

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **A Passion for the Lost**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-6

#### The Passion of Jesus for the Lost

I don't want to share a long time tonight, nor do I necessarily want to preach a sermon at you. I would like to, if I might, and I do this from time to time, just have kind of a large group Bible study with you, along the theme of the passion of Jesus for the lost. But it will take me just a little bit of time to sort of get specifically to that because I want to speak in general of this matter of being concerned about people who are without the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let me begin by saying it this way. Everything great in life, everything worthwhile, everything significant, everything supremely impactful and fulfilling is the result of someone's undeniable and unstoppable passion. The things that mark human history as unique events are the result of people who have a deep and consuming desire to see something come to pass. And if Christianity is to impact the world, it must be carried by people who have a consuming desire to see it reach the ends of the earth. There must be a certain passion involved in Christian evangelism. But because we live in an age which literally overwhelms us, which overpowers us, which dominates our thinking, the age in which we live tends to dull our sharpness. It tends to blunt our commitment. It tends to obscure the reality of what is a genuinely legitimate goal and what is an illegitimate involvement in nothing more than trivia. We live in an age that robs our faith of its inflammatory power.

And for the most part, it seems to me that Christians are content to sort of set out their faith in mental crystals. It's just sort of hard and clear and cleancut and that's about it. There are Christians today, it seems to me, that sort of are a cold bath for every fiery heart. In fact, when we meet someone with passion who is concerned about some spiritual enterprise, we don't understand that because that is not the norm. The norm is to sort of have your Christianity fit in somewhere so it doesn't disrupt your life style, or it doesn't...it doesn't create discomfort for you. It doesn't break into your leisure.

Many in Christianity today have a big brain but a very small heart. And the church's temperature has dropped. Her step is leaden and her spirit is somewhat apathetic.

Whenever I think about that I am reminded of something I found years ago in the Presbyterian Journal that I think is so powerful, I read it to you about seven years ago when we were in Matthew 4. And I want you to listen to it again. It is a modern parable.

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little life saving station. The building was just a hut and there was only one boat but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea and with no thought for themselves they went out day and night tirelessly searching for the lost. Many lives were saved by this wonderful little life saving station and it became famous. Some of those who were saved and various others in the surrounding area wanted to become associated with the station and wanted to give their time and money and effort for the support of its work. So new boats were bought and new crews were trained and the little life saving station grew.

Some of the members of the life saving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt a little more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. So they replaced the emergency cots and beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building. Now the life saving station became a popular gathering place for its members and they decorated it beautifully and furnished it exquisitely because they used it as sort of a club. Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on life saving missions so they hired life boat crews to do the work.

The life saving motif still prevailed in the club's decorations and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where club initiations were held. About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the hired crews brought in loads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick and some of them had black skin and some had yellow skin. And the beautiful new club was considerably messed up. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where the victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life saving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life. Some members insisted on life saving as their primary purpose, pointed out they were still called a life saving station. They were finally voted down and told if they wanted to save the lives of various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own life saving station down the coast, which they did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that occurred in the old one. It evolved into a club and yet another life saving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself. And if you visit that coast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along the shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters but most of the people drown.

You get the idea. It's a parable of the church. And we have to ask ourselves the question: where has the passion for life saving gone? Where is the burden for evangelism? Why is it that evangelism seems to be a distraction for the church rather than its central function? Where is the spirit of

Jeremiah who in chapter 9 verse 1 said, "Oh, that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people?" He wished that he had a head filled with water so that it could gush out with all of the emotion bottled up inside, escaping only minimally through his tears.

Has the church settled for a self-indulgent kind of Christianity that makes of the church nothing more than activity center? Are we all content with comfort and personal prosperity? If you look back at history, the record of history is that all of its greatest ages have been marked by certain valiant efforts of men. Men who have bridged the gulf which threatened to destroy their society by walking over the body of some fanatic who made himself a highway for his people. The world has always been turned by fanatics. It has always been turned by the passionate people. John Stewart Blackey said many years ago, quote: "The early church worked by a fervent moral contagion, not by the persuasion of a cool argument. The Christian method of conversion, not by logical arguments but by moral contagion and the power of the Holy Spirit, has with the masses of mankind always proved itself the most effective," end quote.

What he's saying is, evangelism is effective when it comes from what the Africans used to call the "hot heart" rather than the cool mind. It is the passion for holiness and the passion for lost people to come to Christ that fires the church and makes it powerful. When the church is preoccupied with its comfort, something wrong has taken over.

I was amazed to hear recently that some people who had been in our church for many years left because we changed their classroom. And I said, "God, help us if we are so far away from what the church is all about that that causes us to leave a church where for many years we have built ourselves into the lives of people and hopefully have been listening to some of the things that were being said." A church or a Christian without strong convictions and strong passion is basically powerless.

You can go back to the Reformation. The greatest mind in the world at that time, the world of theology was a man named Erasmus. He was the polished, he was the learned, he was the mightiest intellect of his day but he had a vacillating character. And God never used him to bring about the Reformation. Instead, God took the rough yearning burning Martin Luther and through him not half the intellect of an Erasmus, not the polished and not the skill and not the charm but the fire in his heart. And it was he that God used to turn around the course of church history. The great preacher, Joseph Parker, said years ago, "As long as the church of God is one of many institutions, she will have her little day. She will die and that will be all. But just as soon as she gets the spirit of Jesus, until the world thinks she has gone stark mad, then we shall be on the high road to capture this planet for Christ," end quote.

"I marvel," said an old Puritan, "how I can preach stoically and coldly, how I can let men alone in their sins and that I do not go to them and beseech them for the Lord's sake. However they take it and whatever pains or trouble it should cause me, when I come out of my pulpit I am not accused of want, of ornaments or elegance, nor of letting fall an unhandsome word, but my conscience asks me how could you speak of life and death with such a heart? How could you preach of heaven and hell in such a careless and sleepy manner? Truly this peel of the conscience does ring in my ears, O Lord, do that on our own souls that You would use us to do on the souls of others," end quote.

I can identify with that. Sometimes I feel the great guilt of preaching coldly or somewhat indifferently in heart, if not in voice, of things that demand the greatest commitment.

One great saint of God, Horatio Bernar, after listening to a young minister who was preaching with great gusto said to him, "You love to preach, don't you?" "Yes indeed, sir, I do."

"But," said the saint, "do you love the men to whom you preach?" That's the issue.

And it's tragic when we come to the place in the life of the church where we have found ourselves so...so deep into Christian culture that we've lost our passion. We've lost our warm heart. We have a well-trained mind but not a warm heart.

Dr. Cortland Myers, a Baptist pastor of years back, wrote a book entitled How Do We Know?. The book was about Robert Murray McShayne(?), one of Scotland's greatest preachers who died at the age of 29. That would be the age that I came to Grace Community Church. He ministered to 29 and the Lord took him home. In the book Dr. Myers writes, "Everywhere McShayne stepped, Scotland shook. Whenever he opened his mouth a spiritual force swept in every direction. Thousands followed him to the feet of Christ. A traveler eager to see where McShayne had preached went to the Scottish town and found the church. He went in. An old gray haired sexton agreed to take him through the church. He led the way into McShayne's private study. 'Sit in that chair,' he ordered. And the traveler hesitated a moment then sat in the chair. On the table before him was an open Bible. 'Drop your head in that book and weep, that's what our minister always did before he preached,' said the old man.

"He then led the visitor into the pulpit before the open Bible. 'Stand there,' he said, 'and drop your head on your hands and let the tears flow, that's the way our minister always did before he began to preach.' And Dr. Myers said with a passion for souls lost in needy, is it any wonder that the Holy Spirit gave McShayne a magnetic personality that drew so many to the Savior."

It's the importance of a passionate heart. In fact, I think it would be safely said that no virtue is safe that is not held enthusiastically. No virtue is safe in the hands of one who does not have great conviction. Of John Knox it was said, and I quote his biographer, "So mighty was he in his yearning

for lost souls that I thought he would break the pulpit into bits." Of Joseph Allane(?) who has written so profoundly on the subject of salvation, it was said, quote: "With infinite insatiable greed for the conversion of souls he preached with far-reaching voice, flashing eye and a soul on fire with love."

Where are these men? I decided this week that I needed to read more about those kind of men and so I did. And I read about the passion of John Wesley, his passion for the lost is really astounding. Let me give you a little of the biographical data on John Wesley. The writer says, "He went out to do for England more than was done by the armies and navies of England in the whole length of his life. What courage and what toil. Ease and he had parted company. And as for money, he lived on a pittance and gave away more than \$200 thousand. Abused and maligned in his time, he could say I leave my reputation where I leave my soul, in the hands of God. He said to his brother, Charles, 'When I devoted to God my ease, my time, my labor, did I exempt my reputation?' So John Wesley on foot and horseback traveled 225 thousand miles, preached 2,400 sermons and amid misrepresentation and abuse, never knowing the delights of love at home, subject to incessant attacks of the mob, the pulpit and the press. He did not abate a jot of heart or hope until he had reached the age of 88 and ceased at once to labor and to live."

Canon Ferrar(?) says, "Overwhelming evidence exists to show that the church and people of England in his day were dull, vapid and soul-less and the preaching was careless. The land steeped in immorality. To Wesley was granted the task for which he was set apart by enviable consecration the task which even an archangel might have envied him of awakening a mighty revival of religious life in those dead pulpits in the slumbering church and moribund society. He was the religious sincerity which not only formed the Wesley community...which later became Methodism...but working through the heart of the very church which had despised him, he flashed fire into her whitening embers. It was he who discovered that lost secret of Christianity, the compulsion of human souls. He was the voice that cried over the valley of dry bones, 'Come from the forewinds, O Spirit, and breathe on the slain that they may live.' In Westminster Abbey, that great temple of silence and reconciliation, one may read three of his great sayings, one full of holy knowledge, quote: 'I look on all the world as my parish.' Another full of triumphant confidence, quote: 'God buries His workman, but His work goes on.' The third, his cry in an age of feebleness extreme is the best of all, quote: 'God is with us.'" And, his biographer says of him in climaxing his life, "He was out of breath pursuing souls."

And then there was the example of a great American preacher by the name of George Whitfield. In a long list of great evangelists, the biographer says, "No name stands out clearer in the light of an absorbing passion than that of Whitfield. To him two continents acknowledge their debt and keep green the traditions of his marvelous power. Most of the leaders and charmers of men have come to their service from under the low lintils of the poor and Whitfield was no exception. Uniting with Wesley to form the holy club at Oxford, he was at first morbid in his spiritual earnestness. He wore patched clothing, ate coarse food, prayed under the trees far into the winter nights in such agony of soul that the sweat ran down his face. At last he laid hold on God by simple faith. He had traveled

his own via *de la rosa*(?) the way of the cross, and through pain came to peace. Thereby he was able to help others whose journey came along the same path. Ordained at the age of 22, he began to preach immediately with tremendous effect. Probably no man since the days of Paul excelled him in sacred eloquence. Said John Newton, 'If you ask me who is the second preacher in the world I do not know. But if you ask me who is the first, there can only be one answer...Whitfield' Franklin went to hear him plead for his orphan school in Georgia but resolved he would give nothing. After listening a little, he decided to give his money, first his coppers, then his silver, then his gold, and before Whitfield was done he had emptied his pockets. Hopkinson left his money at home purposely but was so moved he borrowed all his neighbor's money. Gerrick(?) said he could repeat the words Mesopotamia and everyone would weep. But after all has been said about his eloquence, his power over men depended most upon the passion of his soul which absorbed ever lesser ambition and used every God-given power to lead men to the personal choice of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. He was a kindred spirit with Jonathan Edwards in this regard and together they led the great awakening of our young republic. No man was more untiring in devotion than he. At one time he writes...and this is his writing...'Lord, when Thou seest me in danger of nestling down, put a thorn in tender pity into my nest.' And again he said, 'I am determined to go on until I drop to die fighting though it be on my stumps.'

"Speaking of his passions, a Dr. Parsons said of him in a sermon preached on the day of his death, We were convinced that he believed the message he brought to be of the last importance. On the marble epitaph(?) above his dust in Newbury Port these words are carved, it says there, 'As a soldier of the cross, humble, devout, ardent, he put on the whole armor of God, preferring the honor of Christ to his own interest, repose, reputation or life.'" And so says his gravestone. In 34 years he crossed the Atlantic 13 times and preached 18,000 sermons. For his seal he had a lambent flame and under it the motto, Let us seek heaven. In the words of the great poet Kalpur(?), "He loved the world that hated him. The tear that dropped upon his Bible was sincere, assailed by scandal and the tongue of strife, his only answer was a blameless life."

The records of the last hours of George Whitfield at Newbury Port is thrilling beyond words to tell. He is preaching his last sermon. His subject is faith and works. With his great tones he cries, "Works, works, a man get to heaven by works? I would as soon think of climbing to the moon on a rope of sand." But his voice begins to fail. "I go," he said, "to my everlasting rest. My sun has risen, shown and is setting. Nay, it is about to rise and shine forever. I have not lived in vain. And though I could live to preach Christ a thousand years, I die to be with Him which to me is far better."

He was to preach that same night but felt unable to do so. He took his candle to go to bed, half way on the outside staircase he paused with the candle in his hand...the candle had burned down to the socket and so had his life. He went to his room to an agonizing night, humanly speaking, and then into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Transform this nation as God's instrument.

I read about people like that and I ask myself...where are they? Where are they? It seems to me today that the prophets of Jehovah are just about as impotent as the priests of Baal when it comes to calling down fire from heaven. Oh, there's a lot of theatrics and a lot of manipulation and a lot of foolish hysteria, but where is the power and the passion for the lost?

Some of the most wonderful things written on the subject of evangelism were written by a man by the name of L.R. Scarborough(?) who at one time was the president of Southwest Baptist Seminary, the Southern Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth and was the head of their evangelism ministry. Some of his things are just marvelous. And in writing on the passion of Jesus he says this, "Jesus was more than reformer, benefactor, liberator, more than preacher and teacher, He was and is the world's regenerator. He found all life poisoned with deadly sin. He put the saving antitoxin, the life-giving serum of regeneration at the root of the world's sinful malaria, cholera, paralysis, leprosy, cancer, tuberculosis. He was the great physician, the world's great soul surgeon," end quote.

Jesus was marked uniquely, says Scarborough, as one who had a passion for the souls of men. He was eager to reach the lost. He was enthusiastic. He wept over the lost. And I really believe that He is our model and if even so briefly tonight, I would like to look at the Lord as the model of evangelism, of the passion of evangelism.

Now to see this, let's turn to the New Testament and to the gospel record and we'll not belabor the point but just make it and hopefully in a way that will be worth remembering. Jesus had a great commitment to reach lost people with the saving gospel. And I want to just show you some ways we know that, and I'll give you a little outline. First of all, we know that Jesus was concerned to reach the lost because even His forerunner was an evangelist...even His forerunner was an evangelist.

Matthew 3, who was His forerunner? John the Baptist. He was a reformer, a prophet, a mighty preacher, but preeminently he was an evangelist, preeminently he called for repentance, preeminently he was a soul winner, if we can use that rather contemporary term. It is interesting to me, it is significant to me that the Savior, the Son of God, the Lord of glory, Jesus Christ was introduced to the world by a man whose single credential was that he was an evangelist, that he preached repentance and was surely one of the most, if not THE most, powerful evangelistic prophet in the history of Israel. For all Jerusalem and Judea went out to hear him preach. He was a mighty powerful voice of thunder, calling men to God and introducing them to the world's Redeemer who said, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."

To get a little insight into his emphasis, chapter 3 verse 1, "In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying," and here's the essence of his message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He called for repentance, he called for men to turn from their sin and turn to God's kingdom which would be, of course, introduced by the King Himself, the Lord

Jesus Christ. "For this is He that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight," he was getting things ready for the Lord's coming. And it tells that he had a raiment of camel's hair, a leather belt about his waist, his food was locust and wild honey, not a particularly desirable diet, but then if you're out in the desert of Judea you don't have a lot of alternatives. There was nothing about his form or person that was particularly attractive. It was the power of his message, the power of his life. And it says in verse 5, "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region around about the Jordan, both sides of the Jordan. They were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins." This is a revival, folks, that this man brought in preaching against sin.

And he was very direct. He saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming. Now if he had been trained in modern methods of evangelism, you can only imagine how he might have dealt with the Pharisees. What subtleties he might have used to try to identify with where they were coming from. We could imagine all kinds of approaches he might have made. "Oh, that's wonderful...you're a Pharisee. My uncle was a Pharisee. My wife's sister is married, we have them for dinner, it's wonder...I'm so happy that you're..." Maybe there was even evangelism training for how to witness to a Pharisee.

Well I want you to see his approach. "He saw them coming and he said to them, O generation of snakes, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Amazing...what are you doing here, you snakes? "Bring forth therefore fruits befitting repentance and don't be saying to yourself, We have Abraham as our father, don't give me any of the Jewish pride stuff. I'm tell you, God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham, you're not anything special, He can do that with a rock."

Now this is a very direct method. "And now the ax is laid at the root of the trees, therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire, and I indeed baptize you with water to repentance, but He who comes after me is mightier than I whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, He shall baptize you with Holy Spirit and with fire, whose fan is in His hand He will thoroughly purge His floor, gather His wheat into the granary and He will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire."

But where are the thundering evangelists? Why have we bought this cool communication? What passion has been lost to evangelism in the contemporary church so that everybody is into the cool subtle approach...that frankly you don't find in the Scripture, being modeled by the evangelists of holy writ. It was said of John the Baptist in John 5:35 that he was a living and shining light. You would be with John the Baptist about 30 seconds before you knew what he had to say.

Listen, I know Jesus had a passion for evangelism because His forerunner was a fiery evangelist. That tells me something about the Lord's commitment. He wanted to start the revival before He even got here.



Secondly, and these are very obvious points, just by way of review, it is clear to me that He had a passion for evangelism because His own ministry centered on that. The very ministry of Jesus Christ was basically a ministry of evangelism. Chapter 4 verse 17 of Matthew, and we've seen this verse many times, "Jesus began to preach," and what was His message? He just echoed what John preached..."Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He no doubt said the same things John said about wrath to come, judgment, burning, hell, escaping it, confessing your sin, turning from your sin. He preached a message of repentance. And it became the thing that marked His ministry, more than any other subject. And when in verse 35 of chapter 9, He went about the cities and villages teaching the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people, we find there another indication that He was evangelizing. He was preaching the good news of the kingdom. What is the good news? That men's sins can be forgiven, that God has provided a lamb, that God has made provision for sin. That was the good news, and everywhere He went He preached it.

In chapter 11 verse 28 He gave an invitation. "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I'll give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, learn of Me, I am meek and lowly in heart. You'll find rest for your souls. My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Comparing Himself to the heavy load, heavy burden, unbearable things that the legalists were putting upon the backs of people. The first sermon recorded in Scripture, Matthew 5 to 7, I believe is the single greatest evangelistic sermon ever recorded. It is a masterpiece of evangelism in which Jesus starts out by saying here are the characteristics of those in My kingdom. Second point, you don't qualify. Third, you better qualify, you're going to be judged. Three points, three chapters. Number one, here are the standards. Number two, you don't meet them. Number three, you better meet them. Very simple, very straightforward.

You find Him in the gospel of John and repeatedly He is calling for people to come in faith and embrace Him. In John chapter 6 He says, "I am the bread of life." He says, "If you believe on Him that sent Me, that's the work of God." And then He turns and says, "You must believe in Me as the living bread, you must eat My flesh and drink My blood," and what He means is partake of Me. In John chapter 7 He says, "In the day of the great feast, if any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink." In chapter 8, "I am the light of the world." In chapter 10, "I am the good shepherd, I lay down My life for the sheep." In chapter 11, "I am the resurrection, I am the life." I mean, He's constantly proclaiming and proclaiming a message of evangelism, of salvation in Him.

So, we know that Jesus had a passion for the lost. He after all wept over the city of Jerusalem. His heart ached over their unbelief. And He cried out and cried out that they might be saved. But not only was it in the public area, and I could have read other Scriptures to substantiate and support that, there are myriad of them that tell us about the preaching ministry of Jesus, His public preaching. I'm thinking of Mark 1:39, "He preached in their synagogues throughout all of Galilee and cast out

demons." He was a preacher of the gospel. That was His primary calling, to call men to salvation. He came on an evangelistic mission.

But not only will we be sure of His commitment to evangelism by looking at His public preaching, but also by His personal witnessing. Jesus was also involved in personal evangelism. In fact, the initial people that He personally involved were some of the disciples. In John 1:43 He brought Philip to salvation. In Luke 5:27 to 32 and also in Matthew we have the record of Him bringing Matthew to salvation...called Matthew to us and in the gospel of John...of Luke chapter 5 He is called Levi, but it is the same man. So personally He brought Philip to faith, personally He brought Matthew to faith...and other of the disciples, no doubt.

And then in John chapter 4 He met a woman at a well who'd had five husbands and the one she was living with was not her husband, a pretty wretched woman. In wonderful grace He brought her to salvation. And then He met a tiny little guy who was a tax collector and an extortioner who had robbed everybody blind. In Luke 19 he was curious about Jesus, he climbed up in a tree and when the parade was coming by, he was sticking up there in the tree and the Lord just stopped the parade and looked at that guy, his name was Zacchaeus, and said, "Come down out of that tree." Which really puts him on the spot. He probably was trying to be a bit inconspicuous. He was no longer inconspicuous. And He said to him, "I'm coming to your house." And He did and in personal evangelism brought that man to faith and confession of sin and repentance and we know that because the man said, "I'll pay back everything I've ever taken four times." The fruit of repentance. He personally brought salvation to Nicodemus who came to Him by night and before the conversation was over he had learned about the new birth. He personally brought blind Bartimaeus, you read the story in Mark chapter 10 verse 46 to 52, how Jesus brought that blind Bartimaeus to trust and believe in Him as the Son of the living God.

And then one of the most beautiful stories of all, recorded in Matthew chapter 8 when Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee and came into the country of Gerasa and met the maniac of Gadara and that was a town in the area of Gerasa. And he met that...actually there were two of them and cutting themselves with stones and filled with all kinds of demons and before the whole event was...was over, He sent all the demons into a herd of swine who took off and did, what I like to call, a swine dive into the Sea of Galilee. And before the thing was over it says that maniac was sitting clothed and in his right mind and said, "O please, may I follow You." And the Lord wanted him to stay where he was to be a witness. He personally through His own witnessing brought that Gadarene maniac to faith.

And there were times, too, when He endeavored to do personal evangelism, but the heart was closed. Remember the rich young ruler of Matthew 19? After Jesus had brought to him the things he needed to know to come to life eternal, the young man because he was very rich said no, turned away and walked off. And the Lord was left. Tragic. It's nice to know that not every time Jesus witnessed to someone did they believe.

I think perhaps the most beautiful illustration of personal evangelism of all is the very brief and yet poignant encounter of Jesus and the thief on the cross, don't you? Before He was dying, before He went into that final moment and said, "It is finished," and committed Himself to God, He rescued from eternal hell the penitent thief. You see, He agonized over the souls of lost men. He grieved. In John 5 verse 40 He said, "You will not come to Me that you might have life." And there's a pensive quality in those words. His heart was grieved over that.

Look with me at Luke 19 for a moment. I'm sorry, Luke 16:19. This is Lazarus, the beggar and the rich man. And He tells the story of how the rich man went to Hades, or hell, and Lazarus went into Abraham's bosom, the place of blessing. And after having told the story, it comes to an end. And the rich man cries out and says, "Please send somebody to tell my brothers." And Abraham in verse 29 says, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." In other words, let them read the Word of God. And he said, "No, Father Abraham, if one went unto them from the dead, they would repent." And he said unto them, "If they don't hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." And surely when Jesus said that it must have just pained His heart like a stab because He would be that one that rose from the dead. And even though He did rise from the dead, they still wouldn't believe, right? And He knew that, and He said that.

Time is limited. There is no way we can cover all the elements of our Lord's use of evangelism. But He preached the gospel. He personally called on men. I guess we could note some common elements in His ministry of evangelism. One, He was available. You find Jesus always in the crowds. Oh, there were moments when He retreated to the hills, He retreated to the Mount of Olives. There were times when He had to get away or they would have taken His life, such as in Nazareth when they would have thrown Him off a cliff. But for the most part He was available, He was in the throng. Secondly, He had no favorites...He had no favorites. He didn't chase with the elite. In fact, He was with the lepers. Oh, I love the fact that He was with the common people, the harlots, the traders, the tax collectors. He was with those on the low-class socially economically and morally. But on the other hand, He could also go to be with the Roman centurion, a man of dignity and stature. He could go to help wealthy Jairus whose daughter, of course, needed desperately a miracle. And so, Jesus ran the gamut, He knew no favorites. He reflected the mind of God who was no respecter of persons. He was available and He had no favorites.

Thirdly, He was so sensitive...so sensitive to the pain of a sinner. I love the fact that in the gospel of Mark chapter 5, that lady who had an issue of blood so many years reached out and grabbed His garment and He said, "Who touched Me? Who touched Me?" So sensitive. Not only that, He used love and tenderness. He touched a leper, that was unthinkable, absolutely unthinkable to touch a leper. In Matthew 8 when He reached out and touched a leper. So He was available. He had no favorites. He was sensitive and He was tender.

Another thing I see in His ministry, He secured public confessions. He drew out a verbal confession. He got one from the blind man in John 9. He got one from the woman with the issue of blood in Mark 5. He wanted them to confess to Him. He had that same impact on the one of the ten lepers who came back and He drew that confession of faith out of Him.

And perhaps one other thing, He took time. Read the story of Jairus' daughter in Mark 5 and see how in the midst of His busyness He took time, He took time.

What do we learn from this? Be available, don't play favorites, be sensitive, use love and tenderness, secure a public confession and take your time. And then let me share another thing. We know that Jesus was committed to evangelism in the passion of winning lost souls because His forerunner was an evangelist, because He was an evangelist and, thirdly, because He taught everybody around Him to be an evangelist. That was the whole point of the time with the disciples. He wasn't training them to lead great churches, He was training them to evangelize the world.

And we go back to Matthew, again chapter 4, staying with our original text in Matthew 3 and 4. We find in Matthew chapter 4 verse 18 this wonderful and familiar text. Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, Andrew his brother, throwing their net to the sea for they were fishermen. And He said to them, Follow Me. And here you have it, friends, what was the intention of the Lord Jesus Christ in His ministry with the disciples, "And I will make you great church leaders." Is that it? No. "I will make you...what?...fishers of men-- fishers of men." Now the initial call of the disciples had already occurred and it's recorded in John 1:35 to 51. They already had been called to Christ but they were still doing their own work and occasionally ministering with Him. The call to full and total commitment comes even later than this Matthew 4 passage and it's recorded in Luke chapter 5. What you have here is sort of an in between time and there's even a final commissioning that we find in Matthew 10 when He calls them to Apostleship and sends them out. So it's sort of a sequence. First He calls them to salvation, and they go with Him now and then, keeping their job. Then He sort of calls them to total commitment in Luke 5. And later officially commissions them as Apostles. So we're in the early stages, He's already known them, He's already identified them and now He calls them to come and catch men.

Now there are three methods of fishing used in the Sea of Galilee to this day. You go there, you'll see them. One is a line, you throw the thing out, the stick and down goes the line. The second is a drag net. Those things can be a quarter of a mile long with lead weights. They drop them to the bottom and they have a large boat and a dinghy a quarter of mile away and they just drag everything in the sea along. Pull the net together and drag it all up on shore and sort it out. Our Lord had that in mind in the next to the last parable of Matthew 13 on the drag net. But what is used here is a verb...a noun rather than means a casting net...a casting net. I will take you who are used to using this casting net and I'll have you cast it around men. Usually about nine foot in diameter, you stood knee- deep in

the water and you looked for a school of fish and they would know the movement of the schools pretty well and you would hurl that thing sort of like a floppy Frisbee and it would fly out with all the lead weights on the outside, drop into the sea, go down around that school of fish, you would pull the cord together, pull it all in and draw to yourself your catch, amphiblestron, kind of a hard word to say. But it is used for catching a school of fish.

And it's kind of an interesting thing. Follow Me and I'm going to teach you how to catch a school of men. That's what He had in mind. The Lord wanted to train people for evangelism. And do you think they needed training? Would you say they did? Well if you follow the story of the disciples, you will find that the New Testament indicates they had a lack of spiritual perception...I could give you ten Scriptures on that, they had a lack of spiritual perception. They were sort of spiritually dull. They had a lack of sympathy. They were very unsympathetic. They had a lack of humility. They were very egotistical. They had a lack of faithfulness in persevering prayer and they frankly had a lack of courage...as we find when Jesus was crucified. So they needed a lot of training. There was raw material there but not a whole lot to work with, which is very comforting for all of us. The Lord can make something out of nothing. So they were to be fishermen in terms of catching men.

Now what is it that fishermen have to have to be successful? I'm a terrible fisherman, I don't care about it, I don't like it, it's boring, so I don't do it. But I understand that those who do need several things. If they're really going to get...I could get into taking a boat out in the open sea and catching a 300- pound fish. I mean, but standing at the pier and catching the guy's line around the corner doesn't do a thing for me. But anyway, what is it that marks a fisherman? We could say patience does. In order to be effective you have to be patient. Maybe that's where I run a little short. I'm looking for some way to make this time count for eternity and nothing's happening. Patient, they have to learn to wait. That's true in bringing people to Christ...perseverance, over and over and over and over until the results come. Courage, they would often take their small boat on that wild sea when the wind came up. A fisherman has the eye for the right moment. A fisherman keeps himself out of sight so the fish are lured by the bait and not distracted by his presence. And these are things that they would know about, and the Lord sort of moves in with that analogy and says, "Follow Me and we'll apply those things to catching men."

So, Jesus was committed to making fishermen who would catch men. And He taught them much about how to do that. In Matthew 13 He gives them the single greatest lesson on evangelism in all of His teaching.

Now we could also say that the passion of the Lord for evangelism in a fourth point is obvious because not only did He have a forerunner who was an evangelist, not only was He an evangelist, not only did He train evangelists, but He commanded all of His followers to evangelize. That's our calling...to follow up on the great commission, to go into all the world and reach the people who do not know Christ. After the Spirit is come upon you, He said to those gathered in Acts chapter 1, you

shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, Judea, the uttermost part of the earth. And we're to spend our life as a church evangelizing the world. That's our primary objective. You remember months ago when I preached a message on the reason the church is still in the world? You remember that? And I said if we were here just for fellowship we'd go to heaven where fellowship is perfect. And if we were here just for worship, we'd go to heaven where worship is perfect. We are here because there's only one reason to leave us here and that's to be the agent to bring other people to Christ, otherwise we might as well go. And if we're not doing that, we're not doing the thing we're most needful more. And He energized His church and He energized His disciples and He energizes His people through His Spirit in all generations to the task of evangelism.

Now this is just simple basic stuff, but I wanted you to have it in your heart and in your mind. Just in conclusion, how can we who for the most part live in a somewhat passionless time, how can we begin to get that passion? And I have to ask myself that, too, because very often in my own life there's a coldness toward the lost. Very often I get so busy in doing the stuff of the church and the stuff of ministry, that witnessing to a lost soul would be an evasion of my time. Now I realize there's a certain truth in the sense that I am gifted and called to a task which limits me to other tasks, but does not certainly excuse my disobedience or lack of compassion.

How can I...how can you get something of the passion of Christ? Something of the passion of Whitfield and Wesley and these people like Robert Murray McShayne, how can we begin to capture that kind of heart?

Let me give you just a handful of suggestions. First of all, study Christ...study His great love, study His great compassion, study His tender mercy. I don't know a better way. We can study Wesley and we can study McShayne and can study Whitfield and we can study the greats of the church's history in terms of evangelism, but ultimately we have to go to Christ. Somehow we have to study Christ and catch His heart. And as 1 John 2:6 says, "If we say we're in Him, we ought to walk the way He walked." So I need then to make myself preoccupied with Christ. Time in the Word, time to meditate on the Word, time to get the trivia out of my life. You know, I really believe...I just throw this in as a thought that you probably will acquiesce to...I believe that if all of a sudden Jesus Christ showed up and wanted to be an elder in Grace Community Church, He would be very disrupting to us, very disrupting. I believe instantaneously He would command certain things of us that would really tear up our schedule. He would eliminate maybe most things in your life and maybe mine, too. He would cut into our leisure. He would cut into our preoccupations and our entertainment and whatever else. I think He would have a very disruptive effect on many of our church activities, which in and of themselves are not evil, they're just rather indulgent. Study Christ.

Secondly, study sin, its guilt, its power, its penalty. And while you're studying that, see where you have fallen prey to the subtleties of the world. It's not easy, people, it is not easy to keep from being pressed into the world's mold, as Romans 12:2 puts it. It's not easy. But when you study sin and you

study it subtly, that's why a few weeks ago I preached on the sufficiency of Scripture, to point out to you how subtly we are sucked in. And one of the ways the church in America is sucked in today is that it's so preoccupied with its own comfort...so preoccupied with its own sort of semi-spiritual entertainment. Study sin and its subtleties.

And thirdly, study sinners. Try to cultivate a love for the lost, not a bitterness toward them. Try to feel how they feel. Try to sympathize with them. You know, it's an absolute fact beyond refutation that the most zealous evangelists are the newest converts. You know that? You can't even argue that. The longer you're a Christian, the more indifferent you become to the lost because the longer you're a Christian, the fewer of them you know anything about. But when a person initially comes to Christ, they have this terrible sense in their heart that everybody around them is so lost because that's how they were. Many of us have forgotten how it is to be lost, some of us never knew. We've been saved as long as we can remember. Somebody said to me, "Have you been saved all your life?" I said, "Not yet, but I have been saved a long time."

Study Christ, study sin, study sinners and study Scripture would be a fourth one. See what it says about hell, see what it says about death. See what it says about judgment. See what it says about salvation. That's what we've tried to do tonight. See what it says about our need to evangelize.

And then one last one and that is to pray...pray that God will give you that heart. God will give you that passion. If you're content not to have it and, Oh, that is such a temptation, you're not going to call out to God for Him to give it to you.

Now I realize there are some people who are uniquely gifted by God for these kinds of ministries, but none of us is exempt from the responsibility and the passion. Study Christ, study sin, study sinners, study Scripture and then pray...pray for the lost and pray that God will give you the heart that you should have for the lost.

I want to close with a little part of the life of a man by the name of John Harper. You may not know the name John Harper. He was a newly called pastor to the great Moody Church in Chicago in the early 1900's. John Harper came to the Moody Church and, of course, he was a man of God, or they never would have had him there. But the real character of that man's life came to the attention of the Christian world in the sinking of the Titanic. And Dr. William B. Riley tells the story of the death of Harper on the Titanic.

"We have the history of John Harper's end for survivors, brought to harbor in safety told us the story." What he means by that, of course, is that we know how it was at the end of his life because the survivors of the Titanic told the story of John Harper. "When the Titanic was struck by the iceberg that drove in her sides and sent the ship to the bottom, John Harper was leaning against the rail pleading with a young man to come to Christ." That tells you volumes about the man, doesn't it?

"Four years after the Titanic went down, a young Scotsman arose in a meeting in Hamilton, Canada and said, 'I am a survivor of the Titanic. When I was drifting alone on a piece of wood that awful night, the tide brought to me Mr. John Harper of Glasgow also on a piece of wreckage. Man, he called to me, are you saved? No, I said, I'm not. He cried again. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.' And the young man standing said the waves bore him away but strange to say, in a few moments brought him back and again he called, Are you saved now? No, I said, I cannot say that I am. He said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. The young man said shortly after that he went down and there alone in the night with two miles of water under me I believed. And I am John Harper's last convert."

Well, let's pray.

Thank You, Father, tonight for the reminder of these faithful saints of the past. Our hearts cry out to ask where are such today? Cannot we be the John Harpers of this generation? The Wesleys and the Whitfields and the McShaynes and the John Knox? Cannot we be the disciples of this time who give our lives, if need be? Lord, fill our hearts with that passion. Tear us loose from the trivia of life. Give us thirsty souls that cannot be quenched except in the conversion of others. And give us the passion of Christ to preach and to personally evangelize. Help us to study Christ, to understand Him, to understand sin, to understand sinners, to understand the Word of God, and to pray that it might be for us that we live and breathe to see people come to Christ. And, Lord, may it be that that is the end of everything and when we do train and teach and build up and exposit the Word and strengthen Christians, ever and always the purpose in view is that they may be better able to bring men and women to Christ, that we together might give You glory. And we thank You for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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