

Giveaways that You Have Been with Jesus

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[0 : 00] I don't want to accidentally strangle myself or fall on those cords.

! Jesus Phelps, glad to have you and John back here.

It's a good thing to have you in Columbus. Amen. Amen. Let me read the passage to you.

Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about. So the disciples said to one another, has anyone brought him something to eat?

Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say there are yet four months, then comes the harvest?

[1 : 18] Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for the harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so the sower and the reaper may rejoice together.

For here the saying holds true, one sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.

Let's pray. Our Father, we are thankful this morning that, first of all, you and your loving kindness have communicated to us your word.

And in that word, you have given us a clear indication of the heart, the character, the life of our Savior. Secondly, we're thankful that you have given to us who know Christ the indwelling spirit whose ministry includes helping us to understand the word, to understand the scriptures.

And we confess at the outset that the matter of allowing the word of God to make a difference in our life is not simply a matter of intellectual grasp, but it is also something that we are wholly dependent upon the work of the Spirit.

[2 : 46] And it is your intention that the word of God would help us change, to be more like Christ and less like we used to be.

And we ask that this morning you would be pleased to work among us and help us to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the remainder of our lives would be lived with a passion for the glory of the King that we someday will see.

And I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. I suppose it's something that in the last several weeks have kind of rolled up inside of me a little bit.

And I can't read the news without becoming a little disconcerted. I look at what is happening around the world.

I look at what's happening in our country. And I recognize that there actually is a growing adversity towards the faith that you and I delight in and find confidence and comfort in.

[4 : 07] But I suppose it's not just this moment and this hour of history that is fraught with danger at being a Christian. I stop and think in a practical and a realistic perspective.

And I'd have to say that it's amazing that Christianity really exists at all. I mean, our Savior, the founder, died on the cross.

He was rejected by the nation that he came to minister to. Of his 12 disciples, 11 of them died as martyrs, taking Judas off the page.

And in the subsequent years that followed, Christians were persecuted, were fed to the lions, burned the stake, driven from their homes, and hated beyond reason.

And it's not just 2,000 years ago that that happened. It's going on today. And as I think about it, I trust that none of us here in the days to come will actually take the...

[5 : 20] One of the things that persecution did in the early church was it weeded out the wheat from the chaff. You know, you could pretend to not be a Christian and avoid pressure.

Or you could be an authentic believer and invariably end up being identified. Identified for the life that you lived and identified for the truth that you spoke.

I think a little bit about Peter and John. You know, when you think about their lives, you recognize that they were clear indicators of who Jesus was.

And one of the things that spotted them was, remember when they were brought before the Sanhedrin to give an answer for the fact that they'd been witnessing? And they were, don't you be doing this anymore, talking about Jesus, etc.

And they were kind of stunned that these rude, uneducated fishermen were as clear in their gospel presentation and in their grasp of the scriptures.

[6:27] And yet they said this. Well, the one thing that was a giveaway was evident that they had been with Jesus. Their lives had been affected by their time with Christ.

And as we work our way through the book of John, one of the undeniable goals that I believe the scriptures intend in our life is that we are changed to grow to be more like Jesus and we grow to love him more.

Does that make sense? I mean, here's the truth. We, by nature, have a great tendency to be pretty self-focused, sadly. And it is the word of God and the spirit of God that lifts our heart up to grow to know who Christ is.

And in growing to know who Christ is, to grow to love him and to grow to want and desire to be more like him. And so as we look at this passage this morning, what we're going to see is some of the indicators of what Jesus was like.

And the outcome is this, is that it should be some giveaways for you of whether or not Jesus' presence and his person is making a difference in your life. Let's look at a couple markers of what Jesus was like and see whether or not we see these in our own.

[7:52] Okay. You look, first of all, at John chapter 4, verse 31. It says, meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, saying, Rabbi, eat. Now, the scene that we actually have here is a little crazy in that you remember Jesus had stopped at the well in Sychar and he'd stopped to kind of refresh himself and rest.

And the disciples had gone on into town to get something to eat. They were hungry. Jesus had stayed at the well and he'd end up having a conversation with this woman. This Samaritan woman. He had shared the sweetness of the gospel with her and her life had been transformed by the power of the cross. And she had run back into town and she went in there and said, hey, I want you to meet the man who told me all that I ever did is not this the Christ.

As a result, the men from the town came back to the well. They wanted to meet Jesus themselves. And so you have this very interesting scene. You have a crowd of men coming towards Jesus and you have the disciples kind of coming back at the same time.

And you can kind of imagine here is Peter and John and the rest of the disciples kind of munching on some pita and maybe a little bit of feta cheese and a little bit of goat meat or whatever else. And they're kind of they're all into lunch.

[9:13] And they come up to Jesus and they say, hey, we brought you back something here. Have this. And Jesus immediately in the context of of this offer for food, he says, what's he say?

Look at the passage. He says, I have food to eat that you do not know about. The disciples were all caught up in their meal.

And to them, the issue that was most important was was seeing to it that their physical hunger was satisfied. And that was at the very center of their thinking and ambitions.

And so when Jesus makes the statement, I have food that you do not know about. I have something that nurtures and sustains me that you're not connecting with.

They it went right over top of them. They missed it. They didn't understand it. And I want you to recognize this morning as you look at this passage, as Jesus speaks, he's giving us a picture of what his heart, his motivation was like.

[10:18] Well, when he says this, I have food to eat that you do not know about. He was identifying the fact that here's the truth. Food is pretty essential for human existence. How many of you have gone NPO?

How many of you know what NPO is? The adults in the crowd have done that, right? NPO is you don't want to hear your doctor say NPO. What does that mean? Nothing by mouth after generally what?

If you have a test in the morning, it's NPO after 12 o'clock or whatever. You know, it's like and I remember going to a surgery. Well, forget that one.

I won't tell that story. But if you miss the memo on NPO after midnight, guess what happens to your procedure? Does anybody know?

You get to come again. And you get to try again. If you break the NPO rule. And how many of you, when you are NPO and they delay surgery, get a little anxious?

[11:19] It's like, get this over with. I have not had anything to drink. I have not had anything to eat. You know, blah, blah, blah. We're pretty sensitive to food.

And here is Jesus. He makes this comment. He says, man, I've got something to eat that you guys don't know about. They immediately thought he was talking about food. And that's not the case.

Actually, what Jesus was referring to is something that is woven into the scriptures.

And he had already identified earlier. And I want you to think with me just for a moment to a passage in Deuteronomy chapter 8. Turn over there, if you will. Keep your finger because we're coming back to John. But when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, what he actually did was he recited scripture.

By the way, that is the best way to deal with the ongoing battle we have with sin. How many of you recognize there is a daily battle that each one of us have with our own heart and the challenge and the temptation to indwelling sin?

How do you deal with it? Well, I'm not going to do that. How many of you tried that before? Just kind of the self-will deal? No, the best way to handle that battle with indwelling sin is to remind yourself of the scriptures themselves.

[12:38] Deuteronomy chapter 8, verse 3. Here is Moses preaching. And he reminds the nation of Israel of God's provision. He says, Jesus, when he made this statement, he was reminding us of a larger picture that should be kind of stuck in our hearts.

And it should be this. God feeds us and provides for us for the purpose of our doing his work. Do you understand that? When Jesus made that statement back in John, back in John we are, when he said this, I have food that you guys don't connect with, you don't understand.

What he was saying is this, is I have that which the Father has provided for me. And it is in relationship to the purpose that he sent me for. The truth of the matter is, every one of us in here that belong to Christ, that know him as our Savior, at the end of the day, the reason he fuels your body is to do his business.

Does that make sense? You should not say, I owe, I owe, and off to work I go. Right? Or, I hope I can take a cruise next month, and that's the reason I'm doing thus and so.

At the end of the day, the believer's life is wrapped up in doing the work of God, and he provides for that end. Jesus also is making this statement, the things that really sustain and satisfy is doing his will.

[14:40] That's the thing that really, at the heart of it, characterizes those who have been with Christ, and whose lives are affected by the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let me stop and have you think with me just for a moment.

One of the very common afflictions of our day is a high level of discontentment and depression and discouragement. Let me tell you something. In many cases, it is rooted simply in living your life for yourself and being involved in self-aduling, I'll change that word, in self-worship, and it is a very fruitless, counterproductive way to live.

If you are focused on yourself, you will not be a happy person. And I want you to understand, Jesus lived his life to accomplish the work of his Father, and that was the thing that fed him and carried him.

Now, before we move on, I want you to stop just for a second and kind of think about the scene that we have here. Here are the disciples. They've been out getting lunch. They come back, and they see Jesus having this conversation with a woman.

Right behind them is this kind of crowd that is descending on Jesus, and they're talking about food, and he says, Hey, you guys don't understand. There's something that's really fueling my heart, and it has nothing to do with what you're thinking about.

[16:02] It kind of went right over top of them. They missed it. And so if you're sitting here this morning, and the truth of the matter is, is that it has been, and everybody look at me. Everybody look at me.

It's been a long time since you have actually had a passion for people that are on their way to hell. I mean that. I don't want you to give up and say, Well, it's hopeless.

Because the more you're around Jesus, and the more you understand the heart of Christ, the more your heart will begin to connect with the things that he connects with.

Does that make sense? And when you look at these disciples, and you kind of get the idea that these guys are brain dead, yeah, thankfully, being around Jesus, change the things they thought about, and you have hope.

You can change. I can change. Well, I want you for a minute to look at the second thing that we look here, having a sense of his timing. And as we work our way on down there, it says, Do you not say?

[17:06] There are yet four months. Then comes the harvest. So the situation, and probably the scene that had been taking place, these guys were on their way. They were moving up north towards Galilee. And as they had kind of been walking this journey, they were walking through farmland.

About 85% of the nation of Israel was engaged in farming. That's what they did. And evidently, during the time in which Jesus was making this journey, it was just after the seed had been planted. And you looked out, and you saw the little sprouts coming up, and probably one of the farmer's little statements was, it's four months till harvest time.

How many of you grew up in a rural community? Raise your hands and wave at me, the rural crowd. How many of you remember the old saying, knee high by 4th of July? Does anybody remember that one?

How many of you know it's not true anymore because of hybrids? You know, you're riding through the countryside, and you say, knee high by 4th of July, and the stuff's over the top of your head. Well, in the ancient world, they'd kind of look at those little sprouts coming out of the ground, wheat, barley, rye, whatever it was, and they'd say, four months to the harvest, four months to the harvest.

[18:22] And you can kind of imagine the disciples as they're trudging along in a nudge, four months to the harvest. They had it. They knew that, little diddy. And Jesus says to them, guys, hey, you're on top of this farming business, but you're missing the real picture.

You got that? What was going on? Here they were. They were kind of chomping on their sandwiches, and here comes a whole crowd.

Jesus had been pouring his heart into one woman. Now comes the crowd. You get it? And Jesus says, guys, you're all about this little sprout of barley or wheat coming out of the ground, and you're all about four months, and let me tell you something.

You're missing it. Look! Lift up your eyes. And what do you see? You see the fields are white unto harvest.

Now stop and think with me just for a moment here. How many of you have ever seen wheat fields that are ready for harvest? Color? What's the color? White? Huh? White?

[19:32] No. No. Barley? Rye? Corn? When crops are ripe for harvest, they are not white.

What gets white? Nothing in the field. What was Jesus talking about? Now this is where it helps you a little bit to know something about Samaritan culture.

The Samaritans were really into wearing white. Okay? Okay? And not only was that a color that was predominant on the Sabbath.

I mean, if you were a Samaritan man on the Sabbath, you were white. You had a white robe. You had a white turban. You were white all over. I mean, it was the thing to do. And we don't know the day that Jesus stopped at the well there at Sychar.

But evidently, here comes this crowd of people to talk to Jesus. And his disciples are all cut up in sandwiches. And he says, hey, look around. Look around.

[20:35] The fields are white unto harvest. And what he was talking about was the people that were right there in front of them. And they were missing it. You see, here's the fact.

The disciples were brain dead to the lost throng around them. Has that been that way for you? The disciples were brain dead. They were missing what was right there in front of them.

You know, when we take our eyes off of ourself and we began really thinking about what God is doing in the lives of people around us. And when we interact with the people that we have daily relationship with, at the heart of our concern should be this unrelenting interest in their eternal destiny.

Is that right? That's the way Jesus was. Here he was at the well taking a rest. And a woman shows up. And he immediately gets into the business.

Of where her soul was. And where she would spend eternity. For all practical reasons. Back come the disciples. They're all wrapped up in sandwiches. And Jesus says, hey, I'm not about food.

[21 : 47] There's something else that really drives me. And it's doing the work. The work of the one that sent me, my father. Interested in the souls of men. And so here is Jesus as he is addressing the disciples.

He says, you know, don't go on with this thing about four months in the harvest. Because let me tell you something. It's right here in front of you. It's right here in front of you. And the business of seeing lost mankind come to Christ is supremely important.

It really is. And so here's a question you can ask yourself. And I want you to be very practical and think about it. Are you all about the harvest? Truthfully.

I'm not talking about the professional. I'm talking about you personally. Are you all about the harvest? Or are you at all about the harvest? Is that something that you think about on a regular basis that you're interested in?

That you're looking for opportunities to be involved in? Or is it something that occasionally you get kind of tweaked at? And you think, well, I better share the gospel. Or what am I going to say at church?

[22 : 53] You know, that kind of thing. No. Where's your heart? Where's your heart? I can't help but think about something I read earlier this week. Actually, last week.

Franklin Graham, in an email that I get from him talking about witnessing, etc. He shared the life of an individual. I want to read just a little portion of it. When you think about the opportunities that we have to see people come to Christ.

Andy Meekins and his wife were on an airplane. They were seated together. And they were making a long journey. Hijackers took over the airplane and demanded that the airplane be flown from where they had hijacked it.

Somewhere in Africa, I guess, over to Australia. And they were advised by the pilot, we don't have enough gas to make it. They said, go anyway. And so, as they neared Comoros Islands near India, one engine flamed out.

And the pilot came over the intercom and he says, listen, folks. I want you to know that we only have very little fuel left.

[23 : 59] And in just a short while, the other engine is going to be exhausted of its fuel and we are going to crash land in the ocean. His wife heard his seatbelt click and he stood up.

And right there in the middle of that airplane in that very, very intense moment, he says, folks, I want you to understand that the probability is that many of us are going to die today.

And I want to talk to you about the thing that's most important. And he shared the gospel briefly. And there was a stewardess who survived.

125, I think of the 175 people died. A stewardess that survived says, I said, and she shared later.

She said, as we were going towards the sea, I bowed my head and prayed and says, I happened to look around later and see several others that were praying.

Of the 175 people on that airplane, 125 died, including Andy, who was still on his feet preaching the gospel when the airplane hit the water.

[25 : 17] Do you understand that? Listen to me. Now is harvest time. Now is harvest time. And that's the point that Jesus was making to these disciples.

Well, there's a time that we can get around to maybe sharing the gospel. No, now. Now is the harvest time. Let me have you think of a third point that we find here in the passage and just kind of pick up, if you will.

Here is Jesus as he's talking. He says, listen, I want you to recognize that this business of harvesting, it gives you an opportunity that you may not realize.

Think about it. He says there in verse 36, already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life so that the sower and the reaper may rejoice together.

Let me tell you something. Seeing people come to Christ is without question the most satisfying experience you will have.

[26 : 18] Why is that? Because it is something that you carry forward with you into eternity. It's something that in the life to come, we will continue to rejoice in in a way that we cannot rejoice in

anything else in this life.

I have watched over the years, many, many people in their early days spend a great deal of energy in acquiring stuff.

How many of you understand what I mean by stuff? Okay. And I've watched as people get older and older and sicker and sicker that their interest in stuff dissipates.

And all that they thought was important, their children are beginning to think when dad passes, when mom passes, I'm going to have a 40 foot roll off here and the rest of it goes to the dump. Right. You see, the truth of the matter is, is we don't take it with us. But the people who come to know Christ will be our companions in eternity. And here is Jesus telling us, listen, seeing people come to faith in Christ is a joy that lasts for all of eternity.

[27 : 43] I want you to recognize another thing that we find here in the passage, just kind of pick up on if you will. It says this, What's he saying here?

The truth of the matter is, is that in most cases, seeing people saved is more often than not a team sport that plays out over time.

Do you realize that? Many, many of the individuals that you have shared the gospel with did not make decisions at the time in which you spoke to them. They weren't convicted.

They weren't necessarily drawn to the cross. And they may have ambled on down the road and you never had another opportunity to contact with them. And yet, time and time again, behind the scenes, afterwards, the Spirit of God has taken that which you have sown.

And he has brought that individual to faith. And somebody else was involved in the reaping. Many, many times as I've had opportunity to share the gospel with different individuals, I recognize at that moment that when people have come to faith, that there's been a great deal of background work done behind.

[29 : 06] Others, family members, people in church that individuals grew up with, or someone who was a passing acquaintance dropped the seed of the gospel and it fell upon fertile soil, but it grew over time.

And I just happened to be at the moment when the reaping took place. And Jesus says this. He says, listen, you need to understand this. It takes place over time.

It takes place over time. And so here is Jesus. He says, one sows and another reaps. By the way, will there be reaping if there is no sowing?

And what's the answer? Will there be reaping if there is no sowing? And the truth of the matter is, you cannot have reaping unless there is sowing. And Jesus, when he spoke to his disciples, the truth of the matter is, is that at that moment, they did not get the priority and the significance of being involved in reaping.

Isn't that right? What were they all about? Sandwiches. They were all about their belly. They were all interested in what was in it for the moment. And yet, here's the sweet truth.

[30 : 16] As a result of being around Jesus, being around Jesus, being around Jesus, their lives moved from being self-focused to being individuals who were interested in the harvest.

Now, think with me. What is a giveaway that you've spent time with Jesus? Well, you're in church. Well, you're in church.

Well, that's nice. Well, you don't engage in the filthy five or the nasty nine or the dirty dozen. Do you follow me? I mean, you're just as pure as the wind-driven snow.

Is that right? Here's one of the things I hope is really the case. As a result of your time with Jesus, you have a growing affection to see people come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The conversations that you have are about opportunities to eventually plant the seed. How many of you realize that not every case in every moment is the right time to do the seed thing?

[31 : 19] Agreed? Sometimes the soil has to be prepared over time. But here's my point. When you have a heart that has been touched by the Savior himself, you grow to become a person who is interesting, scattering seed every opportunity you have.

Listen to me. I have no doubt that the coming generation here in America is going to know absolute difference in what persecution is.

It's just a matter of time. My question to you, number one, in that coming day, will your testimony for Christ be sufficient to draw other people to the cross?

And your testimony for Christ will not be any more significant than your affection for him and your interest in him today. Does that make sense?

You're not going to be different in the future if you're not growing to be different in the present. And, beloved, I want to challenge you this morning as you look at this passage in John.

[32 : 42] We see what Jesus was like. He was motivated with a desire to see people come to Christ. That's one. Two, he saw the opportunity at the moment, and it wasn't something in the future.

And so I want to challenge you as you think about your life. It's all about the moment. You have opportunities. Every one of you. Don't kid yourself. You've got opportunities. Most often, like the disciples, we're just missing them.

Number three, the truth of the matter is, is that God uses other people, and he expects you to be part of the other picture, so that the harvest involves sowing and reaping, and those who are touched by the sweetness of Christ have lives that are affected by Jesus, and it shows up in their interest in the souls of lost mankind.

So let me ask you a question. Do you get it? Do you get it? Do you get it? How will you know that you get it?

The simple way will be when you lift up your eyes and see the harvest field and understand that's why Jesus came. The simple way will be when you find pleasure and satisfaction in the simple process of sowing the seed, whether or not you reap the fruit.

[34 : 16] The simple evidence that you have been with Jesus will be your interest in the souls of lost mankind.

Why? Remember what Jesus said? When he was explaining the purpose for which you'd come, he says, I have come to seek and to save, what?

That which is lost. And in John 17, he made this statement when he was praying for his disciples. He said, listen, Father, I am sending them out in the same manner in which you sent me.

That's me. That's you. Let me close with this. I think one of the things that characterizes a church that is truly growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is that the majority of the work that that church is doing in evangelism takes place outside, not inside.

Do you follow that? You bump into people every day that desperately need Christ. And my encouragement and my passion is to see you here together grow in your affection for the Lord Jesus, that you carry that virus out and you affect other people.

[35 : 36] You bump into them. I encourage you. Don't put your energy into bringing them here so the professional can deal with them, right?

I want you to grow in your love for the Lord Jesus Christ so that that love just kind of radiates and touches people in the places where he has put you, that I don't get to go, Saul doesn't get to go, Andrew doesn't get to go.

You're there. Why? For the testimony and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's close in prayer. Our gracious Father, this morning, as we consider the life of our Savior, we want to be like him.

We want to be affected by the truth of what his heart was like so that when we leave this place this morning, there is a resolute determination.

Lord, work in me that I might have the same passion for lost mankind that Jesus had. Not just because my heart has been stirred to a certain level with emotion, but because I see Jesus and I want to be like him.

[36 : 48] And, Lord, we ask that you would do that, that you might be glorified here on earth as you are in heaven. We ask this in your precious name. Amen.