

(Deeper 2003 - 'Let It Go') Letting Go of... - Sep 27, 2003 Pm

by Stephen Fenton

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of letting go of control and security to fully embrace God's call and purpose for our lives.

Duration: 49:44

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 14:20, Mark 10:17

Topics: "Sacrificial Living", "Faith Commitment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power of the Gospel and how it can transform lives. He encourages his listeners to step off the path of selfishness and stop playing games with their faith. The preacher acknowledges that the challenges in the world can be overwhelming, but he urges his audience to come out of their comfort zones and make a difference. He reminds them of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and the need to fully commit to following Him, even if it means facing difficulties.

Transcript

Lord, as we come into your presence, or I should say, as we continue in your presence, I'm just thankful for the things you've taught us. You know, the last couple of days, Lord, it's been neat to look at your Word, and it's been neat to listen to people talk through the day-to-day at various times and places, but the challenge of letting go of control and how hard that is. Lord Jesus, you know what? It won't happen unless you command it to be so.

We're so conscious, Lord, that we have tried so many times, made so many promises, walked so many aisles to try to be better. For this to happen, Lord, you have to do a miracle, because we will continue to fight you for control of our lives. Even though a part of us deeply loves you, there's a part of us that will fight you to the end.

The neat thing is, you've conquered all your enemies, including our flesh, that hostile part of us. And if you can look at a young man with deep love in your eyes as he walks away and say, Oh yeah, for a man this is impossible, but all things are possible for God. Then you can command us tonight.

And tonight, Lord, our flesh is resisting. Tonight our flesh is tired. I just ask that in these next few minutes you'll give us a burst of energy, clarity of thought, and life.

And if you can talk, if you can command a little reject out of a tree and into life abundant, you can speak to us tonight. And, Lord, I'm so conscious that sometimes our Christian life is a lot of talk, but very little actual response to you. Tonight we pray that you'll cause us.

We're so glad to be in your presence. And to find you indeed where your glory dwells, which is in your temple. And we are that temple, for we are the temple of those.

I've preached on this sermon probably many times, and you've heard some of you this text before. Please do not assume you're knowing what I'm going to say, because you have no idea. Because it really doesn't matter what I say, it's what God says to you through this.

Maybe as you hear it for the second time, but really only for the first time. We looked at last night the story of the rich young ruler and the challenge to give up control of our lives. What a challenge.

What an impossibility. But nothing is impossible, thank you, for Jesus. Nothing.

And we looked at this morning that delightful love story of little Zacchaeus. Such a beautiful story of acceptance and passionate pursuit. And it's only one of so many millions, including yours and mine, that God is pursuing you.

Do not think for one moment that you are searching for him. He is pursuing you. And do not think for one moment that you will be able to maintain control of your own life.

He loves you far too much for that. And don't think for one moment that you can hide in trees for the rest of your life. Behind closed doors, in ivory towers, in places of safety.

Even as he will call you to let go of control. Even as he will call you to let go of your heart. He will call you to let go of your security.

And if this is the same Jesus spoke to eleven young men and said to them, Come on, let's go catch man. And with those twelve young whippersnappers turned the world upside down, then this group is in for quite a ride. As Jesus comes and calls.

And he is calling. I am certain of it. He is calling.

You see, his call is not like an invitation. His call is powerful because it's creative. Because Jesus is the creator.

All things, the Bible says, were created by him and for him. Including you. You were created by him and for him.

You do not belong to yourself, you never did. You're his. He determines your destiny.

He set your days in place. He owns you. And so when he calls, he creatively calls.

He creates new vistas, new horizons, new worlds within your soul. Just by speaking to you directly. That's the power of the gospel.

That through the foolishness of what people like me preach, God speaks and creation happens within the soul. And men and women and boys and girls enter into whole new worlds. Even though they didn't want to.

And you know what? It's time for some of you guys. Time to step off the fleshly tracks. Time to step off the selfish track.

Time to stop the game. Some of you are so tired of the game, that you're a little afraid to step off the treadmill. It's time to step out into the arms of the Lord and see what happens.

Time to stop talking. Time to start responding. Time to hear a call that creates a response and then to act.

After Jesus had fed the 5,000 and so showed his disciples that he was able to satisfy the world. That's a little bit that they would also have. Jesus sent his disciples across the lake.

He went into the hills to pray. When evening came, he was there alone in the hills praying. But it says in Matthew 14 in verse 20 something, which I can't see.

When evening came, he was there alone. But the boat was already a considerable distance from the land. The boat with the disciples in it.

Buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. You know this story. I love this story.

It's one of the most powerful metaphors of the Christian life. The thing about this story that's so neat is that it's real. It wasn't just a metaphor.

It happened. Jesus called creatively into the heart of a man who had to do what was not possible to do. Just because Jesus said so.

It's not just a symbol. It's not just an allegory. It happened.

And it's still happening. As Jesus calls people and says, OK. It's time to let go of control.

Let go of control. It's time for you to come out of your tree. Stop hiding in there.

Because I love you. And I will catch you. Trust me, I care.

It's time for you to do the impossible. Many of us are aware that the task that God has given us in the world is impossible. Many of us are aware that the challenges are overwhelming.

Many of us are aware that the world around us seems to be so confused, so dark, so full of emptiness, so full of lies, that it's impossible for us. And so we get overwhelmed. And so we set up our little siege houses, which we've called churches.

And we've hidden ourselves behind the four walls. And we stay there until we hope the kingdom comes. Jesus comes knocking at the door, as he did at Laodicea.

And he says, can you come out to play? It's time to get out of there. I want you to come into the world. I want you to change this.

I have come to save the world. I'm out here. You're stuck in there.

It's time to do the impossible. Some of you have tried so hard, just in the little world of your own life. And you're already broken and dashed against the rocks of self-effort.

And you know that though you've tried so hard, though you know you've been given this calling to win the world, that you just can't do it. And so there's great confusion. And maybe God will give you something easy to do.

Maybe he'll accept the easy way. Maybe if you could just stay home, stay safe, stay in your own little context, stay in your own little family, stay in your sweet little church, enjoy your sweet little retreats, that it'll be okay. God will accept that.

Because he knows you just don't have it to be like somebody who can go and do the impossible. But the thing is, nothing has changed about what God has called us to do. Nothing has changed about what Jesus wants to do in this world.

He needs to save you. He needs to save kids. He needs to save young people.

He needs to save those who are dying every day for lack of truth. He needs to save them. And his tool, the thing that he uses, is his church.

That's you. Oh, look at this dilemma. We're on the whips.

Man, dear, life is such a storm. It is such a storm. Life is not a party.

It's a storm. It is such a terrifying experience. And over the whips he goes.

This is so cool. Three o'clock in the morning, Jesus went to them. Because they were in need, because they were on the lake alone, he went to them.

Jesus has not left us alone. He has not set us adressed on the sea of life and left us alone. He has come to us.

Hallelujah. He has climbed the whips. Think of this picture, this reality, this storm, these whips crashing against the boat, the spray rolling into the boat, the water filling up that little struggling boat with all the struggling men and the howl of the wind and just the roar that was going on around.

And suddenly they see in the distance this illuminated figure, this luminous character climbing the whips. The spray just hitting him again and again. His hair just lying limp against the side of his face because the water had just drank him.

His clothes soaking wet and yet somehow he was on top. Coming. Terrifying picture.

They were absolutely terrified. They thought he was some supernatural appearance. But it was Jesus coming to them because they were in trouble on the whips.

Listen to these words. But the Son of God, when the time had fully come, God sent his Son born of a woman, born under law to redeem those under law that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father.

So you are no longer a slave but a son. And since you are a son, God has made you an heir. He has come over the whips to us.

He has come into this world at the right time. And he lived and then he walked in the greatest storm of his existence to the cross where they nailed him there. And while they spit in his face, God was present and

said, I love you.

You are my beloved son. When they pulled out his beard, the Holy Spirit comforted him. And when they kicked him and when they beat him on the way down the Via Dolorosa, on the way to the Calvary where they would nail him, the angels ministered to him.

And when the spikes went through his wrists, an excruciating pain shot through every nerve in his body. And when they nailed his two feet together and hung him naked and ashamed before a community who mocked and laughed and scorned at him, heaven sang and heaven loved and heaven comforted him. After three hours of absolute darkness, Jesus Christ cried out in absolute shock, Eloi, Eloi, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Because his father was gone.

He came over the waves, faced the storm. He lay prostrate on a cross before the world, alone. As no man has ever been alone.

He lay in the mystery of God's wrath, separated in such a way as I don't even know how it was possible, but in such a state of terror he cried out, You're gone! We were condemned to a hell of loneliness because of our rebellion. Because we were condemned to an eternity of being left alone in the darkness with our self and all our raging sin. Because he knew that that would bring torment like flames to us forever, he lay on the cross and his father deserted him so that we could never again know what it was to be alone.

He came over the waves. Glory to his name! Isn't he wonderful? He came over the waves. He did whatever it took.

And it took everything more than we can begin to understand. And he rose from the dead. And over every storm he comes in absolute victory.

Absolute authority. Jesus Christ is risen. Jesus Christ is Lord.

Jesus Christ is victorious. Hallelujah. And as he came over the waves to his disciples, they reacted initially in fear but then saw that it was Christ.

They heard his words. Take courage. Look, I know some of you are afraid to give up control.

Time and time again God comes to his people. Jesus comes to his children and says, Don't be afraid. And when Jesus says don't be afraid it means something.

When Jesus says don't be afraid you can take courage. It is I, he says. I am here.

Some of you need to stop being afraid. Start looking towards Jesus. I'm talking to you Christians.

In the storm, rattled around, afraid that you're going to get sick. Afraid that you're going to get rich. Afraid that you're going to get married.

Afraid you're not going to get married. Afraid that you're going to have kids and then not be able to take care of your kids. Afraid you'll not be able to pay the bills.

Afraid you'll not be able to send them to university. Afraid that you'll not be able to reach the world. Afraid that he might ask you to reach the world.

Afraid that he'll send you to Africa. Afraid that he'll not send you to Africa. Stop being afraid.

You know, it's time. It's time to stop being afraid. It's time to come out of the tree you're hiding in.

It's time to give up control. It's time to hear his voice. He came over the waves.

He has defeated sin and death and hell. He has publicly decimated his enemies. There is nothing to be afraid of.

Psalms 27. The psalm that was read to you earlier. Of whom shall I be afraid? Stop being afraid.

Okay. I'll stop being afraid. Not just because I say so.

But it's neat when Jesus says, Okay, come here. Take courage. Courage.

Now the storm is still raging. The boat is still moving in ways you've never seen a boat move. The spray is still splashing all over your face.

The threat around you remains. But now you have courage. Tonight.

On our way to heaven. In the boat with Jesus. And then Peter says something stupid.

Peter, we got over the fear. Excuse. We know we're okay now.

Excuse. Don't say anything stupid. Peter can't help it.

It just comes naturally to him. And he says, Lord. I want to do this.

If it's really you. Well. Okay, I feel so much better.

But tell me to come. Everybody else in the boat has their hands in the air. I don't want to hang with this.

Peter. Peter. You couldn't leave things well alone, could you? You have to say something that stupid.

To put us in that situation. Because if he asks you to come, Peter, you know who he asks next. I mean.

Peter, could you not just swing one leg over and then meet him as he gets to the boat? I mean, you could be the first to hug him when he arrives. We don't care. You have to be this bold.

You have to be this rash. This is so irrational. This is just irrational.

It doesn't make any sense. Peter, we're okay now. The storm is still raging.

Yes, it's terrifying. Yes. Thunder, lightning.

Yes. But it's Jesus right there. We know we're okay.

We're going to make it to the other side. Calm yourself. Accept the right.

Calm. Idiot. Idiot.

Idiot. Idiot. Idiot.

Idiot. Peter, it's just me. I didn't think he'd say I should go.

I really didn't. Somebody just said, oh, God. Tonight something.

He said, oh, Lord. I want to see you in the place where you're going. He sang with all sincerity.

Lord, I want to give you my heart. And I believe you meant it. Somebody got on your knees.

You raised your hands. It's so nice in a boat, isn't it? And then you get some idiot. He says, oh, Lord, what next? And he says, come.

There's a great little worship time going on in that boat. One word turns it all. But it was a creative word.

It was a commanding word. It was a life-changing word. It was just Jesus Christ singing.

Nothing's changed. The world ridges in absolute, complete lack of control around him. Peter has to climb the waves if he's going to get to Jesus.

What a silly notion. But this is what he would have to do. Listen.

Jesus says to you, sing songs for the rest of your life. You can get a good job. You can marry a good woman.

Marry a good man. Raise 2.5 children. Enjoy hundreds more worship times before it's time.

And lay down your life in death. And feel that death dew lying on your brow. Scary words.

And still be in the boat. You'll get there. Still be in the boat.

That's not Christianity. That's not Christianity. You say, Stephen, don't ask me to do anything radical.

But sometimes it's not ready for that. Well, you should have thought of it. That's where you got saved.

You really should have thought of it. That's where you gave your life to God. You know what Jesus said? If you're going to be my disciple, then you've got to just work it out.

You know, if you start the house and you don't have enough resources, you look like an idiot. So work it out. If you try to set out with an army of 10,000 against an army of 20,000, you better surrender.

Quick, work it out. Surrender. If you didn't want me to ask you to do anything radical, if you didn't want him to ask you to do anything radical, you should have stayed lost.

Say, I couldn't. He saved me. Ah.

I couldn't. He paid for me. I couldn't.

He drew me. Ah. He said, Peter, come on.

Such a coward. Come on. Now you're all safe in the boat.

Peter, come on. Let go of your security. Put yourself in such a situation, Peter, that it's just you and me on the water.

And then, Peter, you know full well the only one who can help you there, do the math, settle the equation, Peter. Work it out. It's all about me.

Peter can swim. But he can't swim in a storm. Peter is an expert fisherman.

But he's walking on the water. Peter is rash and bold and sometimes stupid, but he's way beyond the threshold of stupidity now. He did get out of the boat.

As he walked away from that boat, as he climbed the first wave, as water came between him and his incredulous friends, he walked away from his security. Now Jesus said, come. Jesus said, come.

It is time to get out of the tree. It is time for you. It is over.

Control. It is time for you. Well, I would really like to know what that's going to feel like for us.

I would really like some... clarity. I would like to... understand and... you know, get everything together. Does this not sound a little bit like control? Uh-oh.

Oh yeah. I give that up. Sorry.

But you must understand. He may ask me to go... just like Africa. To India.

To Indonesia. And I can't do that. Because you're far, far past... the stage of fear.

Now isn't that neat? Isn't that just like the old devil? That's who's on the phone. Call him. Tell him to go back where he came from.

Never fails. Something will happen to misdirect our thoughts. Perfect timing.

And look, he's even looking for somebody now to answer the phone call. Who is it? Settle, Ted. Amen, hallelujah.

Focus. Two miles away, some little demon sat in somebody's corner. Go look out.

Go look out. Go! The camp! Now! So now that that little strategy has failed, you're far past the stage of fear. You're on a storm that will never change.

You're in a world that without Jesus will eat you alive. Some of you may well die. Why would I say different? Why would he say different? Some of you will give away the rest of your life for a cause that pays you nothing in this world and brings you no recognition, no pension plan, no opportunity for a condominium in Florida, certain ignominy in life, perhaps even violent death.

I kid you not, we are far past the stage of worrying about our bank accounts, worrying about whether or not somebody will take care of our children, worrying about whether or not we can do this. Of course we can't. We're on a water, for Pete's sake.

Oh, no pun intended. But he commands, and he loves, and he calls, and he calls. Let go of your security.

Respond to me in such a way that control is no longer yours. Let go of your heart so I can sell it, and you get out of the boat so that I can do the impossible. See, if Peter did not walk on water, Jesus held him up through every miraculous step.

And then Jesus let him sink a little to remind him that Jesus held him up through every miraculous step. And then Jesus raised him a little and said, Peter, you really don't have any faith, do you? That's why I'm here. And you have a choice.

Everybody wants to talk about choices. So you got one. Stay in the boat.

Stay safe. Be secure. Hear the command of the Lord Jesus Christ to come.

Step out in such a way as you say to the Lord, I don't know what it means. I don't know where it goes from here. But the truth is, far past the stage of being afraid anymore.

It's not that there isn't fear there. It's just, you've said to me to take courage. You've promised to love me.

You've called me. And you've said nothing is impossible for you. And somebody already has walked on water.

Now it's my turn. And you're going to give up the nine to five, if that's what he asks. I don't know what he'll ask.

That's not the point. And you're going to give up university, if that's what he says. Or you'll go to university, even though you never planned it, if that's what he says.

And you'll get married, if that's what he wants. Or you'll not get married. And you'll live.

And you'll get. You'll walk on water. There is an impossible task.

And it will never, ever, ever, ever be done. Till some of us walk on water. The only reason in the first century that the world was won was because Peter walked on water.

And although they didn't walk on water then, the other ten guys followed him in. For each of them went through the rest of their lives, giving it all away. And not seeking to live by any strength of their own.

You can't depend on your own strength when you're walking on water. It just doesn't make sense. You do not need to offer God your gifts and talents when you're walking on water.

It's not possible to walk on water. You don't need to be smarter. You don't need to be braver.

You don't need to be anything. You just need to come. And believe that Jesus Christ is all that He says He is.

And believe that Jesus Christ has died, has risen, and lives victoriously through His people. Leave behind the mediocrity of your life, the plans that you have made and settled in your mind regardless of what God has said. And say, I'll do whatever you want.

I'll go wherever you send me. I'll live. I'll die.

Because I think it's a great idea. Not even because you think it's a great idea. It's because Jesus Christ says, as twelve young men went to give their lives away, eleven of them were martyred, and some of us will be too.

Many of us are in that process now. Many of us got past the place where we heard the command of Jesus Christ, walk, do whatever it takes to keep you afloat. You'll do the impossible.

But it's time. But it's not radical. Someone spoke to me about a mystery that was in Charlottetown last week.

His name is Don Richardson, I believe. Don is a fairly famous missionary, originally from Charlottetown. Fairly senior missionary now.

And I told him he was speaking about the Muslims, and he said, you know, Americans have made a great mistake. This democracy will never come. Iraq.

Because the Muslims as a nation, and as nations, are completely yielded. To Allah. And young men and young women will continue to die, simply because they believe in Islam.

And we make a great mistake by thinking that we can westernize that. These are people who know nothing of independent thought. They're completely yielded.

And God will not ask you to blow up a bus and give your life away that way. Allah is the devil. And we'll pay for that reality, because we will have to say it.

Because he causes people to die, and he brings hatred into nations. And he commands, Jesus Christ doesn't do that. But he does ask us to get out of the book.

So that we can give life, not death. So that we can give hope, not hopelessness. So that the gospel can be heard in every corner of the planet.

So he can come back and take us home. So he can reach the children who are dying of AIDS in Africa. So he can reach millions in northern India, who have never heard his name even once.

So he can touch the hearts of the Chinese culture. So he can be worshipped in a land of 27 million Canadians. Once again.

And it's not going to happen until we get out of the book. You say, this is such a burdensome message. No, it's not really.

I can't make a burden happen. I can't call you out of the book. But I'm certain that he's calling some of you.

I know he is. And it's strange, and it's fanatical, and it's something that will bring us criticism. Because it's just so uncouth, unrespectful, irresponsible.

All the things they thought about Jesus. But it's time, children. I bet you think he's building up to an appeal.

He's going to ask us to walk another aisle. No, I'm not. I'm going to close in prayer.

Right now, I'll listen to your stories. I'll watch you leave. Maybe we'll leave together or whatever God said.

We had to make it so complicated. Doesn't God know how difficult this is for me? Take courage. It is I. I come.

If it is you, call us to him.

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