

A Heart Where God and the World Meet

by Dennis Kinlaw

The speaker emphasizes the importance of trusting God and living in faith, as seen in the example of Abraham, and encourages the audience to capture time in God's name and to become intercessors in the plan of redemption.

Duration: 1:00:46

Scripture: Isaiah 53:6, Philippians 2:4-5, Philippians 2:14-17

Topics: "Heart"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of preaching the word of God and encourages the audience to lift up their voices and rejoice in the salvation of Yahweh. He references Isaiah 53 as a key passage that reveals the arm of the Lord and the significance of believing in His report. The speaker also highlights the need to have the same mindset as Christ, focusing on the interests of others rather than our own. He concludes by urging the audience to shine like stars in a depraved generation, holding out the word of life and bringing glory to God.

Transcript

I want to thank you for the privilege of having the fellowship with you during these days. Most of you are involved in some kind of public ministry, and there was a time when I did not understand the relationship between a speaker and his audience, but I'm convinced that no speaker is any better than his audience. And there is a dialogue that takes place even when an audience appears to just sit.

An audience doesn't. There's a thousand things that goes on while a speaker's speaking. That means there's communication between the two, and that when it is open, it frees the speaker, and it also stimulates the speaker.

I had a little lady who used to say to me occasionally when I was starting out, she'd say, son, there are days when you preach better than you're capable of preaching. And I'm well aware that that's true, because we evoke something out of each other. And so I want to thank you for the privilege of being with you.

The fellows assigned me this, and I've tried to be obedient on that. I want to say something else. You know, the longer you preach, the more you get in the pattern of letting your sentences end on a falling note, and that sounds real authoritative.

But you know, sometimes your sentence may end on a falling note, but inside you, there's something rising that says, are you real sure about that? Now, I count on you to be sensitive enough to the Word of God and the Spirit within you that if the note falls and I sound as if I know what I'm talking about when I don't, that you'll challenge that and say, well, give him a little time on that. But one of the exciting things to me is just being an explorer in terms of eternal truth. The thing I see now is that I'm never going to see, even get very far on the margin of the mystery of redemption.

But I find myself more excited now than I've ever been before about the beauty of the plan of redemption and the incredible beauty and greatness of the truth that is given to us in the Word of God. And I found myself saying, Lord, let me have more and more time with it because I need to know all I can know. So that is preliminary.

I want to say, now get the introduction to what I want to do in this hour. This year, this summer, John Oswalt came to me from head of the Bible department at the college here, a seminary here. And he told me that they were talking about hiring a young Australian lady, some of you know Mary Fisher, and that she would come in to teach biblical theology.

And so they, but she is one of the key persons in putting together the InterVarsity of the Urbana Missionary Conference, which comes in December, right after Christmas. And she said, I'm too committed, I cannot walk away until January. So John said, if we can get somebody to cover one course for us this fall for seniors that have to have it to graduate, then we can postpone Mary's contract until the 1st of January and we won't have to hire somebody instead of her.

So he said, would you be willing to teach this? And so I have an interest in Mary Fisher, and I was excited about the possibility of her coming. Some of you have known her, she probably will be in the summer assembly this year, and you will get to know her if you continue in any of these sessions. But I thought, I taught that course once.

In fact, I taught it 11 years ago, and then I taught it 25 years ago. So maybe I can do that, and at least that'll save the opening for Mary. So I agreed to do it.

I've never worked as hard in my life. I don't have a single note from 11 years ago or 25 years ago that has any relevance to what I needed to do. So I had some weekend assignments, and so I found myself traveling on weekends and all that I could not break, and then tried to teach in the middle.

But it's been a very fascinating thing. I've had to live with the Old Testament. I want to begin with something that has become, it had begun to come clear to me before, but this fall into clear focus.

One of the differences between the Old Testament and the New is that in the New Testament you have a heavy emphasis on the next world. But you don't have it in the Old Testament. All of the promises that were given to Abraham, if you look at Genesis 12, look at its reputation in basically through his life down to the final time in his life at the sacrifice of Isaac, and then in the same promise to Isaac and then to Jacob and so forth.

The promise given to Abraham was in terms of time. And you have to get to the New Testament before you get John 14 and 1 Corinthians 15. Now that has changed my attitude toward time.

I think sometimes evangelicals have looked upon time as something we needed to escape. And we take Paul's statement where he said, to depart would be far better. But if you read that context in Philippians,

he says, but he's not going to take me away because he's got some things here he wants to do.

So I know he's going to leave me with you. In God's eyes, time is incredibly important because all the redemption that's going to take place is going to take place in time. Not going to be in eternity.

It's going to be in time. And so God wanted to get his people to where they'd get their arms around time before he opened up to them the fact that there's something even better ultimately. But if you're going to share in the better, you've got to capture time in his name.

Now it is in time that God is going to do his redemptive work. Now I think that we need to look at Abraham as a model for us because the New Testament takes him as the model. It doesn't take Isaiah.

It doesn't take John the Baptist. It doesn't take David. It doesn't take even Moses.

Moses was an infinitely greater man than Abraham. But it takes Abraham as the model for us. And do you know what he believed? As far as I can find when it says he believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

What he believed God for was for what God was going to do in time, not in eternity. Now I want to know if you're justified the way Abraham was justified. Most of us put justification in terms of when you're justified, you've got a name written down in heaven and a seat in the kingdom.

And your eternal soul is saved. But Abraham was justified because he believed that all the nations in the earth would be blessed through his descendants. Now that's time.

Now I think sometimes we get so weary in pastoral work or mission work that we sort of become psychological escapist. I don't know where you are and I don't know how hard your situation is. One guy said to me this morning, the Lord must want to do something special today.

The devil gave me enough trouble getting here. Now the trouble is there and there's something about it we don't like it and we'd like to escape. But biblical faith puts its arms around time where the problems are and counts on God to do something in the middle of that mess.

Now that's what caused Abraham to be the model for us. Now I haven't always lived that way because I haven't always thought that way. Now I believe in John 14 and I believe in 1 Corinthians 15 and I believe Paul when he says to depart would be far better as far as I'm concerned.

But God's got some things he wants to do and his only way to do them is through you and me. Now, but it's in time that God's going to redeem the world. But secondly, he's the one who's going to do it.

You and I aren't. But at the same time, it's he that's going to do the redemptive work and we're not. He can't do it without you and me.

Now there's paradox in that. But if you get the sentences in the right order, they're not contradictory. If you get the sentence first that there's no salvation anywhere except in God and then, but he's not going to do it except without us, then you're not saying there's anything in us that's going to do it.

He's the one that's going to do it. But that means that one, if I want to be a part of the redemptive work that he wants to do, I ought to realize that my ideas are not what count. It's his ideas that count.

And I've spent a lot of time in my life doing Kinlaw stuff and the end result of it is zero. But when I've been able to sense what he wanted to do and stepped into his flow and become a part of what he wanted to do, there's eternal fruit that comes. Now those are two radically different things.

One produces Hagar and Ishmael and the other produces Christ. Now that's the purpose of a conference like this, to get us back into focus, every one of us back into focus, to find out whether we are in the middle of what God wants to do. And if we're claiming from him, trusting, believing, I'd like to know what you're trusting God for.

I'd like to know what you're believing for. Are you believing for the salvation of your soul or are you believing for God to do something redemptive? It's interesting, Abraham believed that God was going to do something redemptive. I can't find a clue in the text that Abraham believed that the essence of his faith was the saving of his soul.

But the interesting thing is, when you believe the way Abraham did, your soul gets saved. And the order is right. And it's not this way first.

That is the by-product. And that sounds like Jesus. Okay.

Now if this is true, with the world that we're in, can one person make a difference? Because you're one person. And I'm one person. And when he made us, I think he put something inside you and inside me that says, I'm supposed to count for something.

Now that's the reason we're so blooming egotistical. And that's the reason we're so blooming self-centered. And that's half right.

Because God put that sense of significance in us. We are made in his image. And we're made for something redemptive.

We are not supposed to come to the end of our lives and say, thank God I got out of that mess. We're supposed to come to the end of our lives and look back and say, it's marvelous what he's done. And I've had the incredible privilege of being a part of that.

Now can one person make a difference? I stumble across five verses in the Old Testament that have intrigued me. One of them is one that you know. In all five of them, God is looking for one person.

And if I read the passages correctly, all five of the passages say God looks down and says, if I could find one person, my circumstances would be different. Now I was, I'm so glad that Mike had a saying, and can it be that I should gain this morning. You remember that line in there where it talks about an amazing thing, the immortal dies.

How does the immortal die? But that's what we sing about. The immortal dies. Now at the same time that we have that kind of paradoxical language, it's interesting to me when omnipotence says, if I could find one person that fitted my need, my circumstances would be different.

Do you know what circumstances are? Circumstances are the things you don't control. Isn't it interesting when omnipotence has circumstances? But you see, omnipotence put a power in you and me. And when he did, he's the one who created his circumstances.

But he's got them. He said, if I could just find one person, my circumstances would be different. Now as I looked at that, I thought, there are five of them.

And it's interesting when God searches and in at least three of them, he is explicit. And in four, it is implicitly there. And in the fifth, it is very clearly there.

God is shocked. He says, I was appalled when I couldn't find one person. Now isn't it interesting when omniscience is surprised? But you know, there's no way you can talk about God without finding yourself in paradoxical language.

Now one of those passages is one you know about because it's moved in our circles extremely well. I don't want you to look at them. I'll tell you, and if you want to chase this out later, I want your head this morning because we don't have time to move slowly.

One of them is Ezekiel 22:30. And in that passage, it's an incredible chapter where Ezekiel is describing the city of God, Jerusalem, and the people of God, Israel. He is describing the Old Testament equivalent of the church of Christ.

And you know what he says about it? He says the princes are bestial, and they're using their positions of power to prey on their own people. He says the priests have reached the point where they can't tell the difference between the sacred and the profane. Now what do you hire a priest for? To tell you which is sacred and which is profane? They don't know the difference anymore between the holy and the unholy.

And he said the prophets say God has spoken and God hasn't said a word. He says, and the ordinary people are looking for people weaker than themselves so they can live off them, so it is animalism. And that's the picture of the chosen people.

That's the picture Ezekiel gives of the church in his day. And he says, God said, I look for a person. I look for a person to stand in the gap and to make up the head.

Now, the picture is that here is God in His holiness, and here is the world in its sin. And he looks for somebody who can stand between, because the only hope for that world is for somebody to stand between God in His holiness and a world in its sin. And God said, I couldn't find one.

And he's appalled. Now, the other passage that there are three in Isaiah, but there's one in Jeremiah that intrigued me. And again, we're dealing with Jerusalem.

We're dealing with the temple. We're dealing with the chosen people. We're dealing with the people of God, the best the world has to offer, the only people that know the true God.

And Jeremiah says, God says, if I could find one person that lived honestly and loved righteousness, I could forgive Jerusalem all of her sins. Now, that's the Old Testament counterpart to all has sinned and come short of the glory of God, isn't it? He said, if I could find one person who lived honestly and loved righteousness, I could forgive Jerusalem all of its sins. Now, can one person make a difference? If those verses are true, God says, if I could find one person, my circumstances would be different.

Now, the other three passages are the great ones. And I don't want you to think I've mastered all these, but I've been working on them for a while. The first one is in Isaiah 50.

And again, it's one of those passages where he said, I looked for a person, and he's talking about his people, and I could not find one. The other is in, let me give you the third one, is in Isaiah 63, when you see this fellow coming out of Edom. His clothes are red, and the red is not from the color of his clothing, it's from the blood that has battered him and covered him.

And he said, I looked for a person, and I could not find one. The other one is in Isaiah 59. But the interesting thing is, in all three of these passages in Isaiah, in 50, 59, and 63, when he says, I looked for a person and could not find one, when I could not find one, mine own arm brought me salvation.

So when he couldn't find a person, his arm was his only hope, God's only hope. Now, let me talk to you about Isaiah 59. You know part of Isaiah 59 because it begins with that passage.

God is speaking and he says, My arm is not shortened that I cannot save, and my ear is not heavy that I cannot hear. God is saying, You need to know there's nothing wrong with me. Now, thank God.

There are problems everywhere else, but there's nothing wrong with him. And God's just bearing witness to the fact there's nothing wrong with me. There's nothing wrong with my power.

I have plenty of power. My arm is not shortened that I cannot save, I can save. And my ear is not heavy that I cannot hear.

Now, I think there are two things, one explicit and the other implicit there. He can hear prayers if they're offered. And he's got a heart that's waiting for a chance to save.

There's nothing wrong with his arm, his power. There's nothing wrong with his ear to hear. And there's nothing wrong with his love, his heart.

He's waiting for a chance to redeem the world. And he's looking for one person who will help him. And he says, I couldn't find one.

Now, in that passage in 59 that begins, There's nothing wrong with my arm, my power. There's nothing wrong with my ear, my ability to hear. There's nothing wrong with my heart, my willingness to save.

He says, But your iniquities have separated you from the source, the answer to your problem, and to the source of your need. So, here's what I need, and here I am, and my iniquities have cut off the connection. It's like a deep-sea diver and the tube that carries the oxygen has been clipped shut.

Now, he says, How can I get it open? I need somebody to stand between me, the Lord, in my adequacy, and a world in its sin. Now, it's interesting, that's what he called Abraham for. And that's what he called Israel for.

You will remember he said about Israel, You will be a chosen people. You will be a holy nation. You will be a kingdom of priests.

And do you know what a priest is? A priest is a person who stands between. And now he's talking to the ones who were put in that position, and he said, I can't find the one who fits the bill. And so, you go through the Old Testament, and every major person was a failure ultimately.

And he said, I couldn't find one. So, there's the picture. Now, if you look at Isaiah 59, you will find that between that passage, Nothing wrong with my arm, nothing wrong with my ear.

He says, But your iniquities. Then he gives you a description of our iniquities. It is one of the most incredible literary passages in human literature describing human sinfulness.

It's a passage where he says, Justice is perished in the streets, has fallen in the streets. There are none who seek the truth. Everyone is preying on each other.

It is a kind of moral darkness. You almost feel like he's talking about 20th century America, late 20th century. The moral darkness is so great that men at midday, at the brightest moment of the day, as they try to get through society, look for a wall because the darkness is so great that they cannot see where they're going.

And so, they look for a wall to follow. And it says, I'm sure this is where Nietzsche got his line about lighting the lantern at noon. And so, in that he says, I looked for a person, but I couldn't find one.

Then he says, when I couldn't find one, my own arm brought me salvation. Now, as I thought about that, I thought about what kind of person is it that he's looking for? In that verse, verse 16 of Isaiah 59, he said, I looked for an, most of our translations say intercessor. I looked for an intercessor, and I could not find one.

The NIV says, I looked for one to intervene. Now, intervene is a good word. The V-E-N part is Latin for come, and the inter is between or among.

And so, he's looking for somebody who will come between God and his holiness, his loving wrath, and man in his sinfulness. He looks for somebody who can stand between. Now, the Hebrew of that, I checked the Hebrew out.

You know, I used to teach Hebrew, and so, I always had this curiosity, what's behind the translation? So, I checked it out, and I found it's an interesting word. The Hebrew word is machgia. It is from a Hebrew root, pagia, P-G-I-A-N, which means to meet.

And it is a causative form, and it's a participle. I looked for one who would cause to meet. That's a pretty good description of an intercessor, isn't it? I looked for one who would cause God in his redemptive grace to meet the sinful world in its sinfulness.

I looked for one who would cause to meet. Now, one of the things as I've gotten older is language has become much more significant to me, because it's amazing what words do, isn't it? And if you've got the right one, it will open all sorts of doors to you. I don't need to illustrate that for you.

So, I found myself looking to see how often that verb, to meet, is used in the Old Testament. That's a very common word, used, to meet. But when you put it in that causative form, where it's one who causes the two persons to meet, it only occurs a half a dozen, six to eight times in the Old Testament.

So, I checked to see where the other references were, get a little better feel on what the kind of person is that God's looking for. And you know what interested me? I found that two of the references, two of the usages out of the, I think it's six, but it may be eight, two of those references are in Isaiah 53. That tells the whole story, doesn't it? What's he looking for? So, I turned to Isaiah 53, and in the last verse it says, he will forgive us of our sins, he will take our sins, and he will cause us to meet.

It's translated there normally, intercede for us. But the most interesting verse is, verse six, where it's used. Now, if you don't hear anything else, I have to say, this is what moves me the most deeply.

It's that familiar verse, all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. Now, there's no question about our world having gone astray, is there? All you've got to do is look at the 630 news in the evening, read the newspaper in the morning.

And if your newspaper's as lousy as the local newspaper here, you ought to buy the New York Times and really find out how bad the world is and how far we are astray, because it gives you a pretty full account. And one of the things that fascinates me is, the greatest newspaper in the world is hostile to Christianity, deeply hostile to Christianity, so that its very policy is an indication of how far we have strayed from our maker. Now, let me just give you an aside, which I love.

I notice that on the first page and the second line of the New York Times every day, they pay tribute to the one whom they've ditched, because every day has the date in reference to the birth of Jesus. Every day, New York Times bears witness to him. It's interesting, out of our own mouths will come our judgment, isn't it? But in that sixth verse, it says, all we like sheep have gone astray, our world has strayed.

We have turned everyone to his own way. That is the best description of our sinfulness, I know, in the Scripture. Because what is sin? It's my way.

It's easy for me to describe sin in terms of the rapist, the murderer, the drug addict, or the crooked politician. It's easy for me to describe sin in those terms, but do you know how God describes it? He says, Ken Loft, sin is your way. So we've strayed.

What's created the problem? We've chosen our way instead of his. All we like sheep have gone astray, we've turned everyone to his own way. And Yahweh, let me use the Hebrew, has hithjiah, there's the verb, in him the iniquity, the iniquity of us all.

And what the text says is, now we translate it, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. But the Hebrew literal, it says, and Yahweh, the personal name of God, Old Testament counterpart to Jesus, the Yahweh has caused to meet in him the iniquity of us all. As I got to thinking about that, that's a different concept.

Who is he looking for? He's looking for somebody inside of whom the sin of a lost world and the grace of God can meet. Because if the sin of the world can't meet in that heart with the grace of God, then the connection is broken between God in his grace and his redemptive power and a world in its lostness. Now, I'm not a scholar, and I'm not a theologian, but you know, much of my thinking about redemption and the atonement has been that he paid the price, our sins were laid on him, and sort of an objective translation that takes place.

But what the Hebrew says is it happens inside the redeemer. It happens inside him, not on him. Now, hold that.

Do you know? It's not what he did, but it was what happened inside him that redeemed him. Do you know what I think is the most important thing about you and me today? It's not your ministry or mine, it's our heart. And if it doesn't happen here, there ain't gonna nothing happen out there with any eternal significance.

And the interesting thing is nobody can see that but you and God. And I can play games and hide and go through the motions. I can be the president of Asbury College, I can be a teacher in Asbury Seminary, I can be a Methodist pastor, I can be something else.

But the story of anything significant is told where you can't see. You can see the fruit, but you can't see, and so I can hide and play games. God's looking for somebody in whom the grace of God and the sin of the world, the evil of the world, can meet.

Now, what kind of person is that? Let me say, here I saw something else. In that passage in 16 of Isaiah 59, he said, I looked for a person. I looked for someone who could intercede, intervene, and I could not find one.

And I was astounded that I couldn't find one, and when I could not find one, mine own arm brought me salvation. Now, I want to tell you how twisted my thinking has been. Do you know what I thought the arm of the Lord was? I thought the arm of the Lord was what he zapped you with.

You know, Sodom and Gomorrah. That's the symbol of his power. And do you know an interesting thing? The arm of the Lord is referred to ten times between Isaiah 40 and Isaiah 63.

If we had time, I wish we had time to go through it. Let me just grab one or two here to show you the kind of thing that he says about the arm of the Lord. See, the sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him.

See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart.

He gently leads those that have young. And then look at this passage. Come together, all of you, and listen which of the idols has foretold these things.

The Lord's chosen ally will carry out his purpose against Babylon. His arm will be against the Babylonians. I, even I, have spoken.

Yes, I have called him. I will bring him. He will succeed in his mission.

It's first the arm, and next it's he. Okay, look at this one. My righteousness, listen to me, my people, hear me, my nation.

The law will go out from me. My justice will become a light to the nations. My righteousness draws near speedily.

My salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm. They're still waiting, aren't they? Lift up your eyes to the heavens.

Look at the earth beneath. The heavens will vanish like smoke. The earth will wear out like a garment, and its inhabitants die like flies.

But my salvation will last forever. My righteousness will not fail. Awake, awake, clothe yourself with strength, O arm of the Lord.

Awake as in days gone by, as in generations of old. Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces, who pierced that monster through? Listen, you watchmen, lift up your voices. Together they shout for joy.

When Yahweh returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for Yahweh has comforted his people. He's redeemed Jerusalem.

Yahweh will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. Now, but the key to that is Isaiah 53, because you remember how Isaiah 53 began? Who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? And then he gives you a picture of him. Now I want you to see the power of God.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. He was like one from whom men hide their faces. He was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took our infirmities, he carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, sniffing by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us is turned to his own way, and Yahweh has caused to meet in him the iniquity of us all. That's an interesting picture of power, isn't it? What is it? The power to zap? No, it's the power to take my niggling and make it possible for me to be saved.

Take my lostness, take my evil, take my sin, and in that there is the chance for me to be redeemed. Now, I now look upon the arm of the Lord in a different way and his power. I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation.

It is the power for God to absorb my sin in himself and come through and deliver me. Now, that's what you get in Philippians 2, 5 to 11, isn't it? He came to the place where he cared more about us than he did himself. He was willing to be even separated from his Father's face, if necessary, so that I would never have to be separated from his Father's face, so that I could find the Father's face again, and he cared more about me than he did himself.

And when he did, it became possible for me to have a chance to be redeemed. Now, that's the kind of person God is looking for, and what intrigues me is that Paul says, I want the same mind that was in him that made him do that inside you. Now, let me make a comment or two here.

Again, language is not adequate to say it, and the language can be used to misrepresent what's being said. But let me try and you listen to what I'm saying. When God said, I'm looking for a person and I couldn't find one, and he said, so when I couldn't find one, mine own arm brought me salvation.

It suddenly dawned on me what he was saying in that verse was, when I couldn't find one, I had no option if I was to save them, but to become one of them. So the arm of God here is God become one of us. Now, that brings me to this.

You'll let me use bad language to get my point across. I've decided that not even God can save the world from heaven, because he said, when I couldn't find one, I had to become one. Become what? Somebody in space and time.

That puts an incredible sanctity on time, doesn't it? So God himself apparently has trouble saving from the throne, and that takes us back to John's picture in the gospel of the cross, not the throne. It's not from the throne he saves us. Now you know that the lamb came from the throne, but it's not while he's standing in the throne that he saves us, it's while he's hanging on a hill in space and time.

Okay? Now that brings me to this second thought. It's interesting that the key to everybody is in somebody else, isn't it? I love the perceptiveness and the sort of theological, if you let me use the word sophistication

in Wesley's hymns. Long mine prison spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night.

Thine eye disclosed a quickening ray. I woke the dungeon flame with light. My chains fell off, my heart was free.

I rose, went forth to follow thee. He said that he was in sin and nature's night. That's blindness, isn't it? But there are two metaphors that are used, not just that of blindness, but the other is that of bondage.

Bondage. My chains fell off, my heart was free. He's in a dungeon in chains.

How's he going to get out? The key to getting out isn't in him, it's in somebody else. And when somebody else does something, it's possible for Charles Wesley to get out of his prison and his chains and out of his night. Now, we don't have any problem with that when we think about original sin and our fallenness and that all salvation is in God.

But let me jump on that. Deo and I have decided that there's something else involved here and that that's not just the curse of sin, that that's the nature of interpersonal relationship. Because do you know why Jesus came? If I read the gospel of John clearly, the main character in the gospel of John is not Jesus.

You read the passages where he talks about his father and he looks at people and says, this wasn't my idea. This was my father's idea. My father loves me because I came to lay down my life for my sheep.

So that the whole plan of redemption, including Golgotha, didn't start in the second person of the Trinity, it started in the first person of the Trinity. And then it's worked out in the second person of the Trinity, and then it's available for the rest of us. And it's worked out in us.

And do you know what shocks me? Now hold on. It's in Matthew, it's in Mark, it's in Luke, and it's in John. And I was almost 70 before I ever admitted those verses were there.

You know what Jesus said? If you receive me, you get my father. And if you miss me, you miss my father. I had no problem with that.

I know that all salvation is in Christ. But do you know what got me? Three of those occasions, Jesus said, and if they receive you, they get me. And when they get me, they get my father.

And if they miss you and reject you, they miss me. And when they miss me, they miss my father. You know why I never saw those things? Because I didn't want to see them.

I found there are plenty of passages of Scripture I don't want to see. Because if I see them, I've got to deal with them. You check in one of the contexts.

Now I haven't done all my homework on this. I'm working with it. But in the context in Luke, he says, if you save your life, you'll lose it.

But if you lose it for my sake, you'll gain it. And then he says, and if they receive you, they get me. And when they get me, they get my father.

And if they reject you, they miss me. And when they miss me, they miss my father. So I've decided we're dealing not just with a broken relationship because of sin.

I've decided we're dealing with the nature of human personhood. Did you know something I've noticed about people? That nobody ever chose to live on his own. And nobody's life ever started in himself.

Isn't it interesting that every person here began his life or her life in somebody else's body? I've learned that wherever I see a human being, I know there are two more. If you've got one, there are two more somewhere. And when you identify the two more, you know there are four more somewhere.

For everyone, there are two more. And it was when those two people met that something happened in the body of one that made the life of another person possible. All of our lives originate in somebody else.

Now hold on. I interpreted the passages in John differently after seeing that. Because you see, where it speaks about the only begotten son, it can be translated literally from the Greek, the only being begotten son.

So that the original parent-child relationship, the pregnancy never has stopped. His umbilical cord's never been cut. You read the Gospel of John, he's still drawing his life out of his father.

My father has life in himself. He's given to me to have life in me. So I've decided that a human pregnancy is an earthly symbol of what takes place in the heart of God all the time, where the second person draws his life out of another.

So our origin is not in ourself. We're not self-sustaining. For nine months you draw it out of your mother, and then for the rest of your life you draw it out of one womb, and for the rest of your life you draw it out of the oxygen and the chemical and the material things in the world you eat.

And sixteen times a minute your body tells you, or is it eighteen times a minute, your body tells you that your life originates outside you. We're not self-originating, self-sustaining, we're not even self-explanatory. It takes two of us to explain one.

Now why is it so unbelievable that we're not self-fulfilling? Then maybe this thing that Jesus is talking about when he says, I came to lay down my life for somebody else, that's not a symbol of death, that's a symbol of life. Because he says, if you live, I live. And so he is giving us something about where our fulfillment is.

When you get to the place where you see what's in God and you see people around you who are in need, and you say it's possible for me to be in touch with the one who's the conduit between me and him, and then I can become a conduit between him, between them. And do you know that's the only way I've ever seen people find Christ? Is when somebody stood between. First of all, the first one was Christ, who stood between the Father and his disciples.

And then he looked at his disciples and said, as the Father sent me to be the link, now I'm sending you. But that means that I've got to take the other person in my heart, the way Christ took me in his heart, and took the world in his heart. Now you see, there are two things there.

One of them is, he not only took me in the sense of concern for me, but he took my sin. It was his concern that caused him to embrace our sin. And when in his concern he embraced our sin, that sin in his holy divine heart was undone.

And a stream of death that flowed this way met him inside him and turned this way. And then the stream that originated of life in him came to me. And now he says, Ken Law, I want you to let that flow to the next person.

Now there's nothing saving in us, but the incredible privilege is that if I care more about you than I do about myself, your situation changes. And it's possible for you to get out. Now there's nothing mechanical in it.

It's all possibility. But the possibility is there. So he says, if they receive you, they get me.

But who is the you if they receive you? It's the people who have the mind of Christ. And what does that say? Let me see if I can find what we talked about last night. He says, don't do anything out of self-interest or empty show, but in humbleness consider others more important than yourselves.

Don't look to your own interests, but look to the interests of others. In other words, have the same mind that Christ had and don't go about complaining when you find it's complicating things. Because if you care about other people, you pay a price.

So don't be complaining and don't argue. And then he said, so that you may become blameless and pure children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. You see, there to be his fruit.

And he said, if you'll do the same, there'll be a fruit beyond you. And I'll glory in you and you'll glory in them. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.

So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. Now, that's where I'd like to end. Now, in a few minutes, we're going to serve communion.

We're going to do it very simply. But isn't it interesting that communion is the supreme symbol of the body of Christ? And what is it? He took bread and said, he didn't say this is bread. He said, this is a symbol.

He said, this is my body, which was broken for you. And he took the cup and he said, this is my blood, which was shed for you. You know enough about the scripture to know that the Old Testament equates blood and life.

So when the blood was poured out, it was a life poured out. And when he poured out his life for us, a scream started out of Jerusalem. It's moved across the earth.

And he says, take, eat, and feed on me within your hearts by faith. And as I said last night, it's interesting what he said to the priests in Jerusalem. He said, you keep sheep so you can eat and wear them.

I keep sheep so they can eat and wear me. The only person who will ever be fulfilled is a person who has lost his life for something bigger than himself, has quit living for himself or herself, and has learned to live for something greater. And that's always in terms of others.

Most contented people I've ever seen have been the people who had come to that point. Most fulfilled people I've ever seen. When I think of it, I think of three missionaries who retired, or three Christian leaders who retired in Wilmar.

One of them was E. A. Seamans. Died when he was 91. The last 20 years of his life, he'd walk back and forth across the campus.

And as he walked, the atmosphere was different. And he did more for India probably after he retired than he did while he was living. And he did an incredible amount while he lived.

Unbelievable story. But one of the things I always noticed about him was his fulfillment, his happiness. He was always singing.

We'd be sitting in prayer meeting and he'd start singing in the middle of something. And he got to be 91 and he said to David, his son, I need to go back to India. And when he got to India, he got sick.

They put him in the hospital and David went to see him. David had to look at him and say, Dad, it's alright. You don't have to live any longer.

You don't have to live any longer. It's alright for you to die. And when his son gave him permission, E. A. Seamans died.

And you know why he couldn't die? He was living for somebody else. I think he was one of the happiest men I've ever met. Everything he had was on the line for the gospel.

And I think of that passage, For the joy that was set before him, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame. And it's like an expectant mother facing labor. There's something good to come out of it.

So when I get through this, it's all going to be worth it.

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