

Week of Meetings 1986-04

by Stan Ford

Stan Ford's sermon emphasizes our divine purpose, the significance of Jesus' sacrifice, and the importance of being truly in the kingdom of God.

Duration: 56:38

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 21:33-42, Mark 12:28-31, Mark 12:34, John 14:6

Topics: "Stewardship Of Life", "Gods Purpose"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher tells the parable of a man who planted a vineyard and sent servants to care for it. However, when the owner sent servants to collect the fruit, they were beaten and killed by the vineyard workers. The preacher emphasizes that just like the pen in his hand, we were made for a purpose and purchased with a price by Jesus on the cross. He encourages the audience to allow Jesus to control their lives and fulfill their purpose. The sermon concludes with the preacher dismissing the children's meeting and urging the congregation to pray and seek God's guidance.

Transcript

You know, I didn't realise we were going to have a lot of boys and girls here, did I? I thought you were all going to be in there, and I was going in there to speak to you. So, if you don't mind, what I'll do is I'll speak to you for ten minutes, and the big folk can go to sleep. And then when I've finished speaking to you, and I think the big folk will behave themselves, when I finish speaking to you, then I'll expect you to behave while I speak to them.

Will that be alright? I've got something in my pocket. By the way, by the way, I think boys are better than girls. Well, listen, we'll prove it.

We'll prove it. It's no good putting your thumbs up at the beginning. I'm going to ask a few questions, and if you know the answer, you put your hand up.

You don't shout out. If you shout out, if a girl shouts out, they mostly do, the boys will get a point. But if a boy shouts out, the girls will get a point.

But if you put your hand up and you've got the answer right, there's a point for yourself, and we'll see who's best. Do you know it's the best I've got? Really, I ought to have had a pop of pain, but as I said, I didn't know, you see. By the way, what have I got in my hand? Oh, you're shouting.

Do you know it's a good job I'm not your school teacher? I dust your trousers. Oh, what have I got here? Yes, I've got a pen. I want to say three little things about that pen.

And the things I want to say about the pen, do you know what I could say about every boy and girl here tonight? The first thing I want to say about it is that this pen was made for a... P. It was made for a... P. Oh, I must do it this way. Yes. No, it wasn't made for a picture.

No. As a matter of fact, don't tell anyone that the preacher stole it from the office. No, it wasn't made for a preacher, but it was made for a... Yes.

Right. It was made for a... I don't know who the first person was who invented a pen. I think it might have been Mr. Stevenson, I'm not sure.

I only know this. That when a pen was made, it was made for a purpose. And do you know, boys and girls, have you ever looked in the mirror in the morning and looked at yourself, and when you've got over the fright, you've said, do you know I was made for a purpose? I was made for a purpose.

And do you know why boys and girls and men and women were made? The Bible says, this people have I made that I might show forth, that they might show forth my praise. We were made that we might enjoy God, and that God might enjoy us. That's why we were made.

But you know, that pen was made for a purpose, but before it could be fulfilled a purpose, it had to be P with a P. Gets harder all the time. P with a P. Yes. Or it was made for a purpose, but what's the second one? Then it had to be P with a P. Yes.

Do you know that's a good, good reply. It's not right, but it's a good one. P with a P. Yes.

No, not prepared, I say. Listen. Yes.

No. Shall I give you a hint? Yes. No, I won't.

I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll wake up all those big folk and see who can get the answer among them. Yes, sir.

P with a P. It was not P with a P. It was. P with a P. No wonder the boys and girls don't behave themselves. I say, it was made for a purpose, but it was purchased with a price.

Yes. Before this pen could be used, someone had to go and buy it. What good would a pen be on a shop shelf? What good would it be tucked away in a box? We have to go and purchase it.

Do you know, boys and girls, we were made for a purpose, that Jesus came, and on Calvary's cross, He died, and He paid the price that we might be His. Ah. Made for a purpose.

Purchased with a price. But C, not P, C via P. C via P. Think about the pen now. It had to be made.

It had to be bought, purchased. But now it has to be. Have you ever looked at your pen at school? Oh, I used to.

I used to look at my pen, and I'd say to myself, I wish that jolly pen could answer the questions for me. But it was no good. It couldn't.

It had to be. Are you watching? Right! By your teachers, clever. Oh, I say.

Do you know, it had to be controlled by a person. Do you know, boys and girls, when the Lord Jesus made us, gave us, and then went to Calvary's cross and died for us. He not only died, but after he died, he rose from the dead.

And my Bible says that he's willing to come into our hearts and control us day by day. Let's see if we've got it all right now. Remember, no shouting, sir.

I say, let's get the first one right. First of all, the pen had to be made for a purpose. It had to be very good.

You're a bit like me, though. I used to put my hand up and hope teacher didn't ask me. I say, it had to be made for a purpose, but it had to be purchased with a price.

Purchased with a price. And then it had to be controlled by a person. And that's just what the Lord Jesus wants to do for us.

By the way, did you keep score, the teacher in the front row? Did you keep score? What were you doing writing there then? Oh, you were taking the notes out. Oh, I see. Oh, I see.

Now, well, I think, I think the girls were best. But only this week. Only this week.

Thank you. Now, please, do you know, I think it might be well if you were to take the boys and girls out now, sir. Because what I prepared to say is not, you know, they'll be fidgeting and I couldn't blame them.

I'd fidget. Would that be? That's right. Would you mind? We'll dismiss the children's meeting.

And march out good and smart. And everyone's looking at you. Watching you as you go out.

Thank you. That's right. Front row to start.

Or back row to start. Oh, that's right. In their day and generation.

I've been much in thought and prayer today concerning this evening. And I felt that I would like just to share with you, if I may, for a few moments for the mind, the tremendous story that's contained in the Gospel of Mark. I wonder if you'll permit me just to read a verse or two from the Gospel according to Mark.

And maybe there's someone here this evening of whom these words could also be said. The Gospel according to Mark, if we may please. And chapter 12.

The twelfth chapter of the Gospel according to Mark. Verse 28. And one of the scribes came and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that he had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandment says, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, master, thou hast said the truth. For there is one God, and there is none other but He.

And to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the soul and with all the strength and to love His neighbour as Himself is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto Him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question.

May the Lord just add His blessing to this story that I am sure you have heard preached from a legion of times. The little phrase I would like to share with you tonight is the phrase that will challenge the hearts of every one of us if we will take a moment or two to think about it. Thou art not far from the kingdom.

May I paint in the background. You will remember that the Lord Jesus has told a tremendous parable. He has told the parable of a man who planted a vineyard, who sent servants to care for those vines, and when the season came that he would expect fruit from the vines, he sent down to that vineyard a servant to collect what was his, rightfully his.

But you remember that the Scripture says that they took that servant and they beat him. And they cast stones at him. And when the owner of the vineyard heard what had happened, he sends another servant down.

And when they see this servant come, they not only beat, they not only cast stones at him, but they wound him in the head and they kill him. And the master sends the third time another servant down. And when they see this servant, oh, I say, they take him and they do the same to him.

But having, and I think this is a wonderful expression, having said the Lord Jesus as he tells the parable, having one son, his well-beloved, he said, and sent him down to the vineyard to claim what was rightfully his. He sent his beloved son. And when they saw him, they said, this is the heir.

Let us slay him and the possession will be ours. The inheritance will be ours. And they took the blessed son of the Father and they slew him and cast him out of the vineyard.

The Lord Jesus, using the parable, was using it to those Pharisees and scribes, those leaders of the religious life of that nation. And they had no doubt whatsoever of whom he was speaking. They knew that he was speaking about them.

I say, later in that same glorious Bible, we read the account of the first Christian martyr. When Stephen stood before the Sanhedrin council, stood on trial for his life, and he looked at them and he said to them, And which of the prophets did you not persecute? Which of the prophets did you not persecute? Just as that owner of the vineyard sent servant after servant after servant, and they stoned them and beat them and slew them and cast them out. So you have done this with my servants.

You have done this with those messengers that I have sent right through the years. And Stephen says, Which of the prophets did you not persecute? Now you'll understand, and I can well understand, that those Jewish folk were cut to the quick. They had to do something about it.

It would be noise abroad in the city that Jesus had put these leaders of the Jewish faith, he had put them into a position where they couldn't find an answer. And so they come to the Lord with what the Bible says is hard questions. They said, We'll get Him.

Why? We won't divide His ranks completely, but we'll divide them. And so the first one comes and looks at the Lord and says, Lord, I've got a question for you. It's the matter of the tribute money.

Is it lawful to render tribute to Caesar or not? They said, By, if He says it's not lawful, we'll go to the Romans and say, Here's a man who's telling those Jews they mustn't pay their taxes. And if He says it is lawful, we'll go to the Jews and we'll say, He's a Quisling, that's what he is, a Quisling. He's telling us that we ought to pay for those that have conquered us.

If we don't do nothing, we'll divide His ranks. But the Lord looked at them. Oh, what a Savior.

What a Savior. He looked at them and said, Show me the tribute money. Show me a penny.

Now, most preachers tell us that the Lord said, Show me a penny, because He didn't have one. Well, that might be true. That might be true, but I think it goes deeper than that, you know.

Do you remember, at the gate of the house of God, the money changers were found? Some of them actually got into the house of God, and the Lord turned them out. But do you remember, they were there, and they were there for a purpose. Because the Jewish rulers refused to accept Roman money.

And the people who came to make their offerings in the house of God, they changed their Roman money into Jewish money. Because the leaders of the Jewish faith said that it's wrong to have any Roman money at all. And Jesus said, Show me a penny.

And the leaders of the Jewish faith who told all their congregation that it was wrong to have Roman money, they put their hand in their pocket and they took one out straight away. You know, I can almost hear the Lord saying, He didn't. But I can almost hear the Lord saying to them, Yes, hypocrites.

You tell everyone else that it's wrong to have Roman money and you've got it yourself. Well, listen. That which belongs to Rome, you give to Rome.

That which belongs to God, you give it to God. What do they say? His ranks weren't divided. It was the other way around.

He stood on his head and shoulders above all others as the only one that had a pure argument. Then they came and it wasn't a matter of money. It was a matter of marriage.

The sad Jew sees. Now I must confess I rather detest puns on the Scripture because the Scripture is God's Holy Word. But I did hear one person once say that these sad Jew sees were sad Jew sees because they didn't believe in the Resurrection.

I only know this, that anyone who doesn't believe in the Resurrection is sad. They'll be sad in time and they'll be sad in eternity. But these sad Jew sees came.

They didn't believe in the Resurrection and they said, Oh no, just a moment. Just a moment. There was with us a man.

He married. Then he died. The Lord Moses said that if his brother was not married he had to marry the widow that she might be raised.

Well the brother died and his brother married the widow. Then that brother died and his brother married the widow. And that brother died and he's seven times over in the Resurrection.

Who's going to be her husband? Oh, I say, we've got him now. He can't answer this. But what a Savior we've got.

He just looked at them and said, You do her. Not knowing the truth. You don't know the mind and the truth of God.

Don't you realize that in the Resurrection there's neither marriage nor given in marriage? Don't you know in that state everyone else will be lifted to a place of complete happiness, complete joy? I say, you're arguing about if there's life after death. Well let me ask you something. You are Sadducees.

You are religious leaders. When God spoke to your leader, Moses, out of the burning bush, what did he say? Didn't he say, I am the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob? But just a moment, Abraham's been dead for hundreds of years. And Isaac's been dead for hundreds of years.

And Jacob's been dead for hundreds of years. I am the God. Not I was the God.

I am the God. God isn't the God of the dead. He's the God of the living.

And if He's the God of the living and He says, I am the God of Abraham, then there must be a resurrection. There must be a life after death. And the third one came.

And he said, oh, I've got a question and it is a question. Which is the greatest of the commandments? Which is the greatest of the commandments? The Lord looked at him. And the Lord said, the greatest commandment is this, the Lord our God is one Lord.

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and thy neighbor as thyself. And then looking at the man who had asked him the question, we come across this tremendous statement. Jesus looked at him and said, thou art not far from the kingdom.

Now I've got a number of things I want to share with you. I didn't want to take the text out of context. I don't want to say any more about the context as I'll keep you all here tonight and not say a word about the text.

But I want to say a few things about the text. I want to remind you first of all that they came to prove the Lord with hard questions. And I want to remind you that men and women have come to the Lord for many, many reasons.

There were some who came to Him that they might be fed because they were hungry. There were some who came to Him because they were curious. They'd heard all sorts of stories about Him and they wanted to see whether it was true.

There were some who came to the Lord Jesus that they might indeed find healing and they were healed. There were some who came that they might have a revelation of things to come. I know not why you have come to the service tonight.

Maybe you came because someone pressed you to come. Someone invited you to come. I don't know the reason you've come.

But I'm asking you this evening to go further than just coming to the service. I'm asking you, will you come to Christ? And there may be a hundred reasons why you come, but if you come to Him on this, I am absolutely sure that if you come to Him, you will find the one that has the answer to the deepest questions

of your life. The deepest questions.

This man came with his questions trying to catch the Lord, trying to trick the Lord. But oh, how graciously the Lord dealt with him. He said, Thou art not far from the kingdom.

Now if words mean anything, surely these words tell us that there are some people who are in the kingdom. You're not in it. You're not far from it.

But you're not in it. But there are some people who are in it. Oh, please, there has been a time in their life when they have started.

They've trusted the Lord. They still have much to learn. They have still much territory to gain.

But praise God, they know Jesus Christ as their Savior. They have met and trusted the man who died for them on Calvary's cross. They're in the kingdom.

But this man wasn't in the kingdom. Are you in the kingdom? Are you in the kingdom? But if words mean anything, they not only mean that there are some that are in the kingdom. It's possible to be in the kingdom.

But there are some who are far from the kingdom. Some who are far from the kingdom. What do words like these, you're not far, mean? Does it not mean that some people are far from the kingdom? There are men and women, maybe tonight in this very place, and you have to say you've never prayed, and you've never read your Bible, and you've never had any real concern about the name of the Lord, and you take it in vain so often.

You're far from the kingdom. But I don't believe that's the majority of folk here tonight, if there are any like that. But you haven't to be far from the kingdom to be outside of it.

It is possible to be so near, and yet so far. So good, and yet so bad. And this man wasn't far.

He was honest. He was upright. He was well educated.

He was the sort of person that you would candy the joy to name him as your neighbor. But he never had a real purpose in his life. He never bowed before Christ who loved him and gave Himself for him and said, Lord, You know that I need Your forgiveness and Your salvation.

He got near the Lord, but not near enough. Now he had thought seriously. Have you thought seriously? If there was one thing that struck me as I was reading through this chapter today, preparing for this evening, if there was one thing that struck me, it was this, that if ever a man thought and thought seriously, this man did.

There was no light thinking. He dared to look at the Lord, and he dared to say to the Lord, Lord, there is one God and there is none other. Now you know, there are not many people who talk like that.

There is one God. I meet men and women who make their business their God. Men and women who make their home their God.

Men and women who make their education their God. Listen, men and women who make their church their God. Yes.

Yes. They've never entered the kingdom. This man dared to say there is one God.

You know, he went back to the very beginning of divine truth. That tremendous sixth chapter, is it about the fourth verse of the book of Deuteronomy? When it lays down quite plainly for every one of us to know that there is one God and there is none else. Oh, please.

Please. There are those in the world today who take that text in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy and they take its equivalent in the portion that we've read and they say, well, there it is. Jesus couldn't be God.

There is one God. Please, I don't want to run a Hebrew lesson tonight. You understand.

Between you and me, I couldn't do it very far. I could only go so far. But I do know enough to know this.

In the simplest of knowledge, that there are two Hebrew words for one. There is a Hebrew word which means just one. Just one.

There is a Hebrew word which is in the plural, which is pronounced and quoted as one. But you see, I look around this service tonight. I point at my friend here and I say, there's one person here.

But I point at you and I say, there's one congregation. There are more in one congregation than there is in one person. But it's both one.

It's compound unity. One. And the word which is used, the Hebrew word which is used in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy is the word for compound unity.

One. One. God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

One. If God wanted to emphasize that there was only one, that there wasn't the Spirit and there wasn't the Son, He would have used the Hebrew word, Lapid. But He never did.

And this man knew it. He thought significantly. Friends, if heaven is real and hell is real, if life is real and death is real, don't you think you and I ought to take time to think seriously? This man did.

But he wasn't saying, he wasn't, thou art not far from the kingdom. You can think seriously and not be in the kingdom. He lived decently.

He not only thought seriously, he lived decently. He said, Why that commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind. It's real because it makes me go forth to love my neighbor as myself.

I don't know about you, but I wish we were living in a day when men and women loved their neighbor as themselves. Well, I don't know about you, but it seems to me as I open my newspaper, as I turn the knob of my wireless, as I listen to the television, it seems to me that we are living in a sick society. A sick society.

Oh, that men and women lived decently. Men and women went out to love their neighbors themselves while this man sought to live decently. He sought to love his neighbor as himself, but salvation is not of works, you see.

He still wasn't in the kingdom. Jesus said, Thou art not powerful. I say he not only lived decently, he not only thought seriously, but he behaved religiously.

He was a scribe. He was a man who behaved religiously. When the house of God was open, he was there.

When there was service to be done for the children of God, he sought to do it. He behaved religiously. But I've said so many times, and you've heard me say it, that you can be a member of the church, have your name on a wrist, you can have office in the church, look after by others, but that doesn't make you a Christian.

You know, we're living in a very peculiar day. In our modern vocabulary, we are always hearing people talk about being a born-again Christian. I hate the expression.

A born-again Christian? Are you suggesting you could be a Christian without being born again? That it's possible to be a Christian and not be born again? Listen, my friend, unless you are born again, you're not a Christian. So there's no need for you to use that word of born again. Talk about being born again if you will.

Talk about being a Christian if you will. But don't give some suggestion that people can be a Christian without being born again, because you can't. You can live decently, and you can live religiously, but this man did all that.

And Jesus said, thou art not far from the kingdom. He wasn't in the kingdom. But not only was he a man who thought seriously, he was a man who lived decently.

He was a man who behaved religiously. But here's a man who believed partially. He looked into the face of the Lord Jesus and he said, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth.

I mean, it's all right for you and me to talk about Jesus being Master. Oh, it's easy for us in this mobile belt to talk about Jesus being a Master. But he was talking about it in the midst of Jerusalem.

He was talking about it in the midst of those that hated Christ and would kneel into a cross. And he looked at him and he said, You Master, have you spoken the truth? Oh, how many folk over the course of years have I met of Jesus. And I've found so many of them except so much of what Christ said.

You know, I meet the person who says, Oh, I believe in the Sermon on the Mount, Mr. Ford. I believe in the Sermon on the Mount. Oh, I believe in the parable of the good Samaritan.

Oh, yes, I do. All right, my friend. You can believe partially and still be lost, not in the kingdom.

Dare I say one other thing? Dare I remind you that this man who thought seriously, this man who lived decently, this man who behaved religiously, this man who believed partially was the man who, when we've sought all we've got to say, here was a man who was moved completely. Oh, how his heart was moved when he was faced with the appeal of Jesus. When he saw the Lord Jesus answer all the questions that they'd thrown at him and stand unstained in the midst of those that would put him to death.

Have you been moved by Jesus, friend? I've been in services where I've seen men weep. And I don't often see men weep. I often hear preachers talk about men weeping.

But I've spent a great amount of my ministry among men. And I don't often see men weep, but I do. I've seen folk in services so moved they've had a job to stay in their seats and still go out of the service.

Unrepentant. Without having trusted Jesus. Thou art not father on the earth.

Please. Please. Am I painting someone's portrait tonight? Am I saying something concerning you tonight? Are you like this man? So near the kingdom.

Like a ship that weathers the storm of the high seas. And as wrecked on the rocks as it enters the harbour. So near.

And yet so far. Oh, my fellow traveler to eternity, we're not asking you tonight, will you go from this place and plunge into sin? We're asking you tonight, will you refrain from going from this place still outside of Christ? For there's not a man or a woman as honest and as righteous as they have sought to be, but still need the salvation of God. I thank God for a Saviour who reached down and would have rescued the virus that set her.

Thank God He would have. You know it's not my custom to stand in front of you and use illustrations of people that I've known who've come to know the Lord. If someone tells me that they've trusted Christ, I have a habit of saying, I'll see you in six months time.

I'd like to see how it works out. But I look back now over 42 years of serving Christ, I'm no longer a boy. As I look back over my life, I thank God for scores and scores and scores and scores of people who have entrusted Christ.

Their life has been changed such that when you look at them, you don't think they're the same people. That's the sort of salvation I believe in. A salvation that will change a man, will change a woman.

And the Lord looks at this man and He says, you're not far from the Kingdom. You're not far. But being near is not good enough.

No need for me to remind you, is there? No need for me to remind you there was a man who came so near Christ, his lips touched the lips of the Savior. He felt the very breath of the Christ upon his face. And then he slipped down to hell.

The poet as well said, thirty pieces of silver burn on a traitor's brain. Thirty pieces of silver, oh, it is a hellish gain. I've sinned and betrayed the guiltless, he cries with a bated breath.

And casting it down before them, he runs to a madman's death. So near! Oh, Judas, how near! No one was nearer than you, and yet not in the Kingdom. We were talking the other evening about the last Jewish king.

I reminded you that the Jews haven't had a king from that day to this, and won't have one until the blessed Christ of God, whose right it is to reign, will reign over them. But I think of Agrippa as he says, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. Almost.

But lost. I open my Bible and I turn the page to the story of the rich young woman. The scripture says, Jesus looking on him, loved it! But he went away.

He went away. Oh, my fellow traveler to eternity, can I ask you tonight, with a bang, are you in the Kingdom or not in the Kingdom? Or you say, how is it possible for me to know that I am in the Kingdom? Well, let me refer you to the thing I said a moment or two ago. I reminded you that to be a Christian, you must be born again.

To be in the Kingdom, you must be born again. For Jesus looked at Mr. Nicodemus and said, Nicodemus, you must be born again. Unless you're born again, you'll not see, let alone enter the Kingdom.

Have you been born again? Oh, you say, Mr. Preacher, it's a phrase that's used so often. How can I be born again? How can I be born again? This man tells me that and another man tells me something else. How can I be born again? Well, let me say this to you.

I have nothing to say to you. I wouldn't dare tell you how to be born again. I wouldn't dare.

But I'll let the Bible do it. I'll let the Bible do it. 1 John chapter 5, verse 1. 1 John chapter 5, verse 1. Don't go on this place and say, Ford said, I didn't.

1 John 5 and 1, stood this out. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. What? Have you been born again? Have you been? Do you know what it means to believe? It simply means to trust your life to Him.

If at the end of a hard week you have been able after meeting your expenses to put aside a little money, you go down the road and you walk into the bank and you put it on the counter and you say, Sir, I believe in the bank. Look after it for me. Have you ever come to Jesus Christ and said, Lord, here's my life? Take my life.

At the church at Corinth it was said they gave first themselves to the Lord. Have you ever come to Him and said, Lord, I'm no sinner. Take my sin and wash it away.

I can't do anything with it. I've tried to give it up. I've tried to finish with it and it comes and tells me again and again and again and again, Lord! I believe.

I'll trust my life to this. When 18 months or so ago I was on the bank in the hospital not expecting to come out, when the nurses came to me and told me they were going to jab me in my arm, they told me they were going to put things in my mouth and I had to swallow them, I didn't say, Don't do it! Don't do it! I couldn't have even told you the name of the surgeon or the doctor in whose hand I was. I was so powerless for understanding anything.

But I knew then that I believed in Him. There it is. Put the drill in.

Give me the pit. And I still take it. I've got a feeling every morning if you were to shake me, I'd rather.

I only know this. I only know I believe. Have you ever believed in God like that? Have you ever come to the heavenly position and said, Lord, if I am like I am and I remain like I am and I die of sin and I'll perish? But the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son cleansed us of all sin.

I come and I believe whosoever believeth that Jesus was a man. What a day! It's the Christ. It's the anointing of God.

God's Saviour! Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. What's on your birth certificate? Hey! What's on your death certificate? My Bible says that without Christ we're dead and touchless, isn't it? But He gives us new life. Born again.

Dare I? Dare I? Dare I tell you that old story I've told you before? I know. Dare I? I'm going to. You remember the story of the man that read the newspaper the same way as Mary does? Always start at the

same place.

Births, deaths and marriages. Reading it down. Oh, a little boy.

Oh, a little boy. Oh, very nice. Oh, a little girl.

Well, not so bad. Or married. Or at about time to.

You know the sort of remarks you make when you read it. Then suddenly saw. We regret to announce the death of.

There was his name. Suddenly at. There was his address.

But he wasn't there. Out he went. Bought another paper.

There is what we regret to announce the death of. Suddenly at. Down to the newspaper office he went.

And on the counter. Well, you can understand, can't you? So would I. Eventually the assistant editor came out. Full of apologies.

Said, sir, we're very sorry. We don't know how it's happened. We were notified and we printed.

But don't you worry. We'll put it right. What are you going to do? We'll put your name in the birth column tomorrow morning.

And I want to say, my friend. I'm glad I've got a Savior who puts our name in the birth column. Born again.

Yes, dead and trespasses and sin. But born again. Have you been born again? Thou art not far from the kingdom.

I don't know. Maybe there's someone like that tonight. Not far from the kingdom.

Don't stay like that. Because if you're not far from it, you're not in it. And you're in danger.

But tonight. Swing wide the door of your heart to the king of kings. Bid him enter for wonderful peace he brings.

He will shelter you under his outstretched wing. Swing wide the door of your heart to the king of kings. Shall we close and pray? Dear God and Father, we thank Thee again for these little children.

God bless them. Give to their parents that love and compassion and skill and help that they need to raise them to this. Give to the leaders of the little group with which they are connected.

Give to the woman group. The help which comes alone from Thee. That they may be able to bring them for the sake.

We thank Thee for those of our friends that have been with us now. Please Lord, grant that it shall not be said of anyone. Thou art not far from the kingdom.

Oh please God. May it not be said. They are far from it.

But grant that each one of us may take that step. And come into the kingdom of God. For Jesus' sake.

Amen. We won't sing a hymn because there will be some of you parents anxious to pick up your children. I do thank you for being with us.

And if there is anyone here tonight. And you care to talk with us about these things. We are your servants for Christ's sake.

Pray don't go on this way. Until you are sure you are in the kingdom. And the Lord bless you.

Amen.

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