

Parish Retreat 2018 Session 3

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[0:00] Amen. So here's a fun little nugget as we're, again, we're talking about Church Army. I have to keep calling you the bishop. It's just, it's out of love and adoration. You, when this guy here, when this lovely man of God, you know, asked about Church Army and how small it had gotten.

It had gotten down to here, right? So I'm always excited. I remember, you know, when the whole church started to explode. I was in seminary taking summer Greek. I did it because I hadn't been in college for 14 years.

So I took my whole year of Greek in eight weeks. And it was, it was fun. It was painful. It was fun. And again, remember, I was a guy with undiagnosed learning disabilities. God did a miraculous thing.

When I was in school, I had a .67 one semester. Went to a 3.25, just like that. Right? God's miraculous, right? He's a good God. And so we had gotten real small.

I'd gone off to do my summer Greek. And while we were there, so I got involved in all of the kerfuffle in the church. I was at Plano. You know, you guys were both there at Plano when you met.

[1:04] But as I was flying back, I ended up sitting in a seat next to a, there's a space in a woman that does. And she was from Dallas Theological Seminary. And she knew Howard Hendricks.

He's a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. And when I was on staff with Young Life, I was working towards my MDiv, right? Which he would do. And we were talking about Howard, who was teaching classes, right? And it's always fun to take classes from a guy from Dallas Theological when you're an Anglican.

Because some things you don't agree on. Thankfully, we agree on Jesus. Amen? So I'm sitting there. And there were some people on the plane. They were just making a big stink. You know, it's like, oh, look, I've got my Bible.

I'm one of those knuckle draggers. And, you know, these guys are like, oh, sweet, Moses, please, just stop. You know? And I had just gotten filled by the Spirit of God when we were in Plano. If you had processed, I was given a word from God and a vision.

And as you went by, I really heard these are those who have washed their bloods in the man. And it was a procession of martyrs. Thank you. And as a young seminarian, I was impacted deeply about that.

[2:05] Right? So I was all in. I didn't know what was happening in the church at the time. I went to a very evangelical, cloistered church in Connecticut. Faithful people of God. But I didn't know. So I got in there and my world was just a wreck.

I'm like, what is this? So in 2003, if you started an Episcopal seminary, you were one of two things. One, stupid. We're called by God to be a martyr.

Now, the word martyr has some really bad connotations. You think about martyr. But martyr, martyr, just translates to witness. That's all it means. So we're called as followers of Christ to be witnesses of what God has done for us.

Again, that's why I had to get the rock. That's why I made the piles. We're witnesses to what we've seen. Everything we do is to set up an opportunity to be a witness. Now look, on Young Life Days, we would say that everybody deserves the right to hear the gospel.

Amen? If they receive it and respond, there's rejoicing in heaven and I get so excited. If they don't, we love them anyway. Really important.

[3:11] So when we're doing these ministries, especially with the homeless, their radar is really big. They know that we're out there. And they know that we're part of dignity and respect. And I want to remind you guys, it's not about us and them, it's about individuals and names.

When I sat down on that plane, this guy in the middle sat down, and he was all shades of freaked out. I can't believe it, I can't believe it, I can't believe God would do this to me. I'm like, oh my gosh, what did God do to you?

He's like, are you one of them? Venom. Those guys. And I'm like, I was there where they were, but no, I'm not one of them, because I wasn't ordained yet, so I was being a good evangelist, right? He's like, well, I just got to tell you, I'm an Episcopalian and I'm gay, and I can't figure out why God would send me to Plano, Texas this weekend. I'm like, wow, man, that's really hard. And I said, well, look, my name's Brian, what's your name?

He said, my name is Cooper. So in the start of all of this, God was showing me it's about names and people with stories and lives. I've never forgotten Cooper.

[4:10] I've gone to Plano in 2003. I've been around in this movement since, no, I can't say that. It started a long time ago. The dawn of creation, actually.

All these days were written down and ordained before one of them was set into being. But I was reminded, first and foremost, that it's about the individual, right? You want to keep that in mind. It's super important. So when we're looking at that, if we can go to Luke chapter 14, verse 12.

We're going to do some party planning. So I want to encourage you, you know, one, if there's a particular sin that you find most repulsive, if you dare, find someone who engages in that and learn their name.

And befriend them and love them, right? I had the honor and the blessing last week of sharing the gospel with a prostitute. It was just incredible. And she didn't want to do what she had done, but it was part of her addiction.

And she was weeping. If you want to friend me on Facebook, I had a picture. And on that picture was our sign-up sheet. And on the sign-up sheet was one of the tears that she wept.

[5:26] And I was just taking, these are the tears that, you know, the woman that was caught, that watched Jesus' feet. They were the same tears, right? So she had these beautiful cleansing tears. So, again, meet these people.

Chapter 14, verse 12. Can someone read 12 through 14? The Parable of the Great Banquet? I will. He said also to the man who had invited him, When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.

But when you give a feast and invite the poor, crippled, the lame, the quiet, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

It's a nice party, right? Now, when we look at Scripture, you want to be careful. You don't want to prove text. And when you hear that, like, what resonates? What jumps down?

Any words in particular? A little inductive Bible study. What do you hear? Repay. Repay? What is that? What is repaying?

[6:36] I know we can't repay Jesus. Okay. But it's kind of weird, right? God's going to repay you. There's a reward system in heaven. Do we know that? Can we agree with that? We don't want to say it, but we're going to get gifts in heaven.

What is that about? We're going to get gifts in heaven. It's about the character of God. No, I hear you. But, like, also, too, when we see in the book of Revelation, when we get to see King Jesus on the throne in front of this glassy sea, right, there's going to be a lot of crowns on Jesus' head.

What are those about? You know this one? It's just amazing. Those crowns are our crowns. All the crowns that we've gotten when we see the King of Glory, we're going to say, I don't. If this is for you...

Right, that's the repay. I'm sorry. Yes. Repay. When I get excited, I don't shut up. Please forgive me. Repay, that's a good one.

What else do you hear? What other words jumped out? We can all speak at once. It's okay. Invite. Invite before. Invite. You will be blessed.

[7:44] You will be blessed. Okay. What else you got? Anything back there? Feast. Feast. Woo! What's that?

What's that bread upstate New York thing on? It's the rye bread with a... Oh, yeah. What's it called with a salt? I mean, it hurt them around. Oh, well, no. Kimmelwick? Yeah, Kimmelwick.

That's it. It's like a deer lick or something, man. I love those things. Beef on wit, right? Isn't that that? Beef on wit. That's what we're going to have, man. Woo! Awesome. Past-age beef on wit.

What else do we have? A little word's jumping out. We got feast. We have invite. Four. Four. Four. Four. Sure. Good one. What else do you got?

Friends actually jumps out in the sense that you would expect that you would be inviting your friends to the banquet, right? Right. So I want to be careful, too.

[8:56] So there's positives and negatives, right? Especially, and Luke looks really good. When we have these, there's a lot of contrasts, correct? You know, the Bible's full of it. You know, we have light and dark. We have Mark, it's really great, talking about in-groups and out-groups.

Those that are here, those that are out. So we have a story of the great banquet. There's a theological understanding here. Very practical understanding as well, right? The practical understanding is, again, from out of your heart pours it.

Jesus was really clear. He talks a lot of times about, you know, it's not what goes in you what defiles you. It's what comes out of you. It goes off into the sewer. That's important stuff. But our heart exposes, our actions expose our true belief.

Here's Jesus talking about this great parable, knowing that man's heart is naturally due to the sin and the fall inclined to themselves. Right?

So we would say today, you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. Insider trading. You know, if you're involved in politics, it's pork barreling. Right? I'm going to just latch on to yours.

[9:53] You're going to latch on to mine too. So he's talking about, you know, this theological understanding of, you know, at this day. And it's important. When you look at the words there too. The cripple.

Here's Jesus talking to these guys. Now, were these guys Christians yet? No. No, they were what? What did they worship? Well, no.

A lot of these guys were, it starts with a J, sounds like muse. They were Jews. Yeah, baby. Sharp like a golf ball. Right? So these guys were Jews and they were God-fears. Now, if you go back to the Old Testament, back through Deuteronomy, there were people that couldn't get into the temple, were they?

How come? You, unclean. But specifically things. There were eunuchs. Right? Dry branches. Let it be restored. Right? The ones that were lame.

These were, these people being invited to the banquet were the ones that couldn't get in because God said don't. They're not perfect. They're not allowed in the temple. And here's Jesus saying, look, when you go and have this banquet foreshadowing the temple, I want you to invite all those that you think aren't worthy of coming in because I'm going to pay the invitation costs.

[11:05] It's important stuff. Right? So it's like, who do we not think is worthy to be invited to the party? Right? We have a God of extravagant grace.

I tell people all the time, everyone is welcome at my party. It's a come as you are, not a stay as you is. Now look, man. I literally, this is my craziest one.

One day, there's this guy, Declan. He's overdosed. I watched it happen. It's very sad. But Declan was this flamboyant transvestite, man. And he would come to our church service on the streets of downtown Hartford.

And then one day, I accidentally didn't lock the van. And I looked over. He had used our van as a changing room to switch outfits. And I'm kind of like, Declan, that's a nice top.

Yeah, I'm like, what do we do? But I know, I know that he had so much stuff, so much life he had to get through before he could come to Jesus. Amen?

[12:01] So we're trying to create, trying to craft in everything we do this space where people can experience the movement and the healing power of the Holy Spirit.

Right? When we do our ministry on the street, that's what we're trying to create. If you're ever in counseling, they talk about a safe space. If you're ever in that, you know that Holy Temple Starbucks? Have you been there?

I worked for them for quite a while. It was interesting. It was the most honest man with the best hope that I ever had. I worked next to a kosher supermarket. And all my Jewish friends would want to stay after work and talk about Jesus.

It was a blast. I had so much fun. But they talk about creating a third place. Not home. Not work.

Right? More of us. If you guys are over 40, you know, a place where everybody knows your name.

Right? Cheers, man. It's what we're trying to do. So the Lord's saying, the church, the church ought to be that space. Right? Where everybody is welcome to come in.

[13:01] So we're going to go to when Paul writes to the church in Galatia. Now we're always fighting and arguing. Right? He says, look, I want you guys to look about this.

To experience the fruits of the Spirit. Not the gifts. What are the fruits of the Spirit? Pineapple. Love. God.

God. Greatness. Patience. Patience. Kindness. Yeah? Self-control. Self-control. Understand.

Yeah. Goodness. Right? Do you guys realize what the Holy Spirit did with that? Here's the church of Galatia. Right? Remember, we're about to set the circumcision.

The yoke of the law that they couldn't bear. And God's saying, I'm going to start to do this piece.

And I'm going to ask you guys to be a place that will exhibit the fruits of the Spirit. So that when these people come in, you'll let them be there.

[14:00] You'll let them be there. Jesus came for the sick or for the healthy? Sick. Mm-hmm. So when we start to do these ministries, I warn people, when you do them with the right frame of mind, you will not believe who the Lord's going to send to you.

Right? I ask churches a lot, when's the last time you experienced a new person coming in? And I'll often say, well, how come you haven't had someone in 11 years? When you are prepared as individuals to receive the person the Lord sends to you, remember, He does that.

No one can come to the Father unless they are first called. Prevenient grace. The Lord's going to send them to you. And you're going to start to hear, hey, can I ask you a question?

So when you focus on, again, the gratitude of what God's done with you, you prepared yourself, you're going to be personally and collectively a receiving vessel for the broken. And He's going to give you these gifts.

Now, a lot of us had gotten caught up in a time in a church and we experienced the gifts of the Spirit. And we loved them. They were beautiful. But the gifts of the Spirit were supposed to help us live this life that we could exhibit the fruits of the Spirit.

[15:09] That's the long-lasting work of what God's done. When we're a church that is full of love and patience and joy and kindness and peace and long-suffering, when the people come in and start to walk and live a new life, we're going to have that for them.

Amen? Amen. Really important. They're receiving gifts. Right? So when Paul talks about desire the greater gifts, right? It's the fruits and stuff.

That's what we're asking and being called to invite those. So again, when you have the feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the blamed. The blamed. Invite the blamed. Bring in the Republicans and the Democrats.

And by golly, everybody else in between. Because everyone needs Jesus. Amen? So when you do that, invite the people that were formerly outside. Right? And then they kind of come in.

Again, it's not a stage roar, but just come as you is. Right? And then when, verse 15, you'll be rewarded at the resurrection of the judge. Then when one of those who reclined at the table with him heard these things, he said to him, What are you talking about?

[16:17] Blessed is everyone who leads dreadfully in the kingdom of God. Now imagine that was cleaning stuff up. You know what I'm saying? It was like, if you were down south, you would say, Well, honey, God bless your pointed little head. Right?

He wasn't really meaning it. And we know that because Jesus go on, and there's God with the big but again. But he said to him, A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. At the time for the banquet, he sent his servant to say to those who have been invited, Come.

Everything is ready. Right? Now when you guys go through seminary and have all your fancy schmancy classes, you're going to like get drowned in this whole thing of the already and the not yet.

You guys know that one, right? Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Do you guys that haven't been through seminary know about the tension of the already? I had Rod Whitaker was my New Testament professor.

He would talk to his hands all the time. He was like, Landshop. It was already and the not yet. And we're living in this tension. And we would get whiplash going back and forth.

[17:16] Right? So I want to ask you this question again. When, or rather this, what is the gospel? What is the gospel? What is it? Somebody.

What is the good news of Jesus Christ? Okay. So the good news is I can be reconciled. Right? I can be.

Right? That's where you're saying the good news is. Right? You are. Okay. So I am. So that you would say John 3, 16.

The good news, the good news of God is that you can avoid death forever when you come to him by faith. And you can experience this new life in Christ.

Right? John 3, 16. Right? So that's what we're saying. So when does that happen? When is the good news then? Yeah, but then, but you're getting a reward when?

[18:14] When you kick the bucket. Right? Right? Right now. And you have fellowship with God already. We have fellowship with God already. A lot of us will say the gospel is, here's the good news.

You can avoid death and have eternal life with Christ Jesus, and he'll forgive your sins. Right? So what we're, and that was a big movement back in the 50s and 60s, is that then we're going to have that.

When Jesus was clear, Jesus says the kingdom, the good news is now. Now. We have to be cautious though. We can't have a full gospel church. All those signs you see, they're wrong. Now. The full gospel, the full good news, is when Christ comes back at the second coming, and puts all things to right. That's the fullness of the gospel. But the gospel, the good news, is that the kingdom has come near.

Not just that we're forgiven of sins. Praise God for that. That's part of it. It's like saying, my final reward is heaven. No, my final reward is on a new earth. A new restored earth.

[19:12] The full gospel is now. Now. Now. And when we understand and grasp that, then we start to invite people to the party now. Then we throw the party now.

We're trying to build pockets of shalom. Right here in Syracuse. What road is this? Onondaga. Did I say it right? Awesome.

Almost part India. Almost part India. So what the Lord, what the Lord said is, look, I want you guys to get a banquet hall, a party hall, on whatever road I just said here.

We might have thought, this guy found a great deal. God had a good bargain. But no, God ordained you guys to be here. That's the piece. He gave me the banquet hall.

And the fun thing, it used to be a Masonic party house. God redeemed stuff like that. Know what I'm saying? What's funny is, I meet in City Hall. City Hall used to be a Masonic lodge, downtown Hartford.

[20:17] I'm all about that kind of stuff. Right? So, the gospel is now. And then again, who do we invite? We invite everybody. Right? And at once, the man gave the great banquet.

And again, Jesus was talking about himself foreshadowing when he was going to return, part of it. And that the Jews were first invited. And then the gospel of John says, he came to that which was his own, and his own did not receive him.

So, we're looking at Jesus and seeing these words, so that later on, when it was read, it would speak back into them and go, oh man, did not our hearts burn with us along the road? Didn't we know that piece?

Right? Except for them then and for us now. And he said, look, come on now, everyone's ready. But what happened in verse 18? Someone read it for me. But?

But they all like began to make excuses. The first said to him, I have bought a field and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused. Right. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to examine them.

[21:20] Please have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come. So the servant came and reported these things to his master. And the master of the house became angry and said to the servant, go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.

And the servant said, Sir, what you commanded has been done and still there is room. And the master said to the servant, go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in that my house may be filled.

For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. Thank you very much. So look, I believe that we have a God of order.

And I say that because my bishop always tells me. Father Brian, we have a God of order. And I'm like, yes sir, we do. I agree with that. And we have fun. My bishop and I, at one point I said, Bishop, I start to think I want to use incense in my service.

I don't know what's come over me. And he said to me, Father Brian, we call that progress. Right? I love Bishop Bill. He took me in. Literally, I called him up from Tanzania late one night when things were happening.

[22:34] I felt the call saying, Bishop Bill, I need to transfer in. Would you take me? So it was 1130 at night there and he's like, yes we do. You know, so he was my respite and the calm of my storm. And I'm forever grateful for him.

So too often, we hear the church, you know, reading these verses and they say, you know, the Great Commission, the scripture says, God, God demands us to go and do these things. But I want us to remember is it has to come from a spontaneous desire from your heart.

It needs to be. When you read the scripture, I want you to understand that you were the leper, you were the cripple, you were the blind, you were the defect that could not have access to the great banquet.

That's you. That's Brian. Right? But because Jesus made me new, the gospel came, I received him, I was a new creation, no condemnation, I had access to that.

Right? When we operate from the mindset of, okay, the gospel is now, the Bible tells me to go and do it, and it's out of compulsion, not out of compassion, we're going to burn out.

[23:42] We're going to fry, it's not going to be sustainable. When we operate in the power and gifting of the spirit, it will be energized. You know what that's like. You can do a million things, but if it's in the power of God, you're never going to weary.

You're going to run, not going to weary, you're going to fly, you know, like the blades. Right? It's true. So, when we have this piece here telling us that we're supposed to go out, I just, I wonder, like, what happened to the church when we stopped going out and inviting people in?

Again, it's not just into the church, it's inviting them into the kingdom. Amen? I used to be on staff with Young Life, right?

And we would always, people would wait, we're going to get to summer camp, we're going to have all these kids come to Christ when that professional speaker gets up there because he has all the right words and all the right flash. Right?

I'm five foot five, I'm balding, and I'm pretty hairy. I'm convinced my doppelganger is an orangutan. Right? But for some reason, I can walk into a jail full of kids because of power of the gospel to hear it.

[24:51] I can hang out with the elderly when they hear it. I can hang out with the homeless when they can hear it. It's got nothing to do with Brian, it's the Christ in me. And it's the Christ in you. So, why do you think we all forgot to go off into the hedges and the hedgerows?

How come? What do you think somebody did? Fear of rejection. Who was that? Fear of rejection. Fear of rejection? Is that a thought or a personal one? Or both?

Is that like what you think of the church or for you two? Oh, you two? Yeah, yeah. Fear of rejection. You two. You two. What else? You two. You two. Worldliness.

Worldliness. Oh, that's a good church word. What does that mean? So, being more concerned about the things of this world rather than the kingdom.

What about the church? Okay, good one. What else? Control and trust. Control and trust? What does that mean? What does that mean? We're afraid to go off into the streets and proclaim and tell people to come to the party for control and trust.

[26:01] I'm giving control of myself and trusting in God. Okay. Fear of abandonment? It is. I don't fear that.

I just like to have some control over what's going on in my life. And I really don't have control and I know that. Right?

Absolutely. Why else? This is fun stuff. I mean, I really, I got released in all this when I was in seminary. Do you guys ever take classes from West Fairfield? Anybody know Dr. Les Fairfield at Trinity School for Ministry?

He's like one of my heroes. He would always do dry erase stories and like he would just get excited and furrow his brow. We could imagine putting playing cards here and he would stick. Love the man. He's played Princess Cupcakes and Action Green on my living and floor with my daughters.

Right? So all Christians should be jealous of me. But Les Fairfield would share stories about Whitfield and about all the great people in the great revivals. They would go off into the slag piles in Sheffield and they would stand out in the rain and meet 20,000 people without amplification without

