the landslide of prayer began, which overflowed to the churches in the evenings. People began to be converted, listen, 10,000 a week in New York City alone. I'm not talking about Bible times, I'm talking about in the late 1800s.

This happened in sophisticated, wicked New York City, 10,000 conversions a week. The movement spread through New England, the church bells bringing people to prayer at 8 in the morning, 12 noon, 6 in the evening. The revival raced up the Hudson and down the Mohawk, where Baptists, for example, had so many people to baptize that they went down to the river, cut a big hole in the ice, and baptized them in the cold water.

And when Baptists do that, they're really on fire. Right. I don't know if the water sizzled, but maybe it did.

As far as the churches were concerned, the ministers of Atlantic City reported that of a population of 50,000 people, there were only 50 adults left unconverted. Take Portland and Oregon, 240 major stores closed from 11 in the morning till 2 in the afternoon each day to enable people to attend the prayer meetings, and they signed an agreement so no one would cheat and stay open. Take the First Baptist Church of Paducah in Kentucky.

The pastor, an old man, Dr. J.J. Cheek, took in a thousand members in two months and died of overwork. What a glorious way to go to heaven. Anybody like to try that? Boy, I'm ready.

If I could go that way. Hmm. Now how does the Bible speak about this kind of a situation? I want you to go back with me 2,500 years to the land of Palestine.

Nebuchadnezzar, the leader of the great Babylonian Empire, invaded Israel and he came with a huge army. He burned the city of Jerusalem, he leveled the temple to the ground, and he took away most of the population to Babylon as captives. They were deported, they were settled in Babylon.

He said, you're never going back. Settle down, make your homes, make your life. This is where you're going to stay.

They just left behind the poorest people, the lowest classes in the country of Israel. But God had something to say about that. And finally the Persian Empire came in and took over the Babylonian Empire.

And a man by the name of Cyrus, who was the leader of the Persian Empire, 50 years after the deportation, decided that he would send Jews back to reestablish a Jewish culture in Israel. And he sent

back 50,000 Jews. And they went back, led by Zerubbabel, who was of the royal family, a noble.

And he was to be the governor and the organizational leader, and Joshua was to be the high priest, and they were to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and rebuild the temple and establish the Jewish worship and the Jewish culture again. And so they went back and they began. Well, if you're going to take a nation that is destroyed, that is dead, that is gone, and bring it to life, it takes more than organization and more than human wisdom.

It takes the mighty power of God. And so as they went to work, everything started to go wrong. The people that lived there were against them.

All the people that surround them were their enemies. The people who had established their homes there who were Jews were against them. And it seemed like they could never accomplish it.

Finally, they wrote to Artaxerxes, that is the people around them, and said, these people are going to establish this city, they're going to rebel against you, put a stop to it. And Artaxerxes wrote and said, stop it. And 16 years went by and nothing happened.

Sometimes I think of that 16 years as a period that's passed in evangelical Christianity since the last Great Awakening in North America. And I think it's about over. And I tell you, God said, I'm going to do something about it, so he sent Zechariah and Haggai to be prophets and to speak to those people and to do something about that situation.

In chapter 4, there are three questions that are asked, and I want you to notice those three questions with me quickly tonight. They're very important for our day. Will it be reform or revival? Here are the questions.

The first one is in chapter 4, verse 7. Who art thou, O great mountain? Who art thou, O great mountain? The second one's in verse 10. Who has despised the day of small things? And the third one's in verse 11. What are these two olive trees? Now I want to paraphrase those questions just a little so we can come to grips with them.

The first question, who art thou, O great mountain? I want us to change so it sounds like this. What is the world's problem today? What is the problem facing us in North America today? He said, who art thou, O great mountain? This mountain that's in the way, that's hindering, that's standing before is irrobable. What is this great mountain? I want to ask today, what is this great mountain that's hindering the work of God, the Evangelical Church? What is this mountain? What is the world's problem, the problem of North America? Number two, who has despised the day of small things? And I want to change that as to what is the attitude of the Church of Jesus Christ today? What is the attitude of the churches? Because that's what it means.

If you despise the day of small things, that's an attitude, isn't it? To despise something, to look down on it, to think it's of no value, no account, that's an attitude. So what is the attitude of the church toward these problems? And finally, what are these two olive trees? And we're going to find out that question is, what is God's solution? What is God's solution? Now first, what is the problem in North America today? Well, you heard our brother say tonight that he listened to a tale of sin until he could listen to it no longer. You know one of the reasons that pastors are burning out at the rate they're burning out? Because day after day, all day, all they listen to is sin.

And I'm not going to stand here tonight to tell you how bad it is. Some of you know how bad it is. Last Sunday night, we left Sunday afternoon to come here, but last Sunday night we had the Dobson film on pornography.

And when our government set up a federal commission on pornography, I presented a paper to them in Canada. And I don't know, as a Christian, whether you allow yourself to be exposed to the sin that surrounds you or not. But if I stood here tonight and told you some things that I know to be happening all around us, some of you'd be so embarrassed that you'd probably get up and walk out.

The condition of sin in our world in which we live is so bad that I want to tell you something. There isn't any governmental or sociological solution to the problem. I know that the government in Canada is spending millions and multiplied millions of dollars to try to do something about wife abuse and child abuse and pornography and evil of every kind, and they cannot touch it.

And I sat and listened to our cabinet in our province, some of them with tears in their eyes, talking to us as pastors and saying, speak to us. Tell us what you think. Tell us what you believe.

And I said to our premier, sir, I know that you don't have any answers, and I pity you. I wouldn't sit in your seat for anything in the world, because I know that you are burdened with the problems of this province and you have no answers. There are no natural answers.

You say, don't you think we should do anything about it? Absolutely. We showed the film Sunday night. When I get back next Sunday night, I will preach on the subject.

We'll have mics in the aisles. We'll have a large crowd in our church, and they'll ask questions, and we'll deal with it. Absolutely.

When there's anything of that type that comes in our community, I deal with it publicly. I preach on it. I oppose it.

I fight it. I deal with it. But I know that that isn't the answer.

I think Christians ought to take a stand, but I know that's not the answer. A man in our church who was minister of social services in our province decided that he was going to clean it up, and he cleaned it up. But boy, I tell you, he is one of the most hated men in that province.

The evil is so tremendous that there is no human solution to the problem. But what God wants you and me to see tonight is the problem behind the problem. And this one is a shocker, because God gave Zechariah a vision, and he saw Joshua the high priest standing before the Lord.

Now, we're not talking about one of the poorest church members. We're not talking about that man, you know, who still has some bad habits about him, and isn't really committed totally to Jesus Christ, and doesn't tithe, and isn't very regular in his church attendance, and is out there on the periphery, you know. We're talking about Joshua the high priest.

And in everyone's eyes, I'm sure he appeared to be very paragon of virtue. But Zechariah saw him like he really was. Zechariah saw the problem behind the problem, because Joshua the high priest was standing before the Lord, clothed in filthy garments.

And the problem behind the problem is the sin of God's people. The problem behind the problem is the sin of God's people, even in the highest places. Isn't it true? Isn't it true? If we hadn't believed it before, Christian brother and sister, you have to believe it today.

I travel all over the world. I speak at mission conferences and pastors' conferences everywhere, and I want to tell you that it doesn't matter how high you go in the Church of Jesus Christ, or what kind of position you want to find, or how godly or admired or respected the man or woman may be. I have heard just about every sin you can imagine confessed from the lips of God's leaders.

And the problem behind the problem is sin. And Joshua was clothed in filthy garments, and there he stood. But I'm so encouraged tonight because the answer to that problem is not reform, but it's repentance, and it's the grace of God.

Amen? And the Lord stood there and he said, take the filthy garments off from him and clothe him with clean garments, with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. I want to say to you tonight that there's cleansing in the blood of Jesus Christ. There's cleansing through the confession of sin and restitution, and meeting God in a deep way.

There is total cleansing from every kind of sin. I don't care what kind of sin it is, God can wash it away. But that's where he has to begin.

He has to begin with we who are his children. And I tell you these days, God asks, God, he gets really tough with me. I don't know about you.

You know, I'm so thankful that God won't ever let me get away with a thing. You ever get a little nettle to God over that? You know, how come? I mean, why do you keep bugging me all the time? You know, go bother him, he's worse than me. Now, you wouldn't think that way, you're too spiritual.

You know one thing God's going to be doing this week? God is going to be going through this place. He's going to be tapping his children on the shoulder, his servants, those that really love him. He's going to be saying, I just want to let you see yourself as I see you.

I want you to see yourself as I see you. That's quite different. But my, there's wonderful grace.

You know, he said, my servant, the branch is coming and he's going to cleanse the iniquity of this land. And one day, and that day was the day of Calvary, and I want you to know when Jesus spread his arms on that cross, and when his life's blood was poured out, and when he cried, it is finished. I want you to know he did a work on that cross that is adequate to take care of every sin, all sin.

I don't care how deep it is or how ugly it is, how filthy, how black, how deeply ingrained it is. I am absolutely certain that there are Christians sitting in this place tonight who are in absolute bondage to sin. There's some of you sitting here tonight who are absolutely enslaved.

And one reason you've come to this conference is you're so discouraged because you've confessed your sin a thousand times and you still haven't been delivered. I want you to know the blood of Jesus will cleanse you from every guilt. And I want you to know the power of the cross can bring that old self that's so bound to death and to resurrection and to victory and deliverance.

That's what it's all about. And that's what every revival has always been about. You can study it.

I've been studying it all ever since I was about 20, I think. And I won't tell you how old I am now, but believe me, that's a long time. Everyone has had this message at its very heart.

The other thing that's behind the problem is not only sin, but Satan. See, the reason that reform will not do it is because reform will not touch the power of the kingdom of darkness. See, Paul said we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.

And because the kingdom of darkness is there, and because Satan is set on destroying this world and destroying the church and destroying the work of God, there isn't any amount of reform at any level that will meet the problem. As the Van Nooses and I were driving out of Regina on Sunday afternoon, about four o'clock, and we were swinging from the freeway onto Route 6 to go south, and I pointed out of the window and I said, you see that steel framing over there? That's a church that has just been burned to the ground. That's all that's left is a steel framing.

That's a new church that's just been burned to the ground by the Satanist cult in the city. Absolutely. You say, how do you know? Because they built an altar in there and put their marks on the walls, and those things were still there.

And that's the third church in that city that the Satanists have attacked. They tried to burn another one, and they tried to burn two others, and they didn't quite succeed. The kingdom of darkness is there, and as Joshua stood before the Lord, there stood Satan over against him to resist him, and to accuse him, and to oppose him.

And do you know any kind of reform that will deal with the powers of darkness? I don't. Do you know any new laws that the government could pass in Congress here in the United States that would deal with Satan and with the demons and the princes of darkness, the principalities and powers? We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against the host of wicked spirits and the heavenlies. Do you know any kind of reform that will deal with that? Any new laws? Satan laughs.

You say, don't you think we should pass those good laws? Certainly. But I want to tell you, there are enough good laws in the book right now in every part of the United States and Canada, in every municipality, there are enough laws in the books to clean our communities up and make North America the most holy place that ever existed. There's no lack of laws.

No, that isn't the answer. We are up against the powers of darkness, and I want to tell you what this country has to have is a great, overwhelming outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God in conviction and power that will resist the powers of darkness. The Lord said, the Lord rebuked you, O Satan.

The Lord rebuked you. Is not this man like a bran plucked out of the fire? Oh, that's what we all are, aren't we? We're like a bran plucked out of the burning, saved from everlasting hell and destruction. And only the Lord himself has the power to resist the powers of darkness and to see them defeated and to see the victories won.

And this is going to take a great moving of the Spirit of God. Well, the situation itself, the brokenness of mankind, broken homes, broken marriages, broken bodies, relationships between parents and children, drugs, alcohol, on and on it goes. I just saw a program the other night on the nuclear bomb.

Just terrifying, just absolutely terrifying. There isn't anything that can save the situation. I want you to know we live today in a world that is absolutely bankrupt.

Do you know of a statesman anywhere? I know politicians, but I don't know a statesman. We live in a world that is bankrupt in every way. And it's on its way to hell.

As he said, it's, I think of that phrase often, it's on its way to hell in a handbasket. It is reeling down to hell. The situation is absolutely hopeless.

I think about Harry Morehouse, who was a great evangelist of the past. And one day he was walking in a poor section of the city where he lived. And as he was walking down the street, he saw a little boy who had just come out of a grocery store and he had a pitcher that was all cracked and chipped and dirty looking and it was full of milk.

The little boy had been sent by his mother to get some milk. And the street was full of garbage and junk and filth and mud. And the little boy was trying to pick his way through the rubble.

And all of a sudden his foot slipped on something and he fell and he dropped the pitcher and it broke all in pieces and the milk spilled out in the mud. And the little boy sat there and he started to scream. And Harry Morehouse ran over and picked him up and looked at him and said, are you hurt? Are you hurting? He didn't see any blood on him or anything.

And the little boy is screaming and crying. He said, no, but my mother will whip me. My mother will whip me.

And he said, wait a minute, wait a minute. Just stop crying. Stop crying.

I'll see if I can fix it. Just sit down, sit down. I'll try to fix it for you.

So the little boy, he stopped, you know, and sat down. And so Harry took the pieces of the pitcher and he said, let's see if we can put it back together. And so he, he got the bottom and he set it down there and he, he started putting the pieces, you know, of the pottery and building them up one on top of the other.

And there were some fairly big and he got them all built up. And finally it was, it looked pretty good. And he took the handle and he handed it to the little boy.

And he said, here, put the handle on right there. And the little boy went like that and the whole thing fell apart again. And he screamed again.

And finally, Harry said, well, that isn't going to work as his son. He said, I have better ideas. So he, he picked him up.

And of course he did all this on purpose because he wanted to teach him a lesson. He picked the little boy up and he carried him back to the grocery store and he bought a new pitcher and he had it filled with milk. And then he said to the little boy, the little boy reached out his hand and said, no, I'm not going to give it to you.

And then he picked the little boy up in one arm and the pitcher in the other. And he said, now, where do you live? And he carried them to the house. And he got to the house and set the little boy down the step and pushed open the door and handed him the milk.

And he said, now your mother whip you. And he said, no, because this one's better than the one we had before. And what I want to tell you tonight is that our world is broken into a million pieces and the milk is spilled and there's no amount of patching that will put it back together.

It's like the old thing Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall and Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. And believe me, all the president's horses and all the president's men or anybody else cannot put it back together again. It is broken beyond repair and only the grace of God can do it.

We need one who can come in and give us a new life and pick us up and carry us all the way home and set us on the doorstep. And that's only through the mighty grace of God. And that's only through the power of God as he works.

Well, I have to wait nine to nine o'clock. Are you sleepy? Can you stay with me till nine? If you can't, I'll tell you how I feel about people going to sleep in church. I've felt this way for years.

If I see people going to sleep in church, I don't worry about them because, you know, they sit there and they go, you know, they have a terrible time. So I just say to them, now, listen, don't do that. Don't do that.

Because if you do that, you don't get anything out of the sermon and you don't get anything out of the nap. So just go to sleep and get something out of the nap. Do that.

All right. Now, let's look at our second question. What is the attitude of the church? Who has despised the day of small things? Oh, I tell you, I think sometimes as the Christians, as evangelical Christians look at this great big mess, I believe that one of the reasons that Christians have been tricked and deceived by Satan into thinking that if they could get enough men of God in enough important places and get enough new laws passed and enough of the right men elected, that somehow the government was straighten out the mess is because they don't think that the church can straighten out the mess.

And they think the church is too small and it's too weak and it's too helpless and it's too impotent. And there isn't anything the church can do. And that is true if it was just the church by itself.

But God said, who has despised the day of small things? So what if the church is small? So what if it's weak? So what if it's just a very tiny minority? So what? Isn't that what turned the world upside down after Pentecost? So what's the difference? He said, who has despised the day of small things? I want to read you a passage from Nehemiah 4, because it has to do with the same process of rebuilding Jerusalem. This had to do with building the wall. But Nehemiah went to build the wall.

And it says in Nehemiah 4, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. This was a man of great political power that lived around Jerusalem. He ridiculed the Jews.

Now, I know that somebody may hear what I'm saying tonight and they say, oh my goodness, that man is crazy. Christ all around the world, he is crazy. That is stupid.

That's what they said here, you know. So people say that are in good company. Don't get offended now.

You can't go to heaven if you don't love me, because I'm going to heaven. You've got to be there with me. So you just have to put up with me.

He ridiculed the Jews. And in the presence of his associates, the army of Samaria, he said, what are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring stones back to life from those heaps of rubble burned as they are? Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, what they are building, if even a fox climbed on it, he would break down their wall. You ever feel like you've been ridiculed? These feeble Jews, these feeble evangelicals, what is the matter with their head? Do they really think they can turn the world upside down for God? Absolutely.

It's been done before. Amen. We better believe it.

And then he cried out and he said, hear us, oh, our God, for we are despised. Sure, let me read you one from the New Testament, you know, this one, brothers, think of what you were when you were called, not many who were wise by human standards, not many who were influential, not many of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.

God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are nothing to bring to nothing, the things that are so that no one may boast before him. Who has despised a day of small things? You remember when David went down to visit his brothers to take them some cheese, you know, in the army? I'm talking about David, the shepherd boy, his brothers from the army, and his father sent him to visit and take them some food, you know, a care box.

And so he arrived with food. I'm sure they've got to get the food. But then David stayed around, you know, and and here came Goliath and nobody dared to go out and meet Goliath.

And so David said, I'll go. And his brother said, said, What are you doing? Where did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness that we know you? You just come down here out of curiosity to watch the war. Why don't you go home? Take care of your your sheep, you little squirt.

Huh? Despising the day of small things. And so then finally, you know, David got out there without anything but his sling and his stones. And here came Goliath.

And then he said he despised him, too. He said, What am I, a dog? Did you send a boy out here with a stick? He said, Come here. I'm going to give your flesh to the birds.

I love what David said. David said, You come to me with a sword and spear, but I come to you in the name of the Lord God of Israel, whom you have despised. It's not us, is it? It's God that's despised.

Who has despised the day of small things? No, it's not by might nor by power, but it's by my spirit, saith the Lord. What is our attitude? Oh, I wish that God could change the attitude of the evangelical church, so that we would see that we are living in the time when it's time and when we're due for an awakening, when God wants to bring it and he's trying to stir some of us and he's putting it in our hearts and we're burning up with it and we can't enjoy life anymore because of it. And he wants to bring in our day.

What's your attitude? What's your attitude? Gideon, remember, Gideon even despised himself. Don't you think that God has a sense of humor? I just get a kick out of God. He laughs.

He enjoys people. And he sent an angel down. He said, Now, let's have a little fun with Gideon.

He said he's scared out of his wits. And he's hiding behind the mill, trying to grind his reach, and he's scared right out of his wits. He said, I'll tell you what to do.

The Lord said to this angel, I'll tell you, let's have some fun. You go down there and the first thing you say to him is, Hail, thou mighty man of valor. That's in the Bible.

That's what he did. Gideon turned around and there's the angel. He says, Hail, thou mighty man of valor.

And Gideon said, Who, me? You've got to be kidding. Not me. He said, I'm in the least family in all of Israel and I'm the least in that family.

He said, Besides that, I'm so scared. I'm hiding here. Can't you see? Despising that I have small things.

He said, That's all right, Gideon. I don't need you, but I'm going to use you anyway. And so finally, you know, Gideon got the great army, you remember, and he sent a whole bunch of them home and then got the 300 up there.

And it was interesting, the dream that he heard. Remember, he went down to the host and he heard one of the men, he woke up and he told his friends, the Midianite, that he had a dream and he dreamed that a little barley cake came rolling down the hill and it hit one of the tents and then it hit another tent and then it knocked down every tent and destroyed the whole army. And his friends said, That's nothing other than Gideon.

Isn't that fantastic? A little barley cake destroys a whole army. God doesn't need us to be great. He just needs us to be available.

Amen. He doesn't need your ability. Write this down.

He doesn't need your ability. He just needs your availability. In fact, your ability might get in his way.

He just wants your availability. Jesus was going to feed the 5,000, you know, and he said, What have you got? And he said, Well, we have five loaves and two fishes. But what are they among so many who has despised the day of small things? And we're here from many places.

I want to tell you there are enough people sitting right here to start in motion so much power and blessing. Some of us were talking about the city of Regina when I went there 10 years ago. The evangelical community in that city was small and despised.

And today the evangelical community in that city is powerful and there are evangelical churches growing so rapidly all over that city that the major ones all have two morning services. They're all trying to build new buildings again, some of them for the third time. And people are getting saved constantly.

And we believe we're moving toward an awakening. Now, it doesn't matter how small we are. It only matters how great God is.

Now I want to come to the last question. Boy, I've only got six minutes. The last question.

What is God's solution? What are these two olive trees? I don't think for for months I've been able to read the final answer to that question without getting choked up. He asks it three times and he finally gets the answer. And the angel acts like, don't you know what they are? And he finally says, these, literally in

Hebrew, these are the two sons of fresh oil that stand before the Lord of the whole earth.

Fresh oil. I think that's what we have to have. Don't you want to be a son or a daughter of fresh oil standing before the Lord of the whole earth? It's not by might.

It's not by power. It's not by government decree. It's not by sociology.

It's not by education. It isn't by psychology or psychiatry. It isn't social reform.

It's by my spirit, says the Lord. It's by my spirit and he will, he said, forever bely the foundation of this house and he will finish it. And he will bring forth a headstone crying, what? Grace, grace unto it.

The grace of God. That's the answer. The sons of fresh oil.

And that's what God is looking for. The eyes of the Lord. These seven eyes are the eyes of the Lord going to and fro through the whole earth.

What are those eyes looking for? What are those eyes roaming the eyes of the Lord? What are they looking for throughout the whole earth? They are looking for men and women who are willing to stand before the Lord of the whole earth and become sons and daughters of fresh oil. You say, Pastor, I've been filled with the spirit. That's fine.

I don't, I don't believe that we need to argue in any way about the doctrinal aspects of being filled with the spirit. I just believe that we need to make sure that we are sons and daughters of fresh oil. Fresh oil.

We need the infilling of the Spirit of God upon us. And we need God to come in great power and answer the prayer. That's what the concert of prayer movement is all about.

To cry out mightily to God and confess our sins and repent and be cleansed. And deal with self at the cross and be filled with the Spirit until finally God in His mercy finds a channel that's adequate. You see, there were tubes from those branches, those olive branches, and they were flowing with fresh oil to set afire and to bring light to the world and to bring the power of God into that situation.

And when God has found enough sons and daughters that are willing to be sons of fresh oil, then the Holy Spirit's going to come upon our civilization, upon our world, and you're going to see happen exactly what has happened in other times. And Jesus said, some of you say that it's another time, you know, four months and then cometh harvest. It's in the past, it's in the future, and Jesus says it's now.

It's coming now. I want to close with just a few words from the Welch Revival. Well, it was the social impact that was astounding.

Somebody says, but we need reform. Yes, but the way to get it is by revival. I want to tell you, anyone who is a student of history will know that what I'm saying is the truth, that every great outpouring of the Spirit of God in this world has brought social reform as an aftermath, as a natural result, not as a cause ever.

But as a natural result. And here's the Welch Revival. I want you to see the natural results.

When the Holy Spirit's poured out in great power and there's an awakening among the ungodly. I'm not just talking about revival among Christians. That must come, but then comes the awakening.

And it was the social impact that was astounding. For example, judges were presented with white gloves. Not a case to try.

No robberies, no burglaries, no rapes, no murders, no embezzlements, nothing. District councils held emergency meetings to discuss what to do with the police now that they were unemployed. Fantastic.

I didn't make that up. That happened. In one place, the sergeant of police was sent for and asked, what do you do with your time? He replied, before the revival, we had two main jobs, to prevent crime and to control crowds, as at football games.

Since the revival started, there's practically no crime, so we just go with the crowds. A counselor asked, what does that mean? The sergeant replied, you know where the crowds are, they're packing out the churches. But how does that affect the police? He was told, we have 17 police in our station, but we have three quartets.

And if any church wants a quartet to sing, they simply call the police station. Oh, I love it. That's not some story I made up.

That's history. That's hard facts. As the revival swept Wales, drunkenness was cut in half.

There was a wave of bankruptcies, but nearly all of them were taverns. Boy, I like those kids. There was even a slowdown in the mines.

You say, how could a religious revival cause a strike? It did not cause a strike, just a slowdown. For so many Welsh coal miners were converted and stopped using bad languages that the horses that dragged the trucks in the mines could not understand what was being said to them. That's true.

Hence, transportation slowed down for a while until they learned the language of Canaan. And the writer says, when I first heard that story, I thought it was a tall tale, but I can document it from the Westminster Abbey. That revival also affected sexual moral standards.

He discovered through the figures given by the British government experts that in two different cities, the actual illegitimate birth rate dropped 44% within a year of the beginning of the revival. I'm not talking about the revival that came to our church in Akron tonight, but within one month after that revival, our giving in our church had risen 40% without saying a thing about money. We're talking about reform.

Revival swept Britain. It so moved all of Norway that the Norwegian Parliament passed special legislation to permit laymen to conduct communion because the clergy could not keep up with the number of converts desiring to partake. It swept Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Canada, from coast to coast, all of the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South America, East Africa, Central Africa, West Africa, touching also Brazil, Mexico, and Chile.

And that is what we're expecting. That is what we're expecting. That kind of an awakening.

A man in our church just brought to me recently an old, old copy of another story of the Welsh revival that I had never seen. It was absolutely brown and falling apart, and I made a copy of it on the office copier quickly so it wouldn't be lost to posterity. It's a marvelous story.

May I read you a couple of paragraphs from it? I'm going to close. Arthur Goodrich wrote, All South Wales is aflame with the spirit of a great religious revival. In a few weeks, the fire of it has run up and down the

length of the Gar Valley and the Rhondda and has spread into hundreds of little outlying hamlets.

They are talking of little elts in the snug little stone cottages that line the ridges like low ramparts and the tiny shops where the women come to buy the day's supplies and the railway carriage and at the street corners. Every church community is stirred to the depths, and out of the edges, rough miners are shaking their heads wonderingly and are being drawn toward it until the power of it seizes them and they leave their work to attend the day meetings as well as those at night. Strong men are in tears of penitence.

Women are shaken with a new fervor, and in the streets, small children at their play are humming revival hymns. And it was because one young man said, Oh God, bend me. Oh God, bend me.

And out of that came that great revival. The revival of 1905 that went across North America was so powerful that ships sailing into harbors where the revival was burning were like crossing an invisible line. And they sailed across the line you could not see and the power of God fell upon the ship and in one case, an entire ship dropped anchor with every person on board converted between the time they crossed the line and the time they dropped anchor.

That's not a made up story, that's true. We're talking about a great awakening. Reform? It will not do it.

Revival? Yes. A great outpouring of the Spirit of God is coming. And I pray God that we might be part of it.

Do you have filthy garments? Are you willing for God to speak to you and show you? If you're willing, He's willing. And He'll cleanse you. And He'll fill you.

And He'll make you a son or daughter of fresh oil and put a fire burning in your heart. And all around you, the Spirit of God will start to move. Things will start to happen.

And you'll be part of the awakening that's coming. Let's bow in prayer. Our heads bowed and our eyes closed.

Where's the prayer room? Back this way. Let's just keep our heads bowed and our eyes closed. It may be that God is speaking to you tonight, I don't know.

And it may be that right this first night of this gathering, your heart is so hungry and so full of desire after God that you do not want to wait for anything else before you begin to meet Him. And there is a room set aside for prayer. God is here.

And you're here. And He wants to meet you. If God is moving on your heart and you want to meet Him now, tonight, we're not going to sing at this moment, but just to say to you, if you want to meet Him now, why don't you just get up out of your seat while our heads are bowed.

We're waiting in prayer. And just go to the back of this auditorium, out into the hall, and you'll be shown into the prayer room. Right? We're just going to sit here, our heads bowed and our eyes closed, and wait a few moments for you.

Say, my heart is hungry and yearning, and God has spoken to me tonight, I want to meet Him. I'm going to wait for a few moments to give you that opportunity. Just get out of your seat, go to the back, and go to the prayer room.

Get down on your knees, start to pour out your heart to God, tell Him what's on your heart. There will be those there to help you, who understand what God is trying to do in your life and will help you. Father, we thank you for being here with us tonight.

Oh Lord, I want to thank you for these dear brothers and sisters of mine, who have come for these days together, because their hearts are hungry after God, because their hearts are yearning to see God work. I thank you for every one of them. I pray for those who have already gone to the prayer room tonight, because you have spoken to them and invited them to come.

And we pray together that you will meet their hearts and satisfy their deepest longings. And Father, we pray that for every one of us, tonight should be a beginning of turning our thoughts in the direction that you want to lead us this week. May the Holy Spirit go with us tonight, everyone.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/19/SID19770.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-siple/reform-or-revival-which-shall-it-be/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net