

#131

SESSION 9 - Side A

Author: Festo Kivengere
Place: Conejo Valley, Thousand Oaks, CA
Date: February 12, 1981
Event: Festival of FAith
Theme: Love Cod --Love Neighbor and Tell the Good News
Text: 2 Kings 7:1-9

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and Tellthe Good News

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...apprehension for the meetings are now concluding tonight so that the work may begin. Meetings themselves are not the work. They are simply a preparation. May I use another expression, these meetings were a springboard for you to jump forward. There were not pillows for lovely Christians to sleep on and become comfortable.

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Christianity is not a faith on which you can sit. It has never been meant to be like that. Christianity is a fire. You sit on it you jump. →

If these meetings have meant anything to you young people, to you adult Christians, experienced men and women, they must have meant a springboard forward. So as we sang brethren towards the concluding of the great meetings of celebration of our Festival of Faith. There are mixed feelings tonight. There are people who have already jumped forward. There are the hesitant ones.

But I want to encourage the hesitant ones that you are not strangers to the Lord. You who may feel like Thomas, there are Thomases who are recognized by the Lord. He Gave Thomas another, remember. He will give you another week. Take it easy.

So I want to just pray that as we go into these conclusions, we may be ready to spring forward. For tonight, is when we spring forward from the meetings which prepared our hearts from the tremendous messages from the Word, which warmed us up. So that we can move into the valley with those lovely words of the disciples "Didn't our hearts burn within us as He expounded the Scriptures to us?" Of course, that was on the day of the resurrection as the two were walking to Emmaus.

Maybe during these few days, hearts warmed up, the ice melted, the springs began to vibrate, the hearts began to sing in tune. Well, that's what it meant. That's what it was all about. So we read in this beautiful song such as you sang, it touched my heart deeply that we should have sang it on the night when we conclude our Festival of faith. "So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, till my trophies at last I lay down, and then, oh, that old rugged cross so despised by the world, has wondrous attraction for me."

→ Christianity is strange isn't it? You take the cross, a sign of shame, suffering and pain and make it a sign of glory, something that warms hearts, loosens every part of us. Releases us from our sins, sends us as excited community into the world to heal.

We're going to pray. I'm going to have a few words tonight. I feel that God has spoken and we shared, and tonight has come for you under the influence of that tremendous message that you act like the disciples did.

Maybe you wandered into these meetings because the churches organized them or perhaps an African bishop came to speak in the valley.

→ The disciples walked reluctantly to Emmaus. Recognizing Him, they returned to Emmaus with speed.

They dragged their feet in despair

They accepted or received acceleration when the love of the One who died and rose again penetrated their gloom and set them absolutely free. They went to Emmaus with tragic news. They returned from Emmaus with good news. Let us pray.

Tonight Lord, we are in your presence.

We are concluding these lovely meetings which you prepared for us in our valley that we may look again at the rugged cross and rediscover your amazing grace and by the power of the Holy Spirit enter into the fullness of life.

→ Bless us as we

share tonight that we may not sit on these precious things but that we

→ may move forward into a waiting world to share the good news.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Well, now for tonight, as we conclude these meetings, what can my wife and I say except just to say, these have been indeed a festival for us all. It is true we have spoke in various meetings and I have stood here and have listened to some of your people, these young people singing and hearts have been warmed up as we look again and again at him. Because that is what Christianity is all about, that is what the Festival of Faith is all about. Ot os -- we ,ale pir Festával round him in whom there is life abundant for all who care to come.

→ So we have looked at - Love God-Love Neighbor and become alive; Love God and Move forward in the direction of His love

and love God and share and then Love God or rather

→ Love Neighbor and then become, and then final one was last night Love God and Share. In other words, if you love God, if you love your neighbor then you move forward to share what you are. In the NT, sharing is not sharing your clothes, the money, the food, it is more than that. It is sharing your life. Now everyone of us has got life.

Young children have got life. Old people have got life. Men and women who don't have plenty of this world have got life.

→ So we can share. That is the greatest thing to share. It is to share the warmth of your life and also the coldness of your life. It is as we share not only the respectability but the reality. When Jesus shared, He shared the whole reality of Himself. Tears, tiredness, hunger, loneliness, joy. He shared it all. So share. Then you become more of the kind of human being Jesus Christ meant you to be.

Tonight we are concluding the mission, aren't we? The celebration, the festivities, are concluding in the hall so that they may begin in the villages. Pardon me calling your area, villages. I suppose here you call them towns. But I have seen round here where I stayed near the golf course places marked "Villages." (Laughter) So now therefore I think I'm right in the context of what is going on here. Tonight

→ I want to share with you - Love God-Love Neighbor and tell the news.

and go and share

We talked about sharing but tonight, tonight really what I want to concentrate on is having loved God, and your neighbor, then tonight is a tremendous night.

→ Christianity has some news to share. Especially good news to share. And I must confess there isn't a lot of good news in our world, is there. Not too much.

Yes bits and pieces here and there. But really not a lot of good news. So much so that your newspapers hardly ever writes anything good news. If it is good news they think it is not news at all. It is common ground that only the good news and bad news. You know burning hotels in Las Vegas. Yes, that is good news but when there is peace in Los Angeles it is not reported. Yes, when I turn the pages of your newspaper, if I see headlines, Uganda, I know there is bad news. Nothing is ever reported in Uganda except the bad news. But when it is calm, and there's no fighting and there are no murders and people are doing their ordinary work, no one reports it. No one is interested in reading it. Can you imagine that?

→ So tonight as a Christian community, Love God-Love Neighbor and then go and tell the good news.

I'm going to take you tonight to the Old

→ A story I have had so much blessing from which demonstrates really what I call Good news for us tonight. It is written in the book of Kings in the Old Testament.

You know there was a time in the country when

→ It is Second Kings chapter 7. The Israelites as a nation has always been a nation at war. If you read in the Bible you find war after war throughout until today. And the enemies who is to fight with Israel are the same today as they were thousands of years back.

→ So we read that there was a time when the city of Samaria was besieged by the Syrians. Great armies of Syria. Surrounded this city of Samaria. In the city there was a king But he was a besieged king. Almost like a prisoner. And the Syrians used the method not of smashing the walls but of starving the people. They besieged the city to a certain extent that they expected the people to come out of the city because of starvation and surrender themselves. Oh Or if they refuse to surrender they would die in the city. Months went by until all the stores of the city were completely emptied. And there was no way out. The king was not repentant. This was a judgement of God in the city. The citizens did not repent. Starvation was increasingly eating them like cancer. So in Samaria you had a starved community. There was no good news at all. No rain. No grain. No harvest. Even mothers so, it is recorded in Scriptures ate their children. —ness of starvation.

We have seen it in other areas of the world.

→ It reached such a terrible climax that in the end God sent Elisha the prophet to tell the king of the good news. And the prophet came and said to the king,

in chapter 7, Elisha said to the king

" Listen to what the Lord says "

he was speaking to the elder "by this time tomorrow

by this time tomorrow,

→ very definite; you will be able to buy in Samaria 3 kilograms of the best wheat or six kilograms of barley clears throat for one piece of silver.

You know they were eating dry donkey's head. They were buying, you know, dove's dung because that is what starvation has done to them.

And then of course listen to this very clever but very skeptical, a personal attendant to the king. The prophet was speaking to the king, said to Elisha that can't happen not even if the Lord Himself were to send rain at one. Scientifically, it can't happen. Even if the rain came today. You can't harvest tomorrow. This is the human way of looking at miracle.

And so the prophet of God said, You will see it, and said the prophet, but you will never eat any of the food, Elisha replied. And let me say, the starvation is horrible. Men and women are absolutely desperate. The city is no comfort. The king is no comfort.

→ What I want to say, you know, I am talking about good news.

I'm putting it on the screen, on a dark screen so that good news may shine brighter. Listen, the good news, how it comes. And this is where you add I come in tonight. How is the solution going to come? Well, I suppose you all have expected the king to act to be the instrument because he's very important. Or some important people of Samaria. Or some generals of the Israeli war army.

→ Listen, how God acts.

Some of you please take heart.

Verse 3.

"Four men, listen carefully,

"Four men, not many

who were suffering from that dreaded skin disease, leprosy, were outside the gates of Samaria. They couldn't get in because they were outcast. And they said to one another

They had a sort of committee (laughs) special committee. You've got some of them in the valley (laughter) And they said to one another, I don't know who was the chairman, or chairperson (laughter) Why should we (laughs) why should we wait this is the agenda, you see (laughter)

→ Why should we wait here until we die?

Big question. This is the main point of discussion

It is no use going into the city

You know everybody in America goes to the city. Everyone in Africa goes to the city. Everybody expects te big city with lights and cinemas and everything to be the solution.

→ And the four men said, it is no good going into the city. Because we would starve to death in there. There is no hope in the city either.

Yes it is is wonderful to be in the city but there is no food. But if we stay here we will die also. So staying here is no better than going into the city. So what? A décision is coming. Good news doesn't come easily. There must be a desperate decision. Of if you're like me, may I use this, there must be a step of adventure, if good news is going to come. And here, listen where it all begins.

→ Staying here is no good. Going into the city is no good. what happened?

So let us go into the Syrian camp, the enemy camp. They worse they can do is to kill us (laughs) But maybe they will spare our lives. So as it began to get dark, they went to the Syrian camp but when they reached it no one was there.

The Lord This is good news. You know. Listen to the good news.

The Lord has made the Syrians hear what sounded like the advance of a large army. It was only four lepers (laughter)

See, only four poor little lepers, trotting down the road to the Syrian army, there was a tremendous sound. Listen to that . Listen to what they heard.

The Lord had made the Syrians hear what sounded like the advnace of a large army of horses and chariots. And the Syrians thought that the king of Israel had hired Hittite, and Egyptian kings and their armies to attack them.

→ So that evening the Syrians had fled for their lives. Abandoning their tents, horses and donkeys and leaving the camp just as it was. Can you see how God begins to do things. If you were Jehovah, would you have chosen the four lepers to bring good news? This is no better team. Pep

These fellows can hardly walk. They are not respectable citizens . They are outcasts. And God began to chose to act with these weak human beings and then when they began to move, they obeyed.

Let us go to the camp anyway, prompted by the Epirit of Jehovah. As soon as they decided to go down, what did the Syrians hear? A great army. Horses, chariots, Noises. So don't you get afraid. Some of you who want to move with good news, you look at yourself and you say, But I am only a child. I am only a woman. I am only a young person in schoo. I can't speak very well, I'm only a housewife.

Don't say that. Just simply move in the direction of the hope and Jehovah will do the rest. And then listen to the challenge tonight. You've been here and the LORD HAS DONE beautiful things for you. And listen these fellows came.

→ The four men came and they reached the edge of the camp and they went into the tent and they ate, and they drank what was there. And they grabbed the silver and gold and and clothes and clothing. Which they found and they went and hid them. Then they returned and entered again into another tent and they did the same.

But something began to convict them, something began to speak to them. They said to each other, a second committee (laughter) The first one was "Let us go" We are tired. This is a hopeless business staying outside the city. We move in we starve. We stay here, we starve. Let us go into the direction of danger. That is the decision that you make when you accept Jesus Christ. You step into the unknown. But of course, we Christians don't step into the unknown. We step where Jesus is beckoning "Come to me all of you who are tired and are starving and are burdened and I will give you rest. I will refresh you. So we step to Him. We are better off than the lepers aren't we? Because love is beckoning, inviting.

But when they go in the camp and they found things to drink, food to eat, clothings, silver, gold and the poor leprous men became immediately the richest Christians have become very rich. You come starving. You are fed spiritually. That's why you sing. You come burdened. The burdens are lifted by grace. You feel light.

Back in Africa, one day, we were speaking in a village. And there was a young English missionary lady. And she really was filled by the Spirit of God. And she wanted to give a testimony to this thousands of Africans there. She said, she was an actress in London. And during the Billy Graham crusade at Harringay, she accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. And she changed from being an actress into being a missionary. And she said, that evening, when the Evangelist said "Come to the Lord Jesus," she said, "Although I was young and I was successful and I was making people happy, but I was utterly miserable. She said, when I came to Jesus, accepted the invitation, she said, immediately, she said, I felt as if I was a little bird with little wings. and she said, I began to feel as if I'd like to fly.

And being an actress, an actress, she expressed it so beautifully that most of the people feel as if she was going to fly.

→ You know this is what Christianity Christians find. You come with guilt, the guilt is taken away. The Lord Jesus on the cross removes your sins, washes you clean. The burden is gone. Immediately, you become rich. Immediately you begin to enjoy life and fellowship and you do like the lepers did. They ate, they drank and they took the clothes and the silver, and gold and they hid. Are you hiding those precious treasures

tonight? These few days of the Festival of Faith,

→ Hasen't the Lord blessed you? Don't you feel different? Your faith has become new. Your joy in the Lord is fresh. Your Fellowship is more realistic. Forgiveness is beautiful and you take those precious things and you hide them?

So a second committee. Listen to the agenda of the second committee. And the two men or the four men again, this is the second committee now. And they said

→ But they said to each other, verse 9, we shouldn't be doing this. We shouldn't be doing this. We have good news and we shouldn't keep it to ourselves.

Second committee, that is the agenda. That is the agenda. We shouldn't be doing this. We have good news, we shouldn't keep it to ourselves.

And this is the end of the Festival. If when my wife and I leave the Valley, you simply sit on these wonderful things, then you should have a second committee. And the agenda should be "We shouldn't do this. We possess good news, and we shouldn't really keep it to ourselves. If we wait until morning to tell it, listen carefully, we are sure to be punished. Now you know what Christians do? Young people say, I better wait until I finish college. Housewives say, I better wait until my children are of better age. Business men and women say, I'd better wait until my business has become a little more successful. One excuse after another And the four men said,

→ If we wait until the morning, when there is light, we are going to be punished. There's no time to waste. Good news is in your hands. If you have the good news, it's no good saying, "I better wait," because others are waiting.

Samaria is full of men and women who are starving to death. And you have eaten and you have drunk and you are clothed, and you've got silver and gold. Things which make life worth living and you keep it to yourselves? And you wait for a better time?

→ The four men did not wait. Let us go at once let us go at once and tell the king's officers. Let us go.

So the four men again, they made a decision as they made the first decision. Let us go to the camp of our enemies and see what God can do to give us food.

→ And they moved.

And that's what you did when you accepted the Lord. You broke through very thorny places. The devil was opposing you that's why it's always very difficult for people to make decision. Because every time you try to stand there are all kinds of forces against you. And the Spirit of God helps you to break through.

→ And as you step forward you fall into good hands. And you find yourself surrounded with eternal blessings from heaven and everything the Father has is yours. It's a tremendous experience.

After you have been born again become a child of God, your sins are forgiven. There is liberty in your heart. Life has got wings to fly like that actress. Then you sit on it. Now there is no blessing which can be good news if you simply sit on it. It goes bad. Every divine blessing is received in order to be shared. There is no selfishness there.

And so the leprous men said, let us go quickly even if it is still dark, let us go. Don't wait until America is better. It will never be better. I should not wait until Uganda is better. Uganda is not likely to be better. If we had waited to share the good news until after Amin, we would have had eight years of no good news. We simply had to share the good news with widows with orphans with bereaved, with the suffering ones in this in the midst of chaos. We stood and shared the good news.

→ Jesus is here. Jesus is here. He can forgive. He can restore. He can fulfill. Tremendous.

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So the leprosy men went back into the city. Let us go and tell the king's people. And tonight, as we conclude the festival, make a second decision. It is not good for us having received this good news, food is here, water is here. Forgiveness is here. Life is here. Are we going to keep it to ourselves? Are we going to make the blessings of God into pillows and sleep?

The blessing of the Christian faith is fire. Put your head on the fire, you take it off quickly and move forward. Tell the news.

You remember the two disciples going to Emmaus? No news to tell until their eyes were opened and something which had stopped them from recognizing Jesus - risen Lord was taken away and they saw his wounded hands. As he broke the bread and immediately they turned to each other and they said, "Didn't we feel fire in our hearts as we explained the meaning of the Scriptures from the prophets from the law?"

And then the disciples immediately took their feet, they left Emmaus and they rushed to Jerusalem and when they found the other disciples, they found them all excited. Peter was telling the news. Martha was telling Mary of Magdalene was telling the good news. A number of them were all talking. The whole community had become a community of news. You have got some news to tell?

On Africa when we have been in a festival like yours here, and we have been exposed to the love of God, His forgiving grace, to the power of the Holy Spirit, you know what happens if you meet them in the village, in the villages, they are singing they are talking they are speaking, they are loving. It's a wonderful thing. They have news to tell.

I know of course you are more sophisticated than my people. But sophistication is not what I'm preaching about. Sophistication does not meet the hunger, does it? Sophistication never lifts the burden. Sophistication is all right but it can't meet the need. It is the Lord Jesus who has opened the camp by defeating the devil and invites the children of hunger, starvation, spiritually to come in, drink, eat, clothe yourselves in His righteousness and then get out of the Festival and tell the valley, "we have good news, there is food in Jesus Christ."

→ There is bread for your hunger. There is water for your thirst. There is forgiveness for your sins. There is fellowship instead of loneliness. You come to Him. Are you willing to go and do that?

Or are you waiting until you are better people. You are not going to be better people. And Jesus is not interested in using better people for they don't exist. Jesus Christ is interested in you as you are. He loves you as you are. And he wants you to talk as you are, to share as you are. That is what most people want.

If you are young share Jesus as young. Didn't I tell some of you last night, nights before that people who helped me to find Jesus were ordinary people? The young man who helped me to recover my faith after I have lost it was only a three hour Christian. And he is my brother in law, my wife's own brother. We were teaching in the same Elem. School He was a nice church young man. Very church. (laughter) You know very nice. He was not as rough as I was. But he had never found the Lord. However on that Sunday, he found the Lord in the congregation and when he met me on the road, he was bubbling with excitement and he spoke to me as a friend. And that speaking, that sharing of a simple young man who had come to the Lord bubbling with reality, turned me from my backsliding back to Jesus Christ. Don't you wait tonight.

→ Are you ready? It is not good for us to receive and keep it to ourselves.

Let us go and tell the king's people in the valley. Go and tell the king's people. Don't wait for the good word, if you meet some of those you know who are drunk and look miserable, they are the king's people. Jesus loves them. Don't allow your church to be a church where respectable people come. The church is like a hospital, if they come staggering, welcome them in. Hold them by the hand. That's what the Lord Jesus would have done. Cover their shame, introduce them to the feast of the gospel and then you 'll be amazed in finding brothers and sisters because it is from that community that God recruits His saints. From these people you despise God recruits his saints.

Yes thank God for that. So tonight don't walk home in depression. Having found this food, if those leprous men went back, you know miserable, you know, feeling depressed, you think they would have attracted Samaria to come out?

They went back bubbling with reality absolutely fulfilled. No longer hungry, no longer naked. No longer tired. They had fed, they were fulfilled. They were covered. And they went to the samaria to Samaria and they said, "Look here, ladies and gentlemen there is food in the camp, come along.

And you know the Samaritan woman did the same. You remember that lady? Tired, lonely having divorced five times. And then she found the Lord or the Lord found her. and her water pot, her life was completely filled to the brim--overflowing. And she forgot her physical waterpot. She ran into the city, into the market and she did not call her husband as Jesus had said, "God and call your husband. She called the entire town. Come and see a man who has told me everything that I have ever done and yet he loved me." And they came, the entire town. Where did h, where did she go to seminary? Did she have a B.D. or M.Div. She had seen the Lord Jesus. Her empty heart was filled. Her thirst was quenched. He sins were forgivens. Her same was covered. She had never met anyone like him. Have you? And having met him, you go and meet them. Let us pray.

→ This is a moment now for you to act.

The Leprous men weak as they were, they obeyed and went to tell.

Tonight my challenge to you is not to come forward, no. no. no. It;s go home and tell. Don't keep it to yourself. Are you warm? Go and share the warmth.

→ Are you filled, go and share the fulness. Are you forgiven? Go and share the forgiveness. Don't keep it to yourself.

Or some terrible punishment, which means, you may lose the blessing and become empty.

→ You share it, it will be fuller than ever.

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Youn people, the world is waitinf for you. Say to the Lord, "Yes, Lord, I can't wait until tomorrow. I'm going home to share."

Thank you Lord Jesus for tonight. We have concluded this wonderful Festival of Faith. At the note of praise, good news. We have good news. Those poor men in Samaria had good news of food, of drink, of clothes, of gold and silver. Oh, Lord, Jesus, in you there is more. Help your people tonight to say, it is not good for me to keep it to myself, I will go and share. Others are starving in Samaria. Bless them Lord, make each one of them, young and old, obedient to the voice, to go and share the good news. For Jesus' sake. Amen.