

The City

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon calls for a revival in the church, emphasizing the critical role of the Holy Spirit and the necessity of compassion for the lost in a secular world.

Duration: 26:16

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 9:36-38, Luke 10:2, John 4:35, Acts 13:2

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a personal story about a child who was limited physically and unable to play basketball like the other kids. The preacher relates this to how God looks at all of us, recognizing our limitations and providing Jesus as a solution. The preacher emphasizes the need for a revival of religion and urges the congregation to pray for workers to be sent out into the world to spread the gospel. The sermon also addresses the decline of Christianity and the rise of secularism, highlighting the importance of compassion and feeling for the lost souls in the world.

Transcript

This city, like the rest of our country, is in great need. And in the last two weeks, two polls have come out. One is a Pew poll, and another one CNN picked up yesterday.

I saw it on my iPad, that what's happened is that secularism, anti-Christian, anti-church feeling, and power, and movement, and energy has picked up. And according to the CNN report, it's gaining power because they've learned that the church has been converted instead of the church converting the world, the world has converted the church. And there's a decline now going on.

The mission field of those needing Christ has gotten bigger because the differentiation between those in church and those outside of the church has become negligible. There's hardly any difference. So instead of seeing the commandment of our Lord to go into all the world and preach the gospel and make converts, make disciples, the forces of the world have secularized and made converts of the people who are going to church.

So what to do, what to do? We live in this city which is so pivotal in the whole world. New York City is the center of so much, right? So whatever God would do here in this city, it could set alight, it could set on fire other people. For the church needs what has historically been called a revival.

What is a revival? A revival of the Holy Spirit, what we're singing about here, is revivification, revival, re, R-E, re. Do it again, a second time or again another time. Vivification, set on fire, get alive, get strong, get going again.

In 1799, there was a guy born, his name was Charles Finney. He was born in Connecticut. He ended up in upstate New York.

Upstate New York was just totally barren of any kind of spiritual life. And he began to preach powerfully. He was a mocker as a young man, a mocker of the church, of Christ.

He made fun of those who went to church, but God powerfully met him and met him in such a deep way that the fire that was in him began to somehow spread. Remember what John the Baptist said, when he comes, I baptize you with water, but when he comes, the one after me, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. And one of the things about fire is it sets aflame something, which then sets aflame something else.

Fire spreads. Think about the Holy Spirit as when people really meet God, a pastor, a church, a family, a believer. God has ways of spreading that through supernatural means so that it gets other people set on fire.

But the fire has to begin. The fire has to begin. So time, Finney came to this position, which it seems is accurate to me.

He said the Christian church can't live without regular seasons of revival. It can't be healthy unless periodically God sends seasons of fire and wind and running water and streams, which revives the people. Otherwise, the natural tendency of everything, spiritual, is to naturally become dormant.

Just like something warm automatically cools unless heat is applied again. Finney said the church can't be successful, a Christian can't be successful, unless there's regular seasons of revival, fresh baptisms, fresh fillings, call it what you will, of the Holy Spirit, who then brings a quickening of passion, of energy, of prayer. We don't know how we ought to pray, but the Spirit helps us.

So unless the Spirit comes regularly and is entertained and sought after, even though believers have the Holy Spirit within them, it can get dry very quick. For example, Paul spent three years in Ephesus, and yet the first letter that Jesus wrote to seven churches, Paul was there three years, it's a great church, Jesus writes to them and say, but I have this against you, I know your doctrine is good, you don't permit false teaching, and so on and so forth, but I have this against you, you've lost your first love. You've already lost your first love.

You're not like you used to be, it's just a tendency. It's a tendency. And you'll notice the last letter that he wrote to the church in Laodicea is well known, because he said, you're neither hot nor cold.

I would understand if you were hot, or if you were cold and didn't believe at all, but you're worse, you're what? Lukewarm, in the middle. Just enough heat to keep you tepid. I wanna pray tonight that God would send a revival to New York City, to our church, to every church that calls on the Lord, because we were talking with the youth, some of the youth leadership today, it doesn't matter how you show love to kids, it doesn't matter activities and all those good things and having leaders over them, and that's all right, and we're gonna do it, but unless something happens from heaven, the kids are never gonna know God.

They're gonna never know his presence. They're gonna know Bible stories, they're gonna know, oh, he really likes me, and all churches have to be birthed by some birthing process, and you can't do it by cesarean section, it can't be an operation. It has to be a birthing, and not every church is up to that.

Not every pastor's up to that, of taking something from nothing and seeing God birth it through the Holy Spirit by people calling on God and saying, God, we won't let you go until you bless us. The blessings of God are just, they're won by fighting in prayer and believing and holding on and waiting, Holy Spirit, how we need you, how we need you, come, Spirit, come. As you study church history, which I've been a little bit of a student of, you will find out that these promises of the Holy Spirit have been grabbed ahold of by people, and they won't let go, they're just praying that God would come, that the Spirit would come.

It produces emotion, but it's not emotionalism. It can't be worked up by the organ or by a certain kind of music. That's not revival, that's not the Spirit, that just can be emotion.

It's not done by being quiet. That's not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can make you quiet, be still and know I'm God, or the Holy Spirit can make you just shout for glory and get really exuberant in your praise and worship, but it takes things that are dead or almost dead and it makes it alive.

When the Spirit comes, your faith becomes alive. Jesus becomes real. Eternity becomes like more important than time.

Without the Holy Spirit helping you, time is more important than eternity. And you live for the thing now, and the thing that's promised by God, lay up for yourself treasures not here on earth, but up in heaven, that's just a concept. It doesn't grab you.

Nothing grabs you until the Spirit comes. This country, when it was before it became a country, the drunkenness and the carousing that was going on in the colonies, 13 colonies, was so horrible, the profaning of God's name, and the lack of attendance at churches was so horrible, this was before we became a nation, that people began to get frightened. Christians began to become like, what are we gonna do? And they began to cry to God.

And then a revival came. How did it come? I'm almost afraid to tell you because then you'll think that's the way God works, but every revival, every outpouring of the Spirit is different. But as these people prayed, and God began to come, suddenly preachers were set on fire, and conviction of sin set in among the people, and they couldn't live anymore with their sin.

They had to get right with God. They had to run to Jesus. Prayer meetings broke out.

People began to pray. And conviction of sin and the things of God became so real that in some of these towns, like in Finney's Revivals, in these, you know, no pavement, no just dirt, and they would meet in town just crossing, and two Christians would meet and look at each other and shake hands and begin to weep and pray right in the middle of the street. It just became an overwhelming sense that God is alive, God is real, and nothing can produce that.

You can have all the great oratory, the best preachers, only the Spirit brings life. Only the Spirit brings life. How many believe that? Just put your hands together.

Only the Spirit brings life. Jesus said, I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly, and the one who communicates the life of God is the third person of the Godhead. It is the Holy Spirit.

And he's a he, it's not an it. He's a he, and his ministry is to glorify Christ, convict the world of sin, and stir up things that are half dead or mostly out. He was sent to help us to pray.

He was sent to help us to feel what's going on around us. I would think that in the church, and maybe we will put this one verse up, that the great thing that we need a revival now for, one of the great things, is there's such a lack of compassion and feeling among preachers and believers about that the world is going to hell in a handbasket, and we're going about our business as if nothing else was happening except our own little narrow world. I can't stir this up in you, because you can't stir it up in me.

No preacher can do it. It takes the Holy Spirit to make us look at the world the way Jesus did. And with this verse, these little few verses, I'll conclude.

Just look up here in Matthew, our reading for this week. And Jesus went around visiting all the towns and villages, and he taught in the synagogues. He preached the good news about the kingdom, and he healed people with every kind of disease and sickness, and he saw the crowds.

The good news Bible has it. As he saw the crowds, his heart was filled with pity for them, because they were worried and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He didn't see, you see, the disciples saw the same crowds, but they didn't see them as people.

They just saw them as a crowd. You know, get rid of the crowd, Jesus. It's getting late.

But he saw the crowd like they were sheep. I mean, don't you ever walk down Fulton Street if God would just, by his Spirit, open our eyes? These are people who have a soul. Am I right or wrong? They have a soul.

Christ died for them. And we can just go so busy and not feel, and he was moved with compassion, it says, up there, and when he saw the crowds, his heart was filled with pity for them. We get angry at them sometimes, the best of us.

They're rude, they're in your face, they're cursing, they're whatever, and it's so easy to just, instead of feeling compassion, saying, I don't want to live here anymore, get out of here. I can't take this anymore. He was the Son of the living God, he was perfect, but he was filled with compassion.

And you could say, yeah, but they were choosing to live the way they were living. Yeah, but he saw them, even though they were guilty of sin, notice he saw them as worried and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. The word worried there means they were like stricken and discouraged, and helpless means, it comes from a word which means struck to the ground.

They were knocked down by sin, by the devil, by the world, by all the lies. They're just, they're knocked to the ground. And even though they're boisterous and they're sinning, he looked at them different.

Don't you remember when they went to one Samaritan village and the village didn't want them? You know what the reaction of some of the disciples was? Call down fire and burn them up. Am I right? That was James and John. Call down fire from heaven, why? Because they didn't want you.

And Jesus said, well, I didn't come to wipe people out. I came to save people. And now he's gone and the only representatives he has is us, the church, that we would see people as helpless and stricken, knocked to the ground.

I know, but they're so obnoxious and look, they're doing this and they're doing that and they're out of the closet and they're boasting in their sin. But even when they were like that, he still had pity on them because think of the end they're gonna have. Think of in the end what they're gonna have.

Oh, that God would, by the Holy Spirit, would give them this kind of compassion. Because you know what? Unless a pastor feels compassion, unless deacons feel compassion, unless Christians feel compassion, what hope is there for the world? Then you just make the world, you doom them and you just call down fire from heaven in your own mind. Just destroy these people, they're living so horrible.

But that's not the heart of Jesus. I'm so glad it's not the heart of Jesus because a lot of us would not be here today how many lift your hand and say amen to that? No, he's full of compassion. And finally, and finally the next verse.

So he said to his disciples, he sees sheep, now he sees fields. See, unless the Holy Spirit does this, you just see a crowd, get the people out of here. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd.

Now he looks and he sees fields. The harvest is large and the disciples, they don't even know it, or probably some of them what he was talking about. What harvest? I don't see a harvest, I see a bunch of people.

But see, when the Holy Spirit opens your eyes, you see it as a harvest. The harvest is large, but there are few workers to gather it in. Pray to the owner of the harvest that he will send out workers to gather in his harvest.

Notice this, you can't just have compassion, you have to have enough feeling to make you work. Notice he didn't say just cry over them. No, it takes work.

What work? The work of spreading the good news of Jesus. The work of the gospel, the work of praying for people, of weeping with those who weep, of fighting to get through, for praying for 10-year-olds and six-year-olds. It takes work.

You can't just have compassion. You have to have compassion that'll drive you to work. Listen, that compassion is necessary before you can work, but you just can't have feelings.

You got to have feelings that make you want to, I'm not going to live until I lead someone to Christ. I'm going to lead that person to Christ. I'm going to pray that person after I talk to them into the kingdom.

That's the work. And what did Jesus say? The harvest is ripe. There's no shortage of people in New York City.

I'm praying, talking to all the churches now. There's no shortage of sinners in New York. But what did Jesus say there was a shortage of? Workers.

And notice what he said. He didn't say train them. He said pray that God will send them out.

But the word used there, pray out that God will send, that word send in the Greek means thrust them out. Get them out, push them out, full of the Holy Spirit, push them out. They can't hardly live without doing what God wants them to do.

Notice he said pray. Now, do we need to train people? Yes, but unless God has put compassion and thrust them out, they're just, you're talking to corpses. You're talking to people that are on life support.

And you're telling them how to do exercises. And they're all hooked up with tubes. They need life.

The greatest need we have in this church, in every church in New York City, is life. Life, life that the Spirit brings. Not shouting church, not quiet church.

Holy Spirit church. How many are with me, say amen. Holy Spirit Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, filled with compassion.

Instant, in season, out of season. Not afraid of the devil. Not condemning and judging people.

But loving people, weeping over them. Having compassion on them. You know, I one time saw a child in a playground trying to do something.

And the child was limited physically. And they were all playing basketball. But this one child just didn't have it together.

And I remember watching and tears just broke out because I loved that sport. And I realized that as hard as he would try, the other kids were laughing at him. But I wept because he was, just didn't have what it takes.

But that's how God looks at all of us. That's why he gave us Jesus. I want to see a revival of religion.

Now listen, when God comes, you can't explain it. You can't put it in a box. God just comes.

Our job tonight is pray that the Lord of the harvest will thrust out workers, because there's such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that everybody gets set on fire. And the fire gets in the back of their pants and makes them just run out and do things and talk and love and pray. You can't teach that.

You can't train that. One of the demises of the Christian church is this idea that you're gonna teach everybody into what God wants them to be. That is so wrong.

Then what that leads to is an anti-supernatural spirit. Ask Pastor Tim. It's everywhere in the churches.

Anti-supernatural. You talk like I'm talking tonight. What are you talking about? Just have Sunday church and teach and train and have small groups and we'll train everybody in.

But without the Holy Spirit, Christianity is hopeless. Come on, can we just put our hands together and let God know it's hopeless without the Holy Spirit? It's hopeless. God, we're hopeless without the Holy Spirit.

Train them, yes. Small groups, yes. Everything, yes.

I say yes to everything. But without life, what are you dealing with? Without fire, how are you gonna get other people get going? Now, what I'm speaking about now is not even believed by 10% of all the professing Christians in the country. What would you say, Pastor Tim? Not even 5%.

But this is what we believe. In this church, we believe this. Are you with me? Lift your hand if you believe.

Lift your hand high if you believe what I'm just talking about. We believe this and you know what? The Bible's on our side and history's on our side. The history of the Christian church, the greatest moments of it is not when a great teacher arose or someone got a new computer program.

The greatest moments are when the fire came. When the fire came. Do you know one night we were praying? I close with this.

We were praying right here in this auditorium and we were having an all-night prayer meeting or something. Pastor Bostav was alive. Ingrid was here, they were in the front.

And we were praying and waiting just like the song. That song was just written kind of today. Isn't that a beautiful song? Written by Carol and Freddie.

So we were praying and there was a sweet spirit. We were praying and as God is my holy witness, something happened or they wanted me out there. Some problem came up and it was quiet.

It was midnight or 1230 and I walked right here as God is my witness. And I was walking, I was gonna go out, didn't want to disturb anyone. And I walked this way and I got to right here as God is my holy witness.

I got right about here. And suddenly God came into the building. We all froze, I froze.

I just stopped and I held here and I said, I'm not going out there no matter what's out there. And I just came back here. Because when the Holy Spirit comes, time stands still.

Am I right? You don't care about time. You don't care about a thing in this world. And I remember it was so sacred.

It was just like I just like sat down on the steps if I can remember and just said, oh God, the Holy Spirit, how we need you. How we need you. How many men, close your eyes, how many men want the Holy Spirit in your own life and in this church? And you want to just flat out pray.

I want to see God visit this church. I want to see God visit New York City. I want to see God visit our churches.

Every eye closed. I met someone the other day, oh, I've always wanted to meet you. Pastor Jim Simble, I've read your books and you go to that big church and people lined up outside and they go in overflow and in our church, we have a hard time getting 60 together.

And when they were talking about that, I just inside my heart, I felt so like grieved because oh God, all of our churches need a visitation of the Holy Spirit. All of our churches, all over New York City. In the Bronx, all over Manhattan.

In Staten Island, all over Brooklyn. All over Queens, all over Long Island. We just need God to come down.

Well, how will he come? What will he do? You think you have to worry about that? You think I have to worry about will God do it right? God will do it right. When God comes, he does it right. And then there's compassion and tenderness.

I'm all for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I'm all for the miraculous. I'm all for all of that.

But right now, it's getting late. It's 11 o'clock. It's midnight's coming.

Jesus is gonna come back. And then what's gonna happen to all these people? And we just circle the wagons and we're having church and saying God is on the throne. No, we gotta see a revival come where right maybe at five to 12, like a huge, a huge amount of people just come into the kingdom.

Huge amount, including people you and I know. Every man who just wants to pray with me and the pastors. Pastors, come on up and sit on the steps with me.

Pastors that are here. All the other brothers in the church who wanna come and pray with us, get out of your seat and come up here. All the men in the building, every man in the building who wants to just flat out pray with us.

We're only praying for one thing, not for more money, not for anyone's healing. We prayed for that before. Just spirit come.

Spirit come. Holy Spirit come. We wait for you.

We wait for you, Holy Spirit. Come, we wait for you. We wait for you, Holy Spirit.

What in the world are we gonna do without you, Holy Spirit? Men, let's lift our hands up. Ladies, pray right where you are. Lift your hands up where you're seated, ladies.

We men are praying. You pray with us. Come, Holy Spirit.

Come all over New York City. Every church, every pastor, upon all your people, among the Korean churches. Holy Spirit come on the Korean churches, Chinese churches, Spanish churches.

Let our young people know your power and your presence. Oh, come Holy Spirit, come Holy Spirit.

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