

Sunday 25th August 2024

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Date: 25 August 2024

Preacher: Johan DeJong

[0 : 00] Now you guys are getting some bags but I've got a bag of my own and in my bag are some explorer type things and some other interesting things.

! Josie's got her hand up. Josie what's this? It is a tiny telescope. What's a telescope for? Seeing things. Seeing things especially that are far away.

Here we go, I'm just going to use my telescope. Some very interested people looking at the back there. I can see the mayor. Hello Mr Mayor.

See some other people. Right, wake up you. Yeah, okay. Oh hang on. Hang on. I've just seen someone that I know. Sorry, you just have to excuse me a minute. I just need to go and give this person a hug. Is that alright? Just excuse me a minute.

Just to reassure you, that's not a random person from the crowd. That is my wife. So please don't worry.

[1 : 26] Now, which of those guys is better to see someone from far away or to go and be with them? I mean the answer is obvious, isn't it? It's just better to go and be with them.

And that's actually why we're here today because this is what Jesus did for us. The Son of Man came. That is a historical fact. The man, Jesus of Nazareth, came about 2,000 years ago and was born in Israel, Palestine.

And he taught how we can come back to God and how to live his way. And that's what all the fuss is about today. That's why we do HBC. That's why the Bethel family exists.

Not just because it's nice to be nice, although it is. Not because we believe in community, although we do. Not because we're perfect people, because we're not. But because Jesus came.

Now, that raises a question, doesn't it? Why did he come? Why did Jesus come? All that way. To be near us.

[2 : 42] When he came to find us, says it in our Bible verse, doesn't it? He came to seek for us. Like Granite Simpson, the Lord Jesus came to earth and he is still here working through his spirit today.

And he goes to every town, every town like Farnham, every neighborhood, every house, every school, William Cobbett Hale School, every office, every dirty street, every prickly hedge, every place on earth where people like you and me can be found.

Jesus is searching for people. Why? Why is he searching for people? Right, it's time to look for the next thing in my bag. Let's see, what have I got here?

Oh, it's a bag within a bag. I've got some mucky bits and pieces in here. But in amidst the grime, what's this?

It's a tenner, that's right. Oh, it doesn't look too good, does it? It's not in the best state. Now guys, this is really mucky, isn't it? And really dirty, and it's even a bit ripped.

[3 : 58] How much is it worth? Ten pounds. If I dropped it down the back of the sofa, how much would it be worth? Ten pounds. It would be worth ten pounds, wouldn't it?

If I dropped it down the drain and it was gone completely, how much would it be worth? Still ten pounds, wouldn't it? And this is how Jesus sees us.

Just as we are. Maybe crumpled. Dirty. Years of history. And our notes.

Maybe lost. But still just as valuable. Just as precious to him. See? Worth searching for.

For. Jesus came because we are precious to him. We are valuable to the Lord Jesus. That's why he came from heaven. Perfectly comfortable, happy place.

[5 : 00] That's why he came from heaven. Because we are precious to him. In fact, even little swindlers like Zacchaeus are precious to the Lord Jesus.

Why? Why is Jesus looking for us though? Yes, we are precious to him, but why does he need to find us? Time for the next thing from my bag.

What's in here? What can I find? It's in here somewhere. Oh! Can anybody tell me what this is? Anybody know what that is?

Maybe you've used one at school. A mic. It's a microscope. It's a microscope. That's right. Right. Let's put that here. And I'm just going to put my dirty ten pound note on the microscope.

Yeah, I know. There's my dirty ten pound note. There's the microscope. And we are left with the question, Why is Jesus looking for us? Now, imagine that I cleaned up my ten pound note.

[6 : 02] And I'd wiped it off. In fact, imagine that I'd framed it. In fact, imagine that a famous collector put it in a museum for me.

Imagine that I did some YouTube shorts about my ten pound note. Imagine that I put it through some really good Insta filters. How much would it be worth? It would still be worth just ten pounds, wouldn't it?

In fact, no matter what I did to it, it would still be worth ten pounds. And the other thing that would also always be true about my ten pound note, if I put it under the microscope, is that it would be mucky.

In fact, even if you chemically cleaned it, so that you killed all the nasty bacteria that currency picks up when it does the rounds, even if you did that, that wouldn't restore the rips, it wouldn't put the worn edges back on, it wouldn't undo the history that ten pound note has seen, it wouldn't unbuy the things that ten pound note has bought, would it?

See, that is the problem. Why is he looking for us? To save us, because we are lost.

[7 : 22] We need saving from the consequences of the things in our lives that we cannot undo.

Even if we present a nice clean face to the world. And us being lost doesn't mean that he's misplaced us, like you might lose a ten pound note.

It means actually that we've told him to get lost. Because we want to do life our own way. And then we do, and we end up lost, and dirty like my ten pound note, with a history that we'd rather not have anybody put under the microscope.

And do you know what's wonderful? God's word tells us that Jesus knows all of that. He knows our history. He knows it all. And it doesn't put him off.

Just like it didn't put him off talking to Zacchaeus. He doesn't put his nose in the air, like the rest of the crowd did, in the Bible account that we read. Instead, he comes after us.

And do you know what? Jesus isn't the giving up kind. As we'll see later. Now, of course, if you haven't got a history, then you don't need Jesus.

[8 : 42] Do you? It's like another one of our HBC songs says, Dr. Jesus. Dr. Jesus will see you now. He gives a brand new start. It's not the healthy that need a doctor.

It is the sick. Isn't it? But if you don't have a history, then please come and see me afterwards, because I'd love to hear how you did that. Right? But we're left with the question still, aren't we? So he's coming to seek us and to save us. But how far is Jesus prepared to go? This is the point at which I would love some of the HBC guys to come up and do the sketch they did on Thursday, which will answer that question.

It will tell us just exactly how far Jesus is prepared to go. . I'm a soldier. I'm in charge of nearly a hundred men I'll have, you know.

Boy, I've seen a lot. Toughest place Caesar ever sent me was Jerusalem. Not an easy job, believe me.

[10 : 28] Do you remember that one week? It started on a real high. Tons of people turned out on the streets to cheer on a guy called Jesus.

He'd been traveling around for a few years, showing incredible power, giving people and teaching about God. It seems that everybody loved him.

And yet, before that week was up, we were putting him to death on the Friday.

Crazy. That's right. We were brought in after the Jewish leaders had arrested Jesus during the night. They didn't like the things Jesus was saying and doing.

All the fact that he was so powerful and popular. So they captured him, trying to find something they could punish him for.

[12 : 02] Do you know what? They couldn't find anything because he'd never done anything wrong. But when Jesus said he was God's chosen king and son, the Jewish leaders decided that he

was lying and that he could be punished for it.

So they started to beat him and laugh at him. And then they dragged him off to see the Roman governor, Pilate.

As I stood guard, I listened to Pilate questioning Jesus. But Jesus just remained quiet.

Then he and another prisoner called Barabbas were taken out onto the balcony. By this time, quite a large crowd had gathered.

They were keen to see what would happen to Jesus. Pilate silenced them. Then he gave them a choice.

[13:20] They could choose who they wanted to let go and who should die. In my mind, that was a stupid thing to ask.

I know if they want Jesus killed. He hadn't done anything wrong. Why should he die in the place of Barabbas?

He was a thief and a murderer. But the crowd began to shout, Free Barabbas! Kill Jesus! Free Barabbas! Kill Jesus!

Then our boss Pilate ordered Jesus to be killed. So, we let him away. And we hit him.

We hurt Jesus. And we made fun of him. Then, we tied a wooden beam to him. And led him to a hillside.

[14:20] On the hillside, we put Jesus on a cross between two criminals.

We gambled for his clothes to see who could keep them. When Jesus was on a cross. When Jesus was on a cross. It was different to the others.

He didn't scream or shout. Instead, he forgave those who were being cruel to him. It was incredible. From what I've heard, Jesus had the power to stop it. To save himself. But he didn't. He stayed put. Jesus didn't deserve to die.

But what could I do? It's my job to follow orders. So, I stood guard. And I waited. I waited for Jesus to die.

[15:27] Then, the weirdest thing happened. It was daytime. But all of a sudden, it went pitch black.

Total darkness in the middle of the day. Three hours. None of it made sense.

Until Jesus cried out in a loud voice. My God. Why have you turned away from me? God had turned away from his son.

Jesus took the punishment. For the things that we had done wrong. And in doing so, he was separated from his father. It should be us who were counseled from God.

We don't treat it the way we should. Jesus died in our place. He died so that we could be forgiven friends with God forever.

[16:33] And as Jesus took one last breath, he cried out, It is finished. And died.

The ground shook. And a big, thick curtain in the temple was torn in half. It was then, that I knew for certain, that he really was the Son of God.

What a week that was. There will never be another one like him. I wonder if you've ever thought if there's somebody you would die for? I wonder if you've ever thought if there's somebody you would die for?

I wonder if you've ever thought if there's somebody you would die for.

If you're thinking of anybody, it's probably somebody that you love dearly and that you know loves you. What about somebody who ignores you?

[17:56] Doesn't even care enough, really, to hate you. What about somebody who disrespects you? See, that's what Jesus did for us.

See, if this is us, and we had a note for God, would it be a £10 note, do you think? I think it would be a much higher denominated note, don't you?

And it would definitely be clean and crisp in a way that this one isn't. This is what happens. The infinitely precious God dies in our place.

That doesn't make sense. It's complete overkill, if you think about it like that, isn't it? Unless, unless that particular £10 note, whoever it represents, means so much to God, means so much to the Lord Jesus, so much more than the face value, that he was willing to die in their place.

And that's how much Jesus loves you and me. That he would go to the cross. And of course, only he can do that, because he's the one who issues the currency. He's the one who's clean, isn't he?

[19:22] Jesus looks like this in our place. And the result is that we look like this.

Because Jesus took on our sin, whenever God sees us now, if we put our trust in him, he sees us like this. Not like that dirty, crumpled note that we once were.

Now just imagine for a moment that somebody gave you earthly treasure. They gave you a pile of cash, or you found a gold nugget, or something like that.

That would come with some responsibilities, wouldn't it? You'd probably have to pay some taxes.

The government usually wants their slice, don't they? And then if you have any family, you'd probably be thinking, I'd quite like to provide for them.

You know, if I have kids, maybe I'd like them to have some of that if I die. And of course, you've got to put food on the table. So you've got to think, right, okay, where does this fit into the fact that I have to provide for my needs right now?

[20 : 30] And in the same way, when Jesus offers us eternal treasure, new life, that comes with some responsibilities too. And you're thinking, oh, I knew it was coming.

I knew it was coming. Here's the hook. But there's only one simple responsibility that Jesus' offer of new life comes with. And it is to love and trust and follow him.

How do we do that? How do we follow Jesus? What should we do? We put our faith in him. That's what faith is.

Love and trust and follow Jesus. And faith changes us, doesn't it? If you remember back to the story that we were reading from the Bible, what happens to Zacchaeus when he meets Jesus?

He goes from the man who cheats his own people out of their money on behalf of the Romans to the man who gives away four times what he owes. You see, faith changes us.

[21 : 32] And so it's my joy today to share with you that Jesus came to seek for you because you are valuable. And he came to save you because you are lost.

And it's my privilege to invite you to put your faith in that Lord Jesus. Love and trust and follow him in the same way that he has sought and saved and loved you.

If you want to do something about that, if you know you need to do something about that, please come and talk to me or one of the other Blue Tops today. If you have questions, we would love to help you explore them. Let me just pray.

Lord God, we thank you that the truth at the center of the universe is not me.

It is not my 70 or 80 or 100 years on this earth. Thank you that the truth at the center of the universe is the Lord Jesus who came to seek us because we are precious to him.

[22 : 43] Who came to die in our place because we are lost and he wants us back. Would you help us please each one to put our faith in him? We ask that in Jesus' name.

Amen.