

Building the Body of Christ - 3 the First Body of Christ

by Zac Poonen

To build the body of Christ, we must first live what we preach and be filled with the Holy Spirit, trusting God to provide for our needs.

Duration: 55:59

Scripture: Luke 3:21

Topics: "Faithful Living", "False Teachings"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living out what we preach, highlighting Jesus' example of living a faithful life before beginning His ministry and the need for us to first do before we speak. It contrasts Old Testament preaching with the New Testament focus on living out the message. The sermon also warns against false teachings, the pursuit of money in the name of God, and the deception of relying on miracles as proof of God's approval.

Transcript

We began yesterday looking at John 14 and verse 12, where we saw that if you really believe in Jesus, we can do the works that he did. And we saw that before he began a ministry, he was faithful in his home. And as a carpenter, he was faithful in his place of work.

A lot of people think that if we know the Bible, then we can preach. That's one of the biggest mistakes that Christians have made. Jesus knew the Bible at 12 years of age, but he didn't go to preach when he was 12.

He had to be proven for another 18 years before he went out to preach. Otherwise, what he preached would have been only theory. For example, he preached in the Sermon on the Mount that if you look at a woman to lust, it is like adultery.

Now, if Jesus preached that at the age of 12, it would be true. But when a 12-year-old says that, you say, what experience does he have? But when a 30-year-old says that, it's different. Jesus' preaching was different from Old Testament preaching.

And it's different from 99% of Christian preaching today. Because of one reason. You know, it says at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, and when he wanted to complete his message on the Mount, he said,

Matthew 7.28 says that people were astonished to hear it.

Why? Because he was not teaching verse 29 like all the scribes. Because he spoke with authority. How can we speak with authority? A lot of Christian preaching today doesn't have spiritual authority.

They make a lot of noise. They make them run up and down a platform holding a mic. It's not authority, that's drama.

There's only one way to have authority. And that is, if you have first lived what you preach. The whole secret of Jesus' authority was, everything he said, he had lived for 30 years.

That's why, even though he knew the Bible at the age of 12, he did not preach. Today, there are Christians who don't even know 10% of what Jesus knew at the age of 12. But they go around preaching.

They make a lot of noise. Bang the pulpit and run around. Try to imitate all the American preachers.

And because most believers don't have any discernment, they think these people are very spiritual people. And they themselves think they are very spiritual. Don't be fooled by them.

I am not fooled by any of them. A person is not spiritual because he can sing well. Or because they can write good songs.

That only shows they have got a human gift. So many Christians are taken up with that. They are impressed by good preaching, good music.

Or somebody who can play some instruments well, musical instruments. But a really spiritual man will only be impressed by a life that backs up the words. So that is how Jesus had authority.

So if we have faith, we can do the works that Jesus did and have the authority Jesus had. See Acts 1 verse 1. See Acts 1 verse 1. Acts of the Apostles was written by a man called Luke. The first book he wrote was the Gospel of Luke.

This is the second one. So in the first verse, he is referring to the Gospel of Luke. And what is the title he gives to the Gospel of Luke? We call it the Gospel of Luke.

But he himself calls it something else. He says that is a description of all that Jesus began to do and teach. Just read verse 1. He first did and then he taught.

He never taught what he did not do. And he did not do after teaching. No, he did it first and then taught.

In other words, he never taught what he had not done. That is the pattern for true Christian ministry. In the Old Testament, it was not like that.

Old Testament, if God gave you a message, you could preach it even if you have not done it in your life. See Moses for example. We do not know much about his family life.

Only one place we read that he was fighting with his wife. Chapter 4. And he did not obey God in circumcising his son. Because his wife was not a Jew.

So his wife was the boss in the house. She said we are not going to circumcise the child. So Moses said okay, we will do what you say.

But when he could stand up and preach. Because in the Old Testament, your family life was not important. You just speak what God gives you.

But in the New Testament, the life is the message. The word does not come out of the mouth. The word has to become flesh.

In Moses, the words came out of his mouth. In Jesus, the word was flesh. But the word for Jesus was his body.

You must either follow Moses or Jesus. You must follow Moses or Jesus. 95% of preachers I hear, they follow Moses.

They say do not look at me. Do not look at the way I live at home. Do not look at the way I speak to my wife.

Do not look at the way I bring up my children. But listen to what I say. This is the word of God.

All hypocrisy. That is the reason for the pathetic, rotten state of Christianity today. So many thousands of Christians accept that.

But Jesus was not like that. How long do you think he took to prepare that wonderful sermon on the mount? Did he sit down one Saturday for 3-4 hours? No. He had prepared it for 30 years.

What he spoke was what he lived. Many people find it very difficult to preach a sermon. Supposing I were to ask you this question.

Can you tell me a few things about how you lived in the last 20 years? That is easy. I have just got to speak what is in my life. That is true Christian preaching.

You speak what is in your life. Jesus did and spoke. He did and spoke.

That is how we build the body of Christ. If we speak without doing. We will build an old testament congregation.

There are many big churches today. There are. In America there are some churches with 30,000 people in one church.

It is not a church. It is a congregation. It is an old testament congregation.

They are not members of a body. If you go and sit in a big cinema theatre with 30,000 people. They are all very interested in what is happening on the screen.

They don't have any relationship with each other. It is not a body. It is a group.

They will come next week for the next cinema. This is exactly how many churches are. They all come and sit and watch some performance in the front.

They are not a family. The true church is a family. It is a body like the human body.

The only way we can be part of that is if we first do before we speak. How does Luke describe his first letter? The title is this. The Gospel of Luke.

All that Jesus began to do and to teach. That is how he describes it in the first verse here. Now you are all clever people.

Tell me from that verse. Only from that verse. What should be the title of Acts of the Apostles? From that verse you can get it.

What should be the title of Acts of the Apostles? All that Jesus continued to do and teach. That is the title of Acts of the Apostles. The Gospel of Luke is.

All that Jesus began to do and teach in his earthly body. Acts of the Apostles. All that Jesus continued to do and teach through his spiritual body.

No, spiritual body. It is just a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. The same ministry Jesus continued for 33 years and earth now continues for 2000 years through his spiritual body.

Have you seen these relay races? Have you seen these relay races? Do you know what a relay race is? You hold a stick and run around. In Olympic games you see that. No, no, no.

You take a stick and run one round. Then you give it to the next person and he carries round. Isn't there a name for a relay race in Hindi? You hold a stick and run one round.

Then you give it to the next person and he carries round. That is called relay race. Like that they go round and round.

We can see the Christian life like that. That Jesus had something in his hand. That was the Gospel.

The good news. That the kingdom of heaven has come to this earth. It could be seen in his body.

Heaven was seen in him. If you want to know how people speak in heaven, you could listen to Jesus. How people live in heaven, look at Jesus.

That was the Gospel. It wasn't just your sins will be forgiven. Forgiving our sins is like cleaning the cup.

That is not enough. If I go to somebody's house and they give me a cup of tea, and they want to give me a cup of tea, and they just clean the cup and give it to me, I say, where is the tea? The cup is clean but it is empty. Forgiveness of sins is like that.

What is the use of cleaning the cup if you don't fill it? The Gospel is, heaven can now be lived in our life, in our home. That was the stick Jesus had, the Gospel. The Gospel of the kingdom of heaven.

He finished his race at 33 and a half years. Like in the relay race, he gave that stick to the next person. That was the apostles, Peter and others.

Like Paul. When Paul was finishing his race, he gave it to Timothy. That is the way it should have continued for 2000 years.

Each person giving it to the next person. This relay race was continuing till Jesus returned. But you know what happened? I think very early, maybe in the 2nd century itself.

Some people dropped the stick and they are running. You know, in the Olympic Games, if you drop the stick, your running is useless. It is not counted.

You can run as much as you like, you are wasting your time. Sometimes that happens when one person is passing the baton to the other, he drops it. You know what they do? They stoop down, pick it up, they know it is useless running without it.

So I believe that in all these 2000 years, there have been some people always who have held this baton and run the race. That means somewhere on the earth, there will be somebody preaching the true gospel. Even if 99% are preaching a watered down gospel, it is just like the way a lot of milkmen sell milk.

To make more money, they add water into the milk. They keep on adding. Finally, it is mostly water and a little bit of milk.

That is what happened to the gospel. The gospel was mixed with so many human ideas. Finally, it is mostly human ideas, just 1% gospel.

So that is what we are hearing in most places today. You see for example, the amount of emphasis on money in Christian television today. All of them are asking for money.

Even in the churches, most of the pastors are asking for money, money, money. It is the gospel mixed with water. The gospel was all about God.

See it says in Romans 1. Paul says, I am an apostle set apart for the gospel of God. Romans 1. I am an apostle set apart to preach the gospel of God. This gospel, it says in verse 3, concerns his son.

It is about Jesus. The gospel is about Jesus. It is not about money.

It is about Jesus, how he can deliver us from sin. But when that is not preached, when the emphasis is on collecting money, then it is no longer the gospel. It is mixed up with worldly ideas.

We must not be deceived by all that. Some of the biggest deceivers are those who say that God can do miracles for you. They say God can open your blind eyes.

If I pray, God will open your blind eyes. God will heal your sicknesses. God can even raise the dead.

There is only one thing God cannot do for me. He cannot give me money, so you got to give me that. That miracle God cannot do.

What a deception, and you believe it. The only thing God cannot do is He cannot give you money. For that I have to pass a bag around like a beggar and collect it from you.

There is no difference between these people who pass bags around and the beggar who comes with a tin to your gate. What type of God is this who cannot give us money? All these fake miracles which they do, which fool people. It is the greatest deception.

It is preparing the way for the false miracles that the Antichrist is going to do. He must not be deceived by it. All this false fullness of the spirit and all that.

Jesus did and taught. He did the greatest miracles of all, but he never passed a bag around collecting money before or after doing his miracles. He preached the greatest sermons man has ever heard, but he never passed a bag around to collect money after preaching the sermon.

He had a father in heaven and the father would take care of his needs. All he had to do was to live a life that his father liked. If the father was happy, the father would take care of all of Jesus' needs.

He didn't have to tell anybody his needs. This sort of thing happened even in the first century. There were so many people who were going after rich people for money even then.

In the Old Testament there is a story of Elisha and Gehazi. This rich general came from Syria and through Elisha's prayer he was healed. He came and gave some money to the preacher and Elisha said, I don't want it.

Is it wrong for a servant of God to receive money which he never asked anybody for? Servant of God. It is wrong to receive it from some ungodly, unconverted Syrian man. Elisha would receive it from the Israelis but not from Syria.

But Gehazi was not like that. He said, what a fool my master is. So he went after that man and got his money and clothing and all that.

And he got his leprosy also. And the worst part is he passed on that leprosy to his children. And what did he lose? He lost the possibility of being the next prophet after Elisha.

See Elisha was serving Elisha and he could have been the next prophet. How did he miss it? Because he went after people for money. The same thing is happening today.

Why is it we don't hear anointed, prophetic word from heaven? Which delivers people from sin. Which transforms family lives. Because people have gone after money.

They are not worried whether you get free from your anger. They are not worried whether you get free from your lust and bitterness. They are not worried whether there is peace in your home.

They only want to collect money from you. You tell me, do you think they are followers of Gehazi or followers of Elisha? Do you think they are followers of the apostle Paul or demons who went after money? His co-worker, Demas. He went after money and he left Paul.

He was like Gehazi. But Jesus was so different. The body of Christ, the most important requirement is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

We don't build the body of Christ with money or with music. We trust God to give us enough money to do whatever is needed. If you want to hire a hall here or pay for the food or use a hall like this, you have to pay money for it.

We need money so God gives it. But, supposing we don't have money. Like the early Christians.

Like the early Christians. They used to meet in forests and in the caves and all types of places. But they had a wonderful time.

They may not have had chairs and good building and all. But they were filled with the Holy Spirit. That was the main thing.

So that's what we need to remember. That the Gospel has got nothing to do with money. It has to do with the Holy Spirit filling us.

So this is where Christianity has gone astray. So let's look at Luke chapter 2 once again. Luke's Gospel chapter 2. Verse 49.

We saw that the most important thing for Jesus was to know him as his father. But I want you to see what the father said about him in Luke chapter 3. That's the next thing I want you to see. Luke chapter 3. At the time of his baptism.

We read here Luke chapter 3. And verse 21. When all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. And while he was praying the heaven was open.

And the Holy Spirit came upon him. And a voice said this is my beloved son. In whom I am well pleased.

There are two things I want you to learn there. Which are very important in our life. Remember what I said.

The father loves us as he loved Jesus. God wants to say the same words to us. What are those words? You are my beloved son or daughter.

Number one. Second. I am well pleased with you.

I want to ask you is that your desire? That is the greatest desire of my heart. I have never wanted to be a great preacher. No interest in that.

I never wanted to have a healing ministry. Or travel the world or even build a church. No.

My desire is to hear Jesus the father say to me. You are my beloved son. I am well pleased with you.

If you make that the goal of your life. I want to tell you something. You will accomplish the greatest ministry that any human being can do on the earth.

I am not saying that you will be a great preacher. Maybe you will be a mother. Never travel outside your home.

But you will do the greatest ministry that God has wanted you to do. A finger can never see like the eye or speak like the tongue. If God has made you like a little finger don't try to be a tongue.

No. It must be a finger. God calls somebody to be an evangelist and somebody to be a teacher.

Somebody to be an apostle and somebody to have a healing ministry. Somebody to be a mother. And somebody to just be a help in the church.

Different parts of the body. And if the finger tries to be a tongue because it's jealous that the tongue can speak so much and I can't speak then it will never be able to do what it should do as a finger. The best thing for a finger to do is to be a finger.

If for example a sister says I wish I could have been born as a man so that I can get up in the pulpit and preach a lot. You think God made a mistake in making you a woman? He makes no mistakes. That would be as foolish as my saying I wish I could be a woman so that I could bear children into this world.

How sad that I could not bear any children myself. That's crazy. Stupid.

God doesn't make a mistake. There are different functions in the body. All are equally important.

But we have to first live before we speak. We need to long that we will hear these words from our heavenly father. We must long to hear these words.

First of all you are my son you are my daughter. You must be sure of that. A lot of Christians are not very sure.

Always in doubt they have always seen God is looking at them with some anger. That's the mark of false religion. In Bangalore when they are building some new houses in construction time I see them put a statue of a terrible looking face on top of that building.

I think that's to frighten people from casting any bad eyes on that building if they are jealous. That is a picture of their God. Their God is a frightening type of God who is out to threaten you.

One mark of false religion is they have a God who frightens everybody. That's a mark of false religion. If your God frightens you you've got a false Christianity.

No. I have a father he doesn't frighten me. And I'll tell you something else.

He is never angry with me. He is sometimes sad when I do something wrong. But not angry.

Do you know God is a father like that? Do you know God like that in your life? Not someone who is angry with you. But sad when you don't do according to his will. Don't think that because God answers your prayer he is happy with you.

We know in Gethsemane that one prayer of Jesus God the father did not answer. Did not give him what he wanted. In Gethsemane he said take away this cup.

Father said no. But see another example in 1 Corinthians 10. In 1 Corinthians 10 we read about all the 600,000 Israelites who came out of Egypt.

From Egypt. And they came out it says in verse 2 they were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And they ate spiritual food.

They got food from heaven. Because they were in a desert for 40 years. Desert.

Where everyday they got food from heaven. Imagine if you got food one day from heaven. You'll be talking about it for the rest of your life.

These people got it every day for 40 years. And when they wanted water they would hit a rock and the water would come out. What miracles they experienced.

Then one day they wanted non-vegetarian food. Then hundreds and thousands of birds came and dropped there in front of them. And they got meat also.

Absolutely amazing. The bible says their chappals did not wear out for 40 years. Their shirts never got worn out for 40 years.

What all miracles they experienced. Snakes bit them they would make a bronze snake and they would be healed. They experienced the greatest miracles that anybody has seen.

The most powerful army in the world Egypt they saw them buried under the Red Sea. They fell under the Red Sea. But was God happy with them? See verse 5. With most of them God was not well pleased.

They killed them in the wilderness. So what does that teach us? You can experience the greatest miracles on earth and God may not be happy with you. Some people think that if I get a miracle in the name of Jesus that means God is very happy with me.

I have seen people they experience one miracle in their life for the next 30 years they are only talking about that. Maybe one healing. Do you know how many thousands of people whom Jesus healed in the Gospels who all went to hell? How many thousands? Jesus healed them.

They could testify. Those lepers Jesus healed them. One of them got saved.

Nine of them didn't get saved. How many thousands went to hell like that? Even today many are healed by Jesus who go to hell. Look at these people.

600,000 people who experienced the greatest miracles ever recorded in the Bible. Where do you read in the Bible of people experiencing miracles every day for 40 years? Every day getting bread from heaven. Every day getting water from a rock.

Not one miracle. 40 years every single day. But God was not happy with them.

It's written there God was not pleased with them. To teach everybody that when God does a miracle it does not prove that God is happy with you. It only means that God is a good God.

You can give food to a disobedient child of yours. You may not be happy with the child but you give him food. You pay school fees but you are not happy with him.

It is one of the stupidest things that Christians believe that God answered my prayer so he must be happy with me. Now I will show you the example of a man who experienced no miracles and who did not do any miracles. He never experienced any miracles and he did not do any miracles for 30 years.

Jesus What did the father say about him? The opposite of what we read in 1 Corinthians 10. They were experiencing miracles for 40 years and God said I am not happy with them. Here was a man who lived for 30 years experiencing no miracles doing no miracles and he says I am well pleased with him.

Can God be well pleased with a man who never experienced a miracle? Who never did a miracle? This is Jesus. The trouble with a lot of Christians today is that they have not read their Bible properly. That is why they are deceived by all these television preachers.

This is what the Lord has told me to say. Those who do not study the Bible deserve to be deceived. They deserve to be deceived because they neglect the one book God has given us to study.

There are so many Christians in India particularly in the cities. It may be true of some of you sitting here who watch Christian television more time than they spend reading the Bible. When God in heaven sees that this child of mine spends one hour watching Christian television and 10 minutes reading the book I gave him he deserves to be deceived.

Satan, you can deceive him. This is why Satan and so many Christians are deceived today. You tell me, is it true that you read the Bible more than you listen to other Christian preachers? Then you won't be

deceived.

Some people think if they see a miracle they will repent. See in Luke chapter 16 I am telling you about so many wrong ways in which people try to build Christ's body. That's why people can't see Christ in us.

People don't see Jesus in my behavior and conduct. Then it proves nothing. I can't build the body of Christ.

See in Luke 16 there was a rich man who went to hell and verse 23 in hell he lifted up his eyes and he saw Abraham sitting there. And he said see I've got five brothers down in the world. So can you please send verse 28 can you please send somebody to warn them.

Send somebody from heaven to go and warn my five brothers. Do you know what Abraham said? Listen. Verse 29.

They have got the Bible. That is the Bible. Your old testament the Bible was called Moses and the prophets.

So what Moses Abraham was saying they've got the Bible why do I need to send anybody else. Why do they need a television preacher they've got a Bible. Let them read the Bible.

Let them hear what is written in the Bible. Verse 29. The man says no if they see a miracle a man raised from the dead then they will listen.

No Abraham says verse 31. If they don't listen to the Bible miracle is not going to help. These are the words of Jesus.

That the Bible is more powerful than even a miracle of a man rising from the dead. But how is it with today's Christians? If some preacher raises the dead they'll sit with their mouth open and believe that man more than the Bible. They don't read what Jesus wrote.

If they don't listen to the Bible somebody being raised from the dead is just a deception. God sent Jesus to the earth because so many people had wrong ideas about what God was like. They did not know what God was like.

Today people have got a wrong understanding of Jesus. Now we have to show them what Jesus is like by our life. That is the message we have to proclaim.

We are first to do and then to teach. Then we can build the body of Christ. Let's pray.

While our heads are bowed in prayer don't resist the voice of the Holy Spirit. Say Lord I have only one life and I don't want to waste it. I don't want to be satisfied that you hear my prayer.

I want to please you like Jesus did. Thank you. In Jesus name.

Amen.

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