

A Life That Lays Hold of Jesus

by Santosh Poonen

Santosh Poonen emphasizes the profound love of God for His children and the importance of pursuing a relationship with Jesus above all else.

Duration: 29:26

Scripture: Acts 9:3, Philippians 3:8, Philippians 3:12

Topics: "Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that God wants to use every individual in the body of Christ for His glory. He encourages Christians to embrace their unique identities, including their family background and personal calling, as God's plan for their lives. The speaker warns against wasting time in grumbling and complaining, as it hinders God's work through them. Using the example of the apostle Paul, the speaker highlights how God can transform someone who was once against Christ into a powerful instrument for His kingdom. The sermon concludes with the reminder that God's love motivates His commands to live a life free from sin and worldly desires.

Transcript

One of the most amazing spiritual experiences I've had in my life is when I became a father to children. I have two children. But something changed for my spiritual journey when I became a father.

I think I began to understand in a new way what it means to be a father. See, until then I had a father, my father. But now I was a father.

And I started to see a little bit of a taste of God's heart as a father towards us, his children. And so when I looked into their eyes, these little children as they were growing up, my heart was so full of love for them. I wanted to do anything for them and for my wife.

I would give up anything for them. I made plans for them of all the things we would do together. And as I did that in my little human way, I saw a little bit of a picture of how God does the same thing for us in an infinite way.

And I imagined what if one of these children, during their birth, their mother had died. That happens often that the mother who is giving birth to the child dies during the childbirth. And I imagine what if my wife had died when one of my children was being born.

I tell you, I would love that child probably even more. You see, it says that Jacob loved Benjamin for that reason because Rachel died when Benjamin was born. Because every time I looked at that son or daughter who was there, I imagined, I could see the suffering I had to go through for that child's sake.

And the suffering that my wife would have gone through as she died giving birth to this child. And I want to impress on your hearts, my dear brothers and sisters this evening, that that's how God looks at you. See, there is a love of God that exists in the world.

You know that verse, John 3.16, that says, God loved the world. That he sent his son and allowed his son to die. But that death was not in vain, it wasn't empty.

Because God looked out at the world and wanted something wonderful for these people in the world. He wanted them to become his children. And so if you are one of God's children because you are born again, like we heard this afternoon, the Holy Spirit is within you telling you that you have a father in heaven.

If that is true, that you have that father in heaven now, then this is also true, that he looks at you as his special people. Different from the rest of the world. In that sense, God is partial.

Because you have received Christ in faith, God has special plans for you, his son, his daughter. And it says in Ephesians 1, he chose you before the foundations of the world. That means you look around at the earth, and the seas, and the mountains, and before any of that was there, God chose you, my brother, my sister, because you have received Christ.

And made a plan for your life. A plan that nobody else can destroy. And I think of two parts to that plan.

He planned for you to be his child first of all. That means because Jesus died and gave himself up, and the father and the son had to experience that suffering, he looks at you with a special love. That's why it says in 1 Corinthians 6, that you are not your own, you are purchased with a very high price.

Therefore glorify God in your bodies. Why is it that we want to have no dark part within us? Because we are purchased, we belong to God. He lost his son on the cross.

And it wasn't an eternal loss, but he lost him for that period of infinity during three hours. Just like me, if my wife died when my child was born, and now you are precious to him. But it also says in Romans 8, 29, that he has a plan for us to become like his son Jesus.

The reason God wants to change our lives and remove all the darkness from us is because he loves us. I'm trying to paint a picture of how great God loves you. And it is out of that special, partial love for you, brother and sister, that he doesn't want any darkness in your life.

He has picked you out. Think of all the people that walk down in front of your church or in front of this hall. How many hundreds or thousands of people walk by and they never hear the things that you and I are hearing.

God chose us before the foundations of the world to be made into the image of his son Jesus. And I believe it's because we haven't really seen the amazing love of God that we struggle with these areas of darkness. If we could get gripped with this truth that God laid a hold of me, just the way I am, for a specific purpose.

It would change the way I live my life on earth. If I could get a revelation from God through the Holy Spirit. And by listening to the things we're hearing this weekend.

And my eyes could be opened to see that it is out of God's love that he wants me to be free from sin. It is out of his amazing special love for me that he says, don't love money, it will destroy you. It is out of his amazing special love for you that he says, don't lust after men, after women.

It is out of his amazing special love for us that he says, don't get angry, don't use your tongue badly. And it is out of his amazing love that God allows periods of discipline and patience in our lives. And so the next time, my dear brother and sister, when you're tempted to complain or grumble against God and his dealings in your life.

Maybe you look in the mirror and think, Lord, I wish I looked like somebody else. Or you think about the job that you have and think, Lord, I wish I had that brother's job. Or you look at somebody else that has some gifts and you think, Lord, I wish I had those gifts.

I want you to remember, dear brothers and sisters, that God made you exactly the way you are. Because there was a purpose, a specific purpose in the body of Christ that only you could accomplish. If he did make you to look and to have the gifts like that other brother or sister, then there would be something missing in the body of Christ.

And so exactly as God has made you, exactly the family you were born in, exactly the calling God has for your life, the family that God allowed you to be born in, the purpose that God has created you to be exactly the way you are. God wants to use all of that in the church for his glory. Many Christians want to go to the judgment seat of Christ.

And they're going to look back at their life. And wasted their whole life in grumbling and complaining. So God is going to show them the real videotape of their life, what happened.

And then he's going to show them the videotape of what could have happened. If they had faith in him, he could have done so many things through them. Exactly the way they were.

Born in the family that they were born in. Living in the town that they live in. Because he loved them and his love is so amazing that he can accomplish anything.

See, I believe Paul, the great apostle, had this vision. Let me turn you to Philippians chapter 3. Paul was one of those men who did everything 100%. When he was against Christ, he was against Christ 100%.

And in God's amazing love, he thought, you know what, I can use a man like that in my life. In God's amazing love, he thought, I can use a man like that in my life. Now he's running after sin 100%.

If I turn him to the other side, he's going to chase me 100%. So if you're running after sin 100%, God needs someone like you. If you've destroyed your life, it doesn't matter how young or how old you are.

Because you chased after all the things of darkness and after sin for so many years. If you will let God give you a new heart and a clean spirit. And turn you towards him.

Then he will give you the grace to chase after him with even more zeal than you chased after the world. Then he will give you the grace to chase after him with even more zeal than you chased after the world. As much as you loved to lust after women, now you will love to be pure.

As much as you loved to lust after women, now you will love to be pure. Let me say that again, as much as you enjoyed looking at a pretty girl and lusting, you will enjoy not. Because you know it glorifies God.

This is the true Christian life. Where I enjoy purity. Even more than I enjoyed impurity in the past.

Paul understood this. He says in Philippians 3 verse 12. He says, not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect.

He says, not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect. But I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. But I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

He understood that he was not just any man in the world. He was a special man. And you and I, dear brother and sister, there was nothing special about Paul in himself.

History says that he was a very short, kind of ugly looking man. That's probably why he could never get married. But it didn't matter how God made him or how he had messed up the past.

The moment he turned and saw Jesus on the road to Damascus. He said, Lord you have held on to my life for a specific reason. You have brought me to this conference in Karaikudi for a reason.

You have put me in this church for a reason. I can't waste my life like all the rest of the people. You have laid hold of my life for a specific reason.

And he determined with 100% of his life that he was going to lay hold of that. And you might think, well what was that? Was it that he became a Greek preacher? He wrote all kinds of letters that now we call the word of God? He became a pastor in a church? Then he became the elder among elders? He became an apostle over many many churches? Do you think it was any of that? He says earlier in verse 8, what it was. What it was for which Christ laid a hold of him.

What it was for which Christ laid a hold of him. He says verse 8 from the middle. More than that I count all things to be lost.

Did God use him to preach a fiery sermon? He says that's a loss. Did God use him to build a church? He says that's a loss. Did God use him as an apostle to write scripture? That's a loss.

How can all of these good things be a loss? He goes on to say towards the end of that verse. He says I count it all as rubbish. In order that I may gain Jesus himself.

I will give up all of this. Yes I have a big church and I am an apostle. And I write scripture and I preach sermons.

But I will give it all up. To gain Jesus. Everything in this world.

Marriage, good job, ministry. Reputation on the earth. What people thought of him.

All of that he says that's rubbish. Everything in this world. All of that he says that's rubbish.

Unfortunately today we have a gospel that says that you can use Jesus to get something. Getting Jesus is like getting one thousand rupees. Or maybe ten thousand rupees.

And then you go buy something that you really want with that ten thousand rupees. If Jesus is that to you. You will have a miserable Christian life.

If Jesus is the money that you use to get something else on this earth. No wonder you will be so grumbling, so unhappy, so miserable, so defeated by sin. But when Jesus becomes the prize.

When I have spent all of my money and all of my gifts and everything that I have to gain Jesus. Now I use everything that I have to get more of Jesus. See the devil loves if he can make Jesus a means to something else.

This is one of the ways I believe he comes as an angel of light. We heard about that in the afternoon. If Jesus the devil comes as an angel of light when he presents Jesus as a means for you to make more money.

And you say Lord Jesus I have given my life to you now give me this job. Lord Jesus I have given you my life now help me get married. Lord Jesus I have given you my life now give me some gifts so that I can impress people in the church.

Lord Jesus I have given you my life so give me this, give me that, give me this, give me that. Lord Jesus I have given you my life now give me this, give me that, give me this, give me that. If you live like this forever and when you look back at your life you will have a lot of regret.

The father gave us a little of the spirit of Jesus. And instead of trying to use that for something he wanted to see that we hungered for more of Jesus. When he gave me a little bit more of Jesus I said no I want more of Jesus.

Think about it like this if you had a wife who lived far away or maybe she lived in another house down the street and she said I will send you food I will come and clean the house but I will stay in that house you stay in this house. If you are married I hope you don't have that kind of a marriage. And I am sure if you want to get married you don't want that kind of a marriage.

You would say don't cook for me don't clean the house come and live with me. I want a wife. Or your sister will say I want a husband.

I want somebody that I can experience true love with. The food may be nice cleaning the house that's all good but if I had to give up one or the other I will give up that the food and the cleaning of the house to have you, a wife, a husband. And Jesus looks around on the earth at people calling themselves his bride, Christians.

And they are using him like a remote wife wife who lives in a remote husband. You say Jesus you stay in heaven I will stay here, you give me money, you give me food you give me a job, get me married. That's the most miserable Christian marriage.

The true Christian marriage is when Jesus comes and you love spending every moment of your day with him. God will add all kinds of blessings all your needs he will meet. There will be plenty of food in the table you will have a job, you will get married if that's God's will for you.

You will have many blessings even fellowship and the church, a good church. But you will have the greatest blessing of all Jesus himself. That is, he is the greatest blessing of all.

I want to read a poem for you in closing. I'll paraphrase it so that it's understandable in Tamil. This poem says Once I wanted a blessing, now I want the Lord himself.

Once I wanted a good feeling about being a Christian now I want his word. Once I wanted him to give me gifts now I want the giver himself. Once I wanted him to heal me of my sickness now I want the healer.

Once I was always trying to overcome trying to overcome now I trust him. What that got me was a half salvation now I have the full salvation which is Jesus himself. Once I felt like I was just hanging on barely holding on now he is holding me.

Once I was always drifting from conference to conference just drifting now I have put my anchor down. Once I was always busy planning what I can do for Jesus what I can do next what I can do next now I spend time in prayer. Once I was full of anxiety and full of care now he has the care.

It used to be what I wanted now it is what Jesus says. Once upon a time my prayers were full of asking for this and asking for that now I praise him. Once I was proud of all the good things I did now it is his work that I am proud of.

Once I tried to use him now he uses me. Once I wanted power now I want the mighty one himself. Once upon a time my Christian life was about myself now it is about Jesus.

Once upon a time I hoped in Jesus as something I could have. Now I know he is mine I am married to him and my lamps used to always be dying out now they are shining brightly. Once upon a time my earthly life was so miserable I could not wait to die and go to heaven.

Now I am waiting for his coming back to take me home. Now I am waiting for his coming to take me home. That is where my hope is anchored.

The chorus goes all in all for Jesus. Jesus will I sing everything in Jesus and Jesus everything. Heavenly Father I pray that you will make this a reality in our lives draw us to you draw us to that place of quiet rest near to the heart of God so that we can truly experience rest in this world.

Make it so for all of us I pray that not even one person here will miss out on this. Thank you that you have promised the Holy Spirit for us In Jesus name Amen

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