

The Man Who Has the Clues

by R.V. Amos

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having the clues or the answers to life's problems, which can be found in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Luke 12:54

Topics: "Biblical Guidance", "Christian Transformation"

Description

R.V. Amos preaches about the timeless relevance of the Bible, highlighting its stories of people with hopes, fears, dreams, and sins, and its dramatic incidents. He focuses on the meeting of Philip and the Ethiopian man in Acts 8, emphasizing the importance of understanding and seeking truth with the help of others. Amos discusses the urgent need for clues to navigate life's meaning and challenges, paralleling the crisis in the world with the need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He emphasizes the Church's need for power, concern for others, and unity based on God's terms, and addresses societal problems like liquor, laxity, lovelessness, and living. Amos explores the possibilities for Christians to experience transformation and power through encounters with Jesus Christ, offering solutions to confusion, worry, loneliness, insignificance, sorrow, and guilt.

Transcript

The Bible is an amazing Book. Old though it is, it is as modern as this moment. It tells the stories of people just like ourselves--with the same kind of hopes and fears, the same kind of dreams and longings, the same kind of problems and sins. The Bible is filled with incidents which are dramatic, daring, and dynamic.

One of these is the familiar scene which tells of the meeting of Philip and the man from Ethiopia. You will find the story in Acts 8, and I suggest that you read it again, at this point, to get the facts.

What a graphic story it is! In it we hear the Evangelist's pointed question, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Then comes a pause for thought, and a moment later we listen to the coloured councillor's candid confession, "How can I unless someone will give me the clue?" (Acts 8:31 NEB). In saying that he was very conscious of his need, and admitted that he required the help of someone who could assist him. He was quite frank and honest. He was questing for truth, and had come up all the way to Jerusalem for that purpose. Already he had made certain positive discoveries, but he had not learned enough. As he returned home, he was reading the Scriptures, but he was still groping around in the dark. When Philip spoke to him, the Ethiopian replied that he was in desperate need of help. "How can I understand," he said, "unless someone will give me the clue?"

Well, Philip was such a man. He did have the clues, so he went right on from that point and told this man with enquiring mind, all that he had to know, and to do, to obtain eternal salvation. The result was that this man from Ethiopia listened carefully, weighed up the evidence and then accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and was obedient to his new found Master in the waters of baptism.

This all happened because the Christian is a man who has the clues, which he receives because he loves and serves, worships and obeys THE Man who has all the clues--Jesus Christ. Philip was a man like that!

Now let us turn from the past to the present. We are living in an age when people are looking urgently, even desperately, for the clues which will explain, for them, the meaning of life and the mystery of eternity.

We are living in an abnormal crisis in the history of the world. According to historians there have only been three or four such crises in the whole course of human history. As Billy Graham recently said, "We are in a most critical period in world history, and never has the human race needed the Gospel of Jesus Christ as now." Then, to make the point clearer he adds, "During the past year we have gone on from crisis to crisis. The world is an armed camp, torn by riots, strife, hatred, division, and competing ideologies. Surely at this crucial and critical hour the Church of Christ should be ready to take the offensive. After all, the greatest revolution of all time did not take place in Russia in 1917, but two thousand years ago at the birth of Christ."

Like the Ethiopian of old, our word today is saying, "How can I understand unless someone will give me the clues?" Jesus Christ, the Man who has the answers to life's problems, once reminded his audience of the need we all have to possess the clues which will make life worth living. This is what he said, "When you see cloud banking up in the west, you say, 'It is going to rain,' and rain it does. And

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when the wind is from the south, you say, 'There will be a heatwave,' and there is. What hypocrites you are!! You know to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; how is it you cannot interpret this fateful hour?" (Luke 12:54-56 NEB).

The world, the church, and the individual all need the help of "Someone" who has the clues. That "Someone" is the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is the Man who has the clues for time and eternity. It is true to say, I think, that because Jesus Christ does have the answers, those who follow him learn to see things through his eyes. The real Christian, therefore, is a person who is "all clued up" as how to live life to the glory of God.

Our Master does have the clues! When Jesus Christ comes into our lives fully amazing things begin to happen. Bernard of Clairvaux once said of Christ's coming, "He has come to water dry places; to illuminate the gloomy spots; and to inflame with warmth those which were cold. He has quickened my sleeping soul." Lovely words, aren't they? Add to these the tribute of Clement of Alexandria, "He has turned all our sunsets into sunrises."

Doesn't that grip your heart and mind? Our Master has the clues! He shows us how to live here, and hereafter. He stands before us and offers life--exciting, enterprising, exhilarating, everlasting. That is thrilling, isn't it? This is what we long for, the ideal life for which we have dreamed. Down the arches of the years we can hear the strong, clear, quiet voice of our Lord saying to us, "I have the keys." When we hear those words our troubled hearts are at rest, for we know he has spoken, and all is well.

Jesus Christ is the Man who has the Clues for

THE CHURCH--WITH HER PURPOSE

The church of Jesus Christ is the most remarkable building this world has ever seen. It is not made of bricks, or stones, or timber, or metal. It is built up of people--like you and me. We are the Church! This church is a divine society, a believing fellowship, a worshipping community, a growing organism, a kingdom without frontiers, and is, in some marvellous and mysterious sense, an extension of the Incarnation.

We, who are members of churches of Christ, seek to find our pattern for the life and witness, the faith and order, the service and program of that church, in the pages of the New Testament. As far as we are able, God helping us, we strive constantly to restore that church in its original purity, simplicity, authority, vitality, and unity. Of course, being human we often fall short of our intention, but this is our ideal.

Over the years we have used several "watchwords", and we have tried to observe them in the spirit of Christian love. For example we used to hear, quite often, this truth--"We do not claim to be the only Christians, but we do claim to be Christians only." Likewise we were often told, "Where the Scriptures speak we speak. Where the Scriptures are silent we are silent." Constantly on our lips were the words which expressed our standard of conduct, "In things essential: Unity. In things nonessential: Liberty. In all things: Love." These are all fine ideals. How well we have maintained them is yet to be revealed. Perhaps we will discover that the real and the ideal are far apart.

As a people our dream has been for the restoration of the New Testament Church, and the union of Christians on the basis of God's Word. Even today, although we seek to interpret this in the light of the modern scene, our purpose for existence is still the same. To make this effective, however, requires a sincere and penetrating rethinking of our position, so that in our own day we might still be relevant to the world in which we

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live. It may well be that our Lord will demand us to submit to the searching scrutiny of His Spirit. If we do let's be prepared for some revolutions. As Murdo Ewen MacDonald said, "Jesus Christ is a radical . . . not only did He question the accepted values of his time, he has literally turned the world upside down." So, if we ask our Master to review the place we hold in the Christian world today we might learn some truly amazing things, for,

"He wakes desires you never may forget,

He shows you stars you never saw before.

He makes you share with Him for evermore,

The burden of the world's divine regret."

If we take a close look at the church today we will see that she has three great needs.

1. She has a need of POWER.

No! Not the power of position, nor the power of great wealth. But the power of a great inward strength. Alexander Vidler tells us that one of the things which contributed to the French Revolution was that "there was an absence of spiritual vitality, and without that a Church is ill qualified to face an hour of crisis." (The Church in an Age of Revolution" p. 12).

2. She has need of CONCERN.

This concern must be directed towards the needs of men, the lives of men, and the souls of men. It must express itself in the great church programs of Christian evangelism, Christian education, Christian benevolence, and Christian missions. The church's task in the world is to bring God to men, and lead men to God. She has no other real purpose in existing, than that.

3. She has need of UNITY.

There must be a sense of the oneness of the family of God. There can be no full benediction on a sundered church. During a recent Crusade in Melbourne, in which several churches participated, a great deal of stress was laid on the "scandal of disunity." Well, this is in keeping with the Scriptures, for the Lord Jesus Christ prayed "that they all may be one that the world may believe." A divided church will never conquer the world. That will take a united church--and it must be one united on God's terms, not men's.

What, then, are the clues which our Lord Jesus Christ has for the church today? Just two verses of Scripture. But what verses they are. One of them is Luke 24:49,

"Tarry ye . . . until ye be endued with power from on high."

This is a truly wonderful promise! It is no dream, no impossible ideal. This is something which our Lord promised. The church needs this power to enable her to fulfil her task in the world.

The second clue tells us how to get the power.

You will find it in Acts 1:8,

"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you."

Now, these are the clues which Jesus gives the church. Are they too simple? No, rather are they likely to be too demanding on us. For this power comes only at a price. And that price? Paul sums it up in this saying--Jesus "alone should stand first in everything." (Colossians 1:18, C. B. Williams' translation). A church filled with God's power, and rejoicing in God's presence, and seeking to fulfil God's purpose will find she has the clues she needs for her magnificent task.

Jesus Christ is the Man who has the Clues for

THE COMMUNITY--AND ITS PROBLEMS

The Bible affirms three great truths--(1) That God created the world, (2) That God loves the world, and (3) That God will fill the whole earth with His glory. We believe these things, but when we look around at our social and communal

life we begin to wonder how long it will be before the last of these takes place. The community is full of problems, which give us a great deal of concern.

1. There is the problem of LIQUOR.

Press reports at this point have been most significant. Let the newspapers tell their own story!

Mr. Debenhem, who has been a magistrate for over 13 years in the Redfern Court (New South Wales), said a little while ago that there has been "more crime from 10 o'clock closing. He added that 96% of the crimes which he adjudicated were at least partly caused by alcohol, of 11,437 street crimes . . . only 149 did not involve liquor.

In some senses, an even more distressing report was a statement by a leading Sydney pathologist who said, "Children should be given an occasional shandy rather than forbidden to drink alcohol." The headline of the paper that quoted those words, read, "Give Children Alcohol says Expert."

In reply to this kind of thing it is heartening to read the warning, also in the press, in the words of Sir Philip Messent, former head of Surgical Studies at the University of Adelaide, and a member of the Unley Church of Christ. He said that "social pressures on teenagers to drink have reached criminal proportions. Our young people are faced with a tremendous amount of coercion and ridicule to make them start drinking." Let us take care, for liquor is one of the great social and moral evils of modern society.

2. There is the problem of LAXITY.

Again it is the press we call to our aid. On March 8, 1961, there were headlines informing us that "Doctor Finds Schoolgirl Mothers." The report informed us that a Sydney doctor, in one hospital, in one year, had questioned fifty "girl mothers" under the age of 16 years. That such a condition is to be found in our communities, tugs at the

strings of our hearts. But feeling sorry and sentimental about the matter is not nearly enough. We must seek to find some way of protecting our young folk--girls and boys alike.

3. There is the problem of LOVELESSNESS.

Look around at the old folk living in isolated rooms. Reflect on the strongly materialistic attitude so many folk have towards life. Consider the increasing automation of our way of living, with its decreasing significance of the importance of individuals who make up society. Lovelessness is rampant. "I couldn't care less" is the philosophy of so many.

4. There is the problem of LIVING.

Yes, just living! We live in a world over which the threat of another war is ever imminent. The symbol of our atomic age is a vast mushroom-shaped cloud. George A. Buttrick, some while ago in the U.S., was addressing a Baptist Convention when he said, "The First World War gave Communism a start; the Second World War spread it; the Third World War will establish it across the earth for centuries." Whether that is too extreme, or not, I cannot say. But it is another indication of the problem of simply keeping alive at this time.

Now, what clues has Jesus Christ for these problems facing the community today? Right at the foundation he lays this terrific double commandment,

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment. It comes first. The second is like it: love your neighbour as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-38 NEB).

This is the first clue. If people in the modern society would choose to live by that standard all would be well. To this clue we add another, and it follows quite naturally,

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"Set your mind on God's kingdom and His justice before everything else, and all the rest will come to you as well." (Matthew 6:33 NEB).

We can see the splendid wisdom and the shining logic of these words--words which have a deep spiritual significance for the way the community ought to live. Do you say they express an ideal which is impractical for this materialistic age? Let me reply by saying that there is nothing--NOTHING AT ALL--more realistic than the Kingdom of God at work in the lives of people, and in society as a whole.

Jesus Christ is the Man Who has the Clues For

THE CHRISTIAN--AND HIS POSSIBILITIES

Jesus Christ has made the most amazing promises to the Christian. Most people do want to live good, decent, honest and effective lives. But the problem is how to get the power to do it.

Could I remind you of a man who had a really remarkable revolution in his life? You will find his story in Mark 5: verses 1 to 21. This man was an outcast. He lived in a cemetery, and he made an absolute nuisance of himself. He was "the terror of the tombs." We are told that he was "a man possessed by an unclean spirit." He was terrifyingly strong, and even chains could not hold him. He rushed about constantly, making a great noise. He cut his body, and mutilated himself with sharp stones. He was a menace to himself and everybody he met.

Then, one unforgettable day he came face to face with Jesus Christ, and he had a most wonderful experience. By Jesus he was made clean, he was healed, he became a new man. At the end of the story we find him "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind" (Luke 8:35). What made all the difference? Just this--he had had a face to face encounter with the Great Physician.

When first we met this man he was a real problem. He had no sense of decency, no social relationships, no home, no restraints. After he had met the Master all was changed, decency was restored, the power of evil was broken, and he saw things through the eyes of Jesus Christ.

We, who offer Christ to the world, are offering people an experience like that! And, deep down in the souls of countless men and women is a burning desire for this kind of thing to happen to them, so that they might be made clean. What do you think happens when a person really comes face to face with Jesus Christ?

Well, for one thing, we begin to realise what God is like. F. C. Spurr has said, "Whether they know it or not, it is for a LIVING God that men cry. Humanity demands a God who answers to its humanity--the whole of it--a God of the mind and of the affections: a God who can be loved and fully trusted, and with whom we may have fellowship. In short, a Personal God, a "Thou" who answers to our "I". It is this God whom our

Lord and Saviour revealed." ("The man Who Holds the Keys" p. 21).

When we meet Jesus Christ we begin to know what God is like! In him we see the love of God, the power of God, and the majesty of God. Jesus reveals God in a way we can understand. We all need these personal encounters with him, for he is the Man who has the clues to the secrets of successful Christian living. We must say to him, "I surrender all to You." This is the most revolutionary declaration any man can make.

William Watson wrote a poem, which he called "The Glimpse." In it he tells of a town dweller who achieved a break for one brief hour, when he left behind his dreary work, the smoke, the dust, the factory shadowed world in which he lived, and went out into the glory

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of the countryside. In one brief glimpse he saw the mountains and the sea and the sky--

"Then journeyed home, to carry in his soul,

The torment of the difference, till he die.

That's it! We see what we are. Then we see, through the eyes of Jesus, what we can become. Ah, the torment of the difference! We raise our eyes to God. We say "This is possible. Lord TAKE meMAKE me." And he does, and life will never be the same again.

Yes Jesus Christ has the clues for the Christian. What are they? Listen. He says,

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20).

Listen again!

"I am come to give them life and something more." (John 10:10 Rieu).

Listen once more,

"Anything you ask in my name I will do" (John 14:13).

Glorious clues are these for the Christian--and his possibilities.

Jesus Christ is the Man Who Has the Clues For

THE CONFUSED--AND THEIR PERPLEXITIES.

In the world today there are many people who are baffled, and beaten, and bewildered. They are confused, they are anxious, they are filled with perplexity. Think, for a moment, of the things which get people into this unhappy state.

1. Worry.

Dr. A. C. Dixon, one time the minister of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, said: "It is not the great tiger of calamity and grief that kills us, but the little ant-worries of every day life. Stanley, the explorer, tells us that few of his men suffered from elephants or tigers. Most suffered from 'jiggers'--little insects under the skin." This is all very true! It is the constant, nagging, little worries which do such terrific damage to our peace of mind, and

which get us down, making us all confused and perplexed.

2. Loneliness.

Few things drag us down into the depths of depression like this. People are meant for friendship. The man without a mate is, generally, a very miserable person. God meant us to enjoy the company of other folk. As the Psalmist says, "He has set the solitary of the earth in families."

3. Insignificance.

In this age of increasing automation man is becoming more and more dispensable. He is losing his significance, and this causes a great deal of havoc with a man's self-esteem and dignity. God has made us as we are. He gave us talents, and skills, and minds. We expect to be able to use these things. When we are prevented (whatever the reason) we begin to grope around. We become resentful, confused, and perplexed.

4. Sorrow.

The way we use our sorrows (or are used by them) can make or mar a man. Some people are broken down by sorrow, others are built up by it. If we let it get out of hand the whole of life may become sour for us. Sorrow is at the bottom of much confusion and perplexity.

5. Guilt.

This is a feeling we all know. We have all sinned--whether we like to admit it or not. Nothing so confuses us like the knowledge that we have disobeyed God.

These are just some of the things which get people down, which confuse them, and which leave them in perplexity. What can we do with them? We know we must do something, for we each have a life to live. Unless there is something seriously wrong with him a man must ask, with great seriousness, questions like these--"what am I?" "why am I here?" "where am I going?" He feels he must have a key to unlock the mystery of his life. Is there such a key? Yes,

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there is! The key is more than a system of knowledge, more than a man's philosophy, it is a PERSONa very wonderful person, and his name is Jesus Christ. He is the man who has the clues.

HE gives meaning to the universe,

HE offers the solution of the problems in the lives of men,

HE is the keystone of the arch which locks together the entire life of man, and makes it a noble edifice.

Look at him! Look at

THAT rebel young Carpenter from Nazareth,

THAT Teacher with a mind supreme,

THAT strange Man upon his cross.

Look at him! He has the answers to our needs. He has the clues of life and death. He is the emblem of God's eternal love. With him anyone of us can face life radiantly, triumphantly, and victoriously. Listen to His clues for all those who are confused. He says:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30).

To this he adds a second lovely clue, "Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace, such as the world cannot give. Set your troubled hearts at rest, and banish your fears." (John 14:28 NEB).

Well, there you have it! Jesus Christ IS the Man who Has the Clues. We serve the Christ who says, "I have the keys." (Revelation 1:8). All that remains for us is to follow him . . . with a song in our hearts, and a light in our eyes!

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