

Atlantic Lyman Ministry 02 John 12;31

by Robert Crawford

The sermon emphasizes the importance of believing in the light of Jesus Christ to be saved and to have eternal life.

Duration: 32:06

Scripture: Matthew 11:28, Matthew 16:24, John 3:16, John 10:10, John 12:31-32, John 12:34

Topics: "Evangelism", "Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a personal story about encountering two young boys who had never heard the name of the Lord used in vain. He gives them gospel booklets and treats them to ice cream, hoping to share the simple story of Jesus with them. The preacher also talks about his son, who has achieved academic success without any financial assistance, and how his children used to gather other kids for children's meetings. He emphasizes the importance of seizing the limited time we have in life to accept the truth of the Word of God and find salvation.

Transcript

I'd like to ask you to turn for just a brief season together to the Gospel according to John. One almost fears to take anything away from the solemnity of the thoughts that have been ours. By the help of the Lord, we would like to think that some precious soul will turn to Christ before the close of our meeting.

John chapter 12, and for brevity's sake, let us read from verse 31. Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out. Die, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me.

This he said signifying what death he should die. The people answered him, we have heard out of the law that Christ abided forever. And how sayest thou the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? Then Jesus said unto them, yet a little while is the light with you.

Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you. For he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.

These things spake Jesus and departed, and did hide himself from them. Though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him. We want to think for a few minutes specifically of what we have just read in verse 36, but it would be unfair not to point out the setting.

John's gospel abounds with statements relative to something we all understand, and that goes for the young friends, for the middle aged, and for the older ones. We are blessed in our auditorium here with a lighting system that makes it possible for us to meet together in this evening hour to read our Bibles and shortly to find our way to the doors and head for home. I was in the city of New York, I presume it's about two years now, one afternoon, taking somebody to the airport, I don't just recall who, it was Kennedy Field.

One of the returning missionaries and his wife, when suddenly we became aware that we were in the midst of a situation of chaos, of complete confusion. What had happened, the power generating plants had faded. And in the eastern states from New York, Philadelphia, Boston, on up as far as Buffalo and Niagara Falls, where a great deal of power is generated by the waters that are diverted from going over the falls.

As they descend a steep channel, they go through turbine engines and generate the power for the city of New York and the vast area of New Jersey and the New England states. Well, you friends in the Midwest here would scarcely recognize the confusion. Thousands of people were trapped underground in subway cars that were absolutely black and being underground, there was just no possible way to find their way out of there.

There was no light, there was no ventilation, there was absolutely nothing. People by the thousands were trapped in elevators between floors. They could neither get the elevator up or down.

And there they stayed and this thing went on, not five minutes. In many cases it was up to 12 and 14 hours. Numbers of people took heart attacks and died.

All that had happened was in one split second of time, a relay switch in a generating station had become overloaded, had snapped a signal light that in turn picked up all across the eastern seaboard and threw switch after switch to cut out all the electric power. And they had to begin by finding the very small thing, the very minor switch that caused the start of it. And the great electrical engineers of the country were consulted and called in and some power was brought in from the west and the Midwest.

But it was a strange, phenomenal thing. No airplanes could land, there were no lights in the field. Nobody could get up the stairs in the airport because the escalators in the elevators weren't running.

Couldn't load the luggage, didn't have any power for anything. The whole thing was just a catastrophe of large proportions. Three times this summer we have been alerted that there was a power shortage and if you had air conditioning that please turn it off.

I don't know where the police force would come from to enforce such a thing because if people have air conditioning they have it to keep cool and you can plead with them all you like about power shorting but they say let the other fellow suffer. I've got air conditioning. And they're turned on and they were left turned on until we had a state of emergency.

Now I'm only saying this as a background to point out what Jesus said. If we were to follow through the passages, and I'll only refer to them, in John chapter 1 we read of the Lord Jesus, in him was life and the life was the light of man. Now you'll have to take me at my word tonight.

That statement in chapter 1 and verse 4 refers to the light of creation. In him was life and the life was the light of man. In a few verses further on there's a description of the Lord Jesus coming into the world and it says of his coming, this is the true light that coming into the world lighteth every man.

The world has never been as responsible to the light as since the coming of the Savior who is the true light that lighteth every man. Then in John chapter 3 we read, this is the condemnation, verse 18. If I had said verse 16 everybody would have responded, oh we know that verse.

You know John 3 and 18? Could I say in order of experience it precedes John 3 and 16? This is the condemnation that light has come into the world. And men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. Then in John chapter 8 as we hurry to our close, Jesus said, I am the light of the world.

He that follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. Now if you've been following me in John 1 we had the light of creation. We had the light of Christ coming.

In chapter 3 we had the light of conviction of sin. In John 8 we had the light of conversion to God. I am the light of the world says our Savior.

He that follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. Now what I want to come to is the light of choice. That we read in verse 36 where the Lord Jesus uttered one of the most plaintive pleas of all the Bible.

You know in trying to prepare for the meeting tonight, I was thinking a little bit of our home area and of our own meeting tonight. And I began in memory to go up and down the street. We live in a development of three streets of 18 houses each.

They're all identically alike. And by the way, if somebody would like to do the honors, there's a dog in the audience. And the Bible says without or dog.

So if you'll please help us out. Somebody might remember to look at the preacher instead of the dog. I was counting in my memory.

We had been 15 years in that house this month. In the 15 years we have been there, I have been called on those three short blocks of 18 houses each. I have been called 13 distinct times to witness the death of a person.

Three short city blocks. 18 houses down each side of the block. And 13 individuals have gone into the presence of God.

Some of them I haven't slept for nights after. I think the most tragic one was just a few months ago. I heard a loud call at my bedroom window about six in the morning.

It was just dusk or the daylight was dawning, I should say. And I knew the neighbor's voice and I said, I'll be right out, Frank. I slipped into my clothes and out the door.

And as I did so, I noticed not the house next to ours, but the next one. It was completely enveloped in flames. The neighbor had secured an ax by then.

And I went with him and we hit it against the front door to spring the lock. And as the door sprung open, the flames came at least 20 feet out that door. We were driven back.

I made two or three attempts to get to the door. I tried a cellar window. Couldn't do any good there.

The fire department arrived and the chief put on an air pack. And he said to me, what's the story? Well, I said the story is that the wife is still in hospital as far as I knew last night. But the husband is in there alone.

I don't mind telling you his occupation. That dear man was one of the leading men in the Baptist board of publication right near our home. He had quite a lot to do with the publishing of their books, their literature.

When the chief stepped into the house with his air pack, he turned and walked out and he said to me, there's no use going into that place. He said he's lying on the floor beside the Davenport with an empty bottle of whiskey. And he said beside him there are the remnants of a cigarette and he's burned to a crisp.

Mind you, I had had some few talks with that man. And I'm just as sure as I stand here that he went out into the blackness of darkness. Friends, tonight, this subject of light and darkness is about the simplest thing I could think of but presenting the gospel story.

And Jesus said, why you have light, believe in the light. I only want you to try and bear with me for four little suggestions that are in this text. He has just said, I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

And for those who love the Bible, they'll know this is the third time that he said this. He said it in John 3, 14. He said it again in John 8, or it was said of him in John 8. And he says it again in John 12.

When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, he said in John 8. That was man's part in the death of Christ. In John 3, he said as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. That was God's part in his being put to death.

But in John 12 that we have read together is his own voluntary subjection, I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. Oh, let me ask you, friends, tonight, have you been drawn by cords of love divine to the one who came and, by the way, fulfilled the law that we were hearing of to the very degree that God can say tonight, Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for it as it is written. Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

Now our text is brief. Let me drive it home. You have life.

There are three words that I venture to say will never leave the memory of a soul in eternity. You have life. There are people that don't have life.

A while ago, two little fellows of five years of age were playing along the curb, and as I was passing by, one of them used some rather vile language and cursed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The other one wasn't to be outdone, and he responded by designing or destining his friendly little pal to hell. So I sat down on the curb between them, and I said, By the way, fellows, who were you talking about when I was going by? I said, I heard one of you say something about the Lord Jesus Christ.

What do you know about him? Well, one little fellow looked at me, and he said, I don't know anything. I said, Did you know he was a man? No, sir, he said, I did not. I said, Did you ever know that he came from heaven, and that he died on Calvary, and that he died to put away sins of boys and girls and men and women, and all who trust him can start their way to heaven? You can imagine what he said.

He said, Quit your kidding. Quit your kidding. That little five-year-old fellow had never heard, except in his home and blasphemy, the name of the Lord in vain.

I had a little chat with the other fellow, gave them each a little gospel booklet, and since I had taken their time, I told them each to go and buy an ice cream cone. If you can't win them one way, you can always win them another. And, of course, it wasn't long until they started to look for me.

And I had the privilege of several times telling them the simple story. I hope to meet those lads in heaven because of the precious Word of God in all its simplicity. Now, Jesus said, You have life.

There are young people sitting in our audience this Lord's Day evening, and if your next-door neighbor were dying tonight, and he called for you and said, Please, tell me how to be sure of heaven, you could say, Well, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. You could tell your neighbor, you could tell your pals, you could tell your friends how to be saved. You're not saved tonight.

You have life. You have light to that awful place our brother just read about, the bottomless pit. To that awful scene at the judgment of the great white throne.

To the lake of fire. You have light as to the coming of the Lord. You have light as to your fallen condition and need and danger.

You have light, and Jesus says, You have a divine privilege. You have life, such as many do not have tonight. Well, let me notice with you just quickly.

The Lord Jesus tells us of a very limited time. He used a five-letter word that I would like to ask somebody to define for me. You young teenagers, put on your paper now.

Jesus said while you have life. What does that five-letter word mean? Who's volunteering to answer? Anybody? What does W-H-I-L-E mean? Well, I take it that your silence is that you don't know. And you're not very far wrong.

The while of our text is the limited time in which you might be saved. Our boy, thank God, has given us joy in winning others for Christ. He's in his eighth year in college.

I don't know what he intends to do. But at any rate, he has not taken a penny from my pocket nor a penny of the Lord's money to get his education. He has gone through and complete scholarships.

And if the Lord spares him a few more months, he'll have his doctor's degree in computer science all without a penny's cost. He's what they call an assistant to the professor in Cornell University in the computer department. And I can remember the days when he would round up the boys in the neighborhood and our girl would round up the girls.

And they'd say, Dad, we'll have to take three or four trips tonight for the children's meeting. We've got 10 or 12 or 15 gathered up we have to meet. Right behind us was a family by the name of Stone.

Their two teenage boys came every night to children's meetings. And Greg won every prize. Last summer, he got his first job.

And on his first morning of work, he was taken to where he was to report at the Philadelphia Electric Company. He was assigned with three men on a small skiff. And they were to drop buoy markers in the Delaware River along the bay's edge where they were going to be working as a protection for boaters and skiers and so on.

They wouldn't come near the intake to the power plant. He dropped the first buoy marker over the edge and it was all fine. As he went to drop the second, the cable chain caught on the side of the skiff and it was just sufficient weight and leverage that it upset the skiff.

And the men were all thrown into the water. He was an excellent swimmer. But it wasn't too long until somebody called me and they said, could you go over to Stone's house and tell them their son is dead? I knocked on the door.

The father came. I said, good morning, Fred. His wife Ruth was sitting with her head in her hands.

Up until this moment, they were hoping against hope that in his strong swimming ability he had been able to go against the tide and had reached the small island. Maybe he found his way into a cottage and was trying to recuperate from the ordeal. And they were clinging to a faint glimmer of hope.

I remember saying, Fred, I was given a call that I don't like to do. And dear Mrs. Stone just was convulsed and weeping. We sat there in silence.

There are times when it pays to keep quiet. After a while I said, I'd like to pray with you. We did pray for them after breaking the awful news.

As I was about to leave, the mother took my hand and she said, Bob, could you give us any hope at all that Greg is in heaven? Talk about being on a spot. Here was a boy that had taken every prize for attendance, every prize for memory verse, every prize for bringing the most other scholars. And I said, well, Mrs. Stone, you probably remember hearing Greg say for God so loved the world.

Yes, she said, and I can finish that verse. He often quoted it. Well, I said he knew that and that's all I can tell you.

In my heart of hearts, I have to say, I don't have the faintest glimmer of hope that he had taken in the truth of the Word of God, said Jesus while he had life. And that indefinable period of time that may be five minutes, that may be 50 years, while you have life, you have it at this moment. You may never have it again.

Let me note with you, Jesus suggested there's a personal responsibility. You pass this off to the person sitting next to you or to your friends or your neighbors. He said while you have life, believe in the life.

Now what does that mean? Well, it simply means to allow its radiance to penetrate your life and soul. I believe that that's a light hanging in front of me. I've enjoyed its usefulness in illuminating the pages of my Bible.

I have no problem in believing in the life. What it simply means is to allow it to have its place in your heart, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. In true repentance, as a sinner condemned, guilty of breaking the law of God, as part of the world standing guilty before God, while you have life, believe in the life.

Now what else can you do but believe in the life? And I'll tell you what you can do. Somebody could step over to that panel. I think it's over by the door there.

And just flip a few switches. And I'll tell you, you wouldn't have any trouble believing in the darkness. We would all know it.

We would sense it just as we do the light. What can you do with the light? Well, you can reject it. I could close my eyes and squint hard, and I'm in the darkness itself.

I don't have the best eyesight as it is now. Just by rejecting the light, by closing my eyes, I seem to sense there are some in our meeting that are closing their eyes to the beauties and the Savior who died on Calvary. You can reject the light.

The light can be withdrawn, and it may very well be withdrawn as far as you're concerned. And I'll tell you one step further, you can despise the light. Judas is the outstanding man of history for that.

He walked with the light. I'm referring to Jesus. He talked with Him.

He saw His miracles. He heard His parables. And our Bible says that having rejected Him, he went out, and it was night.

Don't think that just happens to be per chance in the Bible. It was night. He went out into darkness.

And tragically, He hung Himself and went to the blackness of darkness. Jesus said, Why do you have light? Believe in the light that you may be the children of light. That last little clause has been ringing in my soul for the last two or three days.

That you may be the children of light. If we had taken the time to turn to 1 John, we would have read, God is light. That's His very attribute and character.

God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Now let me paraphrase the end of this text. Believe in the light that you may be the children of God.

I'm not changing the text. He's the light of the world, and if you believe in the light, you can go out these doors tonight saying, Thank God. I'm a child of God.

I'm a child of a King. Oh, may the Spirit of God convince you of your position as being guilty of breaking the law of God, a condemned sinner, hastening to the eternal burning. And why do you have light? Believe in the light that tonight you may be the children of light.

We're going to close in prayers. If there's anyone with us that has an anxious, interested thought, don't leave the building. The first time I came to the Limon Conference, it was in the tent out in the country.

When the Sunday night meeting was closing, there were two girls. I think they were sisters, and somebody may be able to fill me in on the details. They came and they sat down in the front row.

One girl was smiling, was apparently happy. The other girl was weeping. I said to the one who was weeping, What seems to be your color? She said, Well, I was at the conference last year and I wanted to be saved, but I went home and I wasn't saved and I'm not saved tonight.

And I can't go home another year without knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. This may help somebody. They told me they lived, I think, some 30 or 40 miles from Limon.

Ring a bell with anybody. I can't remember their names. At any rate, we opened our Bibles and we had the great joy and privilege of seeing a dear soul resting on the finished work of Christ.

Oh, would to God the conference would close like that tonight. If you're interested, my beloved brother, who has spoken so forcefully to our hearts tonight, would be happy. Other men, believers in the Lord Jesus, would be extremely happy.

Go to whoever you feel you can trust, confiding in your needs, but don't leave without being sure that your heart has been illuminated by the gospel of the grace of God, by the knowledge of the One who said, I am the light of the world. Shall we pray? Our Father, we bow to thank Thee tonight that we have had a look at the dark picture of the total depravity of man as proven conclusively by the law of God. We thank Thee for all presents whose mouths have been stopped and they have stood guilty before God.

And at the bar of divine justice they have seen that a Savior has taken their place and paid the debt of their sins and has taken such a position before Thee. Now risen, exalted at Thy right hand, He is able to save through eternity all that come unto God by Him. Save some precious soul tonight, gracious Father.

Bless Thy Word and exalt Thy Son in bringing some dear one to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for promises Thou shalt be saved. Part us with Thy blessings.

Continue Thy favor on my people in this vast area of need in the Midwest, we pray. And use them to the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ for His namesake. I wonder if we might just take a moment to sing a verse today, hymn in closing.

There was one I thought rather appropriate for what we have been considering together. Number 215. Come unto me, it is the Savior's voice, the Lord of life, who did Thy heart rejoice.

O weary heart with heavy cares oppressed, come unto me and I will give you rest. We'll just sing verse 1 of hymn number 215 and then the meeting is over and our brother Star will be at the door as I like to hear it too. Verse 1 of 215.

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