

The Poor Blind Beggarly Believer

by Major Ian Thomas

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's righteousness and the need for credited righteousness through faith in Christ.

Duration: 31:26

Scripture: John 7:30, John 8:20, John 12:23-24, John 13:1, John 17:1, Romans 10:1

Topics: "Poor In Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the parable of the unfaithful servant who deceived his king and gained entry into a wedding feast without a wedding garment. The preacher emphasizes the foolishness of the servant's self-righteousness and lack of understanding of God's righteous demands. The sermon then transitions to the significance of Jesus' hour of glorification and the analogy of a grain of wheat falling to the ground and dying to bring forth much fruit. The preacher highlights the need for individuals to let go of their own self-importance and surrender to God's will in order to bear fruit in their lives.

Transcript

As the Holy Spirit, who is our teacher, once more tonight, will delight to take us into the treasure house and boast, boast of God's Son, so that he may become precious and real and vital in our experience. Tonight, we're going to turn to one of the simplest illustrations that the Lord Jesus used. And of course, he delighted to illustrate the most profound spiritual truths in the simplest possible way.

And this is one of them. And it's found in John's Gospel and the twelfth chapter. John, chapter twelve, verse twenty-three.

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. And from that introduction, we recognize that this is to be an hour of unusual significance.

Which at first, we might find a little strange, because the testimony of the Lord Jesus was this, I do only, always, those things that please him. In other words, there was never a moment at any time, on any occasion, in the thirty-three years, in which as God incarnate, he walked this earth as perfect man, in which everything that he ever did or said or was, was anything but an absolutely valid expression of his Father's mind and will and purpose. Therefore, at first, we might think it a little strange, that there could be any moment of time of greater significance than another.

But this is an hour to which reference is made on several occasions. For instance, in the seventh chapter of John's Gospel, in verse thirty, they sought to take the Lord Jesus, but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. In the twentieth verse of the following, the eighth chapter, these words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple, and though him, for his hour was not yet come.

In the thirteenth chapter, and the first verse, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And in his prayer, in his prayer recorded, glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify thee. And of course, in the same chapter from which I quoted the first verse, and the twenty-seventh verse, twelve, twenty-seven, said the Lord Jesus, now is my soul troubled.

And what shall I say, Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. So quite obviously, this hour was to be one of unusual significance. And of course, the Lord Jesus, as you know, leaves us in absolutely no ambiguity as to what was to occur on that occasion.

For he goes on in the twenty-fourth verse of that twelfth chapter of John, Verily, verily, I say unto you, accept a corn of wheat, fall to the ground, and die. It abides alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

I'd like to read you those two verses out of the Amplified New Testament. In the twenty-third and the twenty-fourth verse of John twelve, Jesus answered them, the time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified and exalted. I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains, it remains just one grain.

Never becomes more, but lives by itself, alone. It remains and lives alone. Will never, ever become more.

But if it dies, it produces many others and yields a rich harvest. Now, there, in all its sublime simplicity, is the illustration used by the Lord Jesus to comprehend the total purpose for which the Father God in heaven, together with the Holy Spirit, sent Him as the Son incarnate into this world. What's the main thrust of the illustration? Not His death, of course, though His death will be imperative.

For without it, He will live and remain alone. The main thrust of the illustration is this, that when a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it is not that it might perish, but that through death its life might be released in resurrection to be shared with countless others. And in this marvelous, simple way, the Lord Jesus spelled out loud and clear the purpose for which as God incarnate He came into this world, lived that sinless life and then died that atoning death, in resurrection He might share His life with you and with me.

Without which death He would live and remain to be eternally lonely. You see, it's sin that separates man from God. The wages of sin is death.

So that had the Lord Jesus never ever been God, as God He was, but just supposing He had never ever been God, but just man, man as God created man to be, man so perfect that the Father God from heaven could look down with utter satisfaction and find in the person of the Lord Jesus the kind of man that in the counsels of eternity God intended man to be. This is my beloved Son. So that had He never ever been God, but only, always, only man, He would have had the absolute right to enter into God's presence and stay there forever as God, as man.

The inalienable right to live and remain forever, to be eternally lonely. You see, there are some folk who would have us believe that the Christian life simply derives from our ability or attempt to emulate the beautiful life that He lived. That there was no particular significance in His atoning death.

They would have us believe that His death was simply the unfulfillment of the life of a noble idealist who philosophized and who paid ultimately the price of being too progressive for his age. He died the death of a martyr. There's no particular atoning efficacy in the blood that He shed.

The significance of His coming was simply the life that He lived. There was no particular significance in the way He was born and there was no particular significance in the way that He died. In point of fact, there are some who will go so far as to say in point of fact it wouldn't really have mattered whether He was born or ever died.

For He is the composite man. He is simply the one upon whom we gaze and in our noblest endeavors and motivated by the sincerest desire, we seek to copy the life He lived and the measure in which we emulate His example, that is the measure in which we have become Christians. In other words, you do your best to be like Jesus.

All right, let's examine that for a little while. Now, born as He may have been and there being no significance in the death that He died, the only important thing being that He lived that kind of life as a target that we should aim at, just supposing the Lord Jesus did only come into this world to live that kind of life and then return to be with His Father in heaven. What could the life that the Lord Jesus lived then in its perfection, in its sublime majesty and beauty, what could that life have done for you and for me now? Now, that's an important question because if you and I are going to stake our eternity upon our capacity to emulate the example that He set and copy the standard that He established, we need to know for our intelligent satisfaction what actually His life then, purely as an example, could do for you and for me now.

Is it a solid, genuine premise upon which we can establish our claim to be Christians? I am a Christian because I am making Jesus Christ my example. He is the one whom I emulate. It is the life that He lived I try to copy.

And I believe that I am a Christian because to the uttermost of my ability I am trying to do just that. All right? Then if that is going to be the ground upon which I ultimately expect to stand before God and find acceptability in the presence of my Creator, I need to have some solid substantiation of that hypothesis. Therefore I suggest that it would be very intelligent, a very sensible thing for us to do to take a few minutes of research and discover what, in point of fact, the life that He lived then could do for you and me now.

Let's turn to the tenth chapter of the Epistles of the Romans as a starting point for our research. Romans and chapter ten. And here the Apostle says, Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is this, that they might be saved.

His prayer and concern for his own kith and kin in Israel, says the Apostle Paul, is that they might be saved. And, of course, that presupposes that they're not. But his concern is that they might be.

For, he continues in the second verse, I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, they practice religion, they're found regularly in their place in public worship, they've testified their faith, they conform to the requirements imposed upon them by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, they practice their religion with no little sincerity and no little integrity, says the Apostle Paul. I have to credit them with this. They practice

religion with a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

So he is concerning himself here with sincere men and women who practice religion with a zeal of God, but they're not saved, and the reason is that they are practicing religion, not according to knowledge. I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. Now, if you do something which is not according to knowledge, of course you do it being uninformed and ignorant.

So there must have been something of which they were ignorant in the practice of their religion, which disqualified them from being saved. Now, what was the nature of their ignorance? They practice religion not according to knowledge. What then was the nature of their ignorance? Well, we're not in doubt about that.

The next verse goes on to tell us. I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, for they being ignorant of God's righteousness. They were ignorant of God's righteousness.

Well, what did that do for them? If they were ignorant of God's righteousness, what was the damage that that did to them in their practice of religion? Well, being ignorant of God's righteousness, in other words, the minimal requirements that he as their creator has the absolutely reasonable right to make upon them as creatures made in his complete and total image, being ignorant on the basis of their practice of religion to settle for a standard of righteousness that fell tragically short of the standard of righteousness that God as creator has the right to demand of them. They were ignorant of the righteousness of God and being ignorant of the demands of that righteousness were prepared to settle for another kind of righteousness that in God's eyes is totally inadequate. Let me read the total verse of the third verse there of the tenth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans.

They've been ignorant of God's righteousness and in that ignorance going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. You see, if you're ignorant of the demands that God's righteousness makes upon you then you will go about to establish your own righteousness on some standard that is other than God's standard. And of course, the standard by which they evaluated themselves and established their own righteousness was a standard that was being arbitrarily set by the ecclesiastical authorities of their day and generation, the scribes and the Pharisees.

In other words, respectable religion. Because the scribes and the Pharisees had presumed to substitute their procedures for the demands of the Holy Spirit. Now, they were ignorant of God's righteousness because from their earliest days, from their earliest childhood they had been taught by the scribes and the Pharisees that so long as they attended church on so many occasions, so long as they paid their tithe, so long as they did this and they did that, so long as, in other words, they conformed to the requirements of that in itself that would be acceptable by God, you do, said the scribes and the Pharisees, your stuff and we'll take responsibility of getting you into heaven.

Now, bear this in mind, if you had been a little child and for the earliest days, from the year dot, you'd been taught that all you had to do was to go to church, pay your tithe, do this, do that, exactly what the priest said was righteousness and God would accept you on the basis of your performance. Well, wouldn't you expect to get to heaven? Once you'd done your stuff? After all, you put the penny in, you ought to get your gum. How tragic that there are tens of millions of people today in the world who are reared in the same abysmal ignorance of God's righteousness and in their pathetic ignorance are settling for a righteousness which is abysmally inadequate.

Do you know what the Lord Jesus said about the righteousness to which they submitted? He called it the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, the respectability that was credited to those who were good churchgoers and conformed to reasonable ecclesiastical requirements. He said, the Lord Jesus, except your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Any ambiguity about that? Could the Lord Jesus have spelled it out more categorically than that? Except your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will in no wise, under no circumstances, enter into the kingdom of heaven.

They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. Of course, if in the ignorance of God's righteousness and its demands that that makes upon you, you go about to establish your own righteousness on some other basis of evaluation, all that you produce by virtue of your behavior is not righteousness. And self-righteousness is hopelessly, hopelessly inadequate.

For, verse 4, the same chapter, Christ is the end of the lawful righteousness to everyone that believes it. In other words, the Apostle Paul, as we shall discover in a moment, recognizing that there is no boy, girl, man or woman who has ever been born into this world since Adam fell, who could ever, on their own, satisfy the minimal demands of a holy God, of a man made in his own absolute image, recognizing that fact, sees as the only possible hope for any boy, any girl, any man or any woman to enter acceptably into God's presence, is that that boy, that girl, that man, that woman should be clothed upon with a righteousness that is not inherently their own, but which has been credited them in the infinite mercy of a holy God, in the beloved Jesus, wearing the wedding garment of His sparklessness. As the Lord Jesus indicated in His parable of the wedding breakfast.

And you will remember, the invitation was given to all in the highways and the byways and the alleys to come to the wedding feast. But in the parable there used by the Lord Jesus, of course, as the custom was, there were servants at the door equipped with the wedding garments that each guest must receive, placing it over their own clothing, so that each might find equal acceptance in the presence of their royal host. But here's a man who comes and says, I don't need that.

I consider that I'm completely adequate. I'm offended at the suggestion that I am not adequately attired for such an occasion. And the faithful servant at the door says, I'm sorry, sir, but I have received strict instructions from the king that no boy, girl, man or woman invited to this wedding feast is to be allowed in other than clad in the wedding garment that he by royal decree has made available for those who have been invited.

I am sorry, sir. I do not have the authority to let you in other than wearing the wedding garment. And that man, in proud indignation, considering himself completely adequate, incensed at the suggestion that he needs anything other than what he is and has got, stalks off in a rage.

But in the parable you remember that the Lord Jesus told, marvellous illustration, an unfaithful servant. Rounds up, taps him on the arm and says, Sir, I understand exactly how you feel. If I were you, I would be just as angry as you are.

I think it's preposterous that a man in your position, your standing, your financial backing, your family pedigree, your culture, your education, should receive such an insolent rebuff. I'll tell you what, sir. I'll get you in.

I'll get you in. Come with me. So he takes him round the back.

I don't know how he got him in, but he got him in. He got him in, the unfaithful servant. That's really the name of the parable.

It's the parable of the unfaithful servant, who defied his king, lied to a man, and said he could get him in. And he got him in. And my, he was just as pleased as punch.

All these stupid simpletons, who at the door had received the wedding garment, and here he was, talking around, advertising his own adequacy. Yes, everything was fine, until the king came. And there was a strange hush.

And every eye followed the gaze of the king. As he focused upon one man, without a wedding garment. And there was a hush.

Every heart beat that little bit faster as the king, never for one moment shifting his gaze, walked straight across to that man, and he said, Friend, how camest thou in, without a wedding garment? And the story tells us, that though this man had so much to say, to the servant at the door, in the presence of the king he was speechless. And the king said, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out, into outer darkness. Yes, a marvellous picture, you see, of a man who practices religion, not according to knowledge.

Who insists on parading himself, in the presence of a holy god, in a self-righteousness, that he considers he has achieved, in his ignorance, of the minimal demands of God's righteousness. Those minimal demands, that have been penned, as I have already reminded you, by the finger of God, in which God plainly indicated, I, as God, made you in my image, and I expect of you, that you give a valid expression, in all that you do, and say and are, of my absolute righteousness. And when, as I have reminded you, the law says, thou shalt not steal, God is simply saying, I, as your God, made you in my likeness, as my creature, and I am not a thief.

And when the law says, thou shalt not bear false witness, God is simply saying, as your creator, I made you in my image, and my controversy with you, is that having created you, in my absolute likeness, so that all creation can look at you, and know what God is like, by what you have been doing, and what you have been saying, and what you have been, you have been telling lies about. That's why the Bible tells us, of course, that God isn't measuring how good you are, and God isn't measuring how bad you are. He's not particularly interested, because so much of that is the accident of birth, the kind of family you were born into.

He's not measuring how good you are, He's not measuring how bad you are. The only thing that God measures is how good you're not. For there is no difference if all have sinned and come short of the glory.

And any boy, any girl, any man, any woman, who has been instructed in the righteousness of God, knows perfectly well they have come short. And there is only one possible remedy for each one of us who has come short of God's glory, and that is that there should be credited to us something that we do not deserve, nor could ever earn. For Christ is the end of that law, for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Any boy, any girl, any man, any woman who is prepared to admit I've come short of God's righteousness, I can never attain to it, for I claim by faith what I do not deserve, the righteousness of the one who upon the cross had credited to Him my guilt. And God has pledged His name, His honour and His glory to accept for

His dear sake who bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Who suffered the just.

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