

Bound for Jerusalem

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Preacher: Bishop Don Harvey

[0 : 00] Let us bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the joy of coming here together, for the opportunity of exalting and raising praise and glory to you through word and through song and through music.

And now we ask you to especially send your Holy Spirit upon us to open our ears that we may hear your holy word to open our minds that we may understand that word and to open our hearts that that word may live and grow and expand there.

And from that expansion, we will share it with others. And this we ask in the holy name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. I want to thank Dan and everyone who has done so much to make this past week such a memorable one for me.

To come back and to spend a week in the life of a parish, or at least in some of the aspects of a life of a parish, is something which I think everyone who is in a more administrative position should do from time to time.

[1 : 24] To go to the grassroots, to see what it is to live out the gospel as you try to spread it with other people. It's been a great experience for me, and I have much to reflect upon when I head back later this week to the East Coast.

I mean the real East Coast. Way to the... Out here when I say the island, you seem to think I'm talking about Vancouver Island. Out here when I say St. John's, you seem to think I'm talking about St. John's Shaughnessy.

In fact, I refer to Newfoundland as the island, and St. John's is the capital where I have lived for so many years. Coming here this week provided quite a challenge for me, and I'll be quite upfront with you about it.

For almost 50 years now, I have had the joy of preaching the Word of God. But for almost every Sunday in that 50 years, I read whatever the colleague epistle and gospel said for the day, and I picked one sentence from that colleague or that epistle or gospel, and I attempted to preach on it. At least I used that as my pretext for preaching. Sometimes after a couple of minutes, I launched out onto what I really wanted to talk about. And when I came here to this parish, I was given not a text, not a section of a text, but a whole book.

[2 : 51] The 20 whole chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 21. And I was told that I was given, don't set your watches on this today, but I was given a certain time span that this service should be in, that this sermon should be in.

I was also given a time span for what the 7.30 service this morning should be, which is about one third of what I'm allowed to do to you. And it seems to me, I would not be at all surprised that before I get to the end of it, some of you are going to be saying, why didn't I come to the 7.30 this morning and get the Reader's Digest version of it.

But I was greatly helped this week because all of the groups I visited that had Bible study all had this same passage, Luke, or Acts, chapter 21.

And so I was able to sit back and let people talk about what this chapter meant to them and as they saw it. And it made, in some ways, my work much easier and in other ways more complicated, especially when the views that so many people were saying and which made so much sense weren't exactly the ones that I had in mind.

Back in much of Newfoundland today, this fourth Sunday in Lent is known as Mothering Sunday. It comes from the Epistle. Sometimes you might read in the prayer book there, Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all.

[4 : 31] And on this day, children would bring, something like Mother's Day, bring flowers and give them to the mothers and so on. And in other places, it was called Refreshment Sunday. The middle of Lent, half of Lent is over, the other half before us.

Let's take a breather. Let's take a breath before we go on to the more difficult side of Passion Week. But it is a great discipline to take a book of the Bible and to work through it as you frequently do here at St. John's.

And so, from now on, whenever I refer to the fourth Sunday in Lent and be calling it Mothering Sunday or Refreshment Sunday, I can guarantee you I will always refer to it too as Acts 21 Sunday because it has been emblazoned in my heart in more ways than any of the other books, chapters of Acts have been.

You see, we find out Paul here is coming at the end of another missionary journey. I believe it's number three. And as he winds his way back to Jerusalem, he does it in stages, stopping off at places where he obviously had been before and or other disciples had been as well, preaching the word of God.

And already, this infancy of the church, there were groups of people waiting for him. There were his followers, followers of Jesus Christ, these people who have been given this message and knew.

[5 : 59] They were waiting to greet Paul and to spend as much time with him as he could afford to spend there. It was in Paul's mind a farewell journey and he told them, this is the last time I'm going to see you here on earth.

I've come to say goodbye. And that caused many tears. And you have some poignant examples of that and in the previous chapter of them kneeling down with Paul and praying together.

And I guess if the hymn God be with you till we meet again had been invented by that time, that's what they would have sung. Something equivalent to that because it was a farewell. You will also notice, if you read it carefully, that is what we call one of the we passages, W-E, not W-E-E, but W-E, us, we.

Obviously, St. Luke, who wrote the Acts, was with Paul at that time, either as, you know, working as an evangelist or working as a physician or working as both.

Paul was hindered throughout his ministry by some kind of a disease. We don't know what it was specifically. It doesn't make much difference what it was. He agreed to accept it as part of, of what he was living with.

[7 : 15] And, but frequently, we find Luke, a doctor, traveling with him, perhaps as his personal physician. And Luke refers to almost the first half of that chapter with we did this, we did that, we did something else.

You're getting here a first-hand account. You're not getting an account that came from one person to another, to another, and three or four stages down the road was, you know, filtered down with different people's opinion.

And what Luke makes very evident here is a certain tension that's existing. The tension of the Holy Spirit saying one thing to Paul, which he is quite convinced the Holy Spirit wants him to do.

If you remember when you heard Acts chapter 20 being preached on, that would have been, I'm sure, one of the things pointed out, where Paul is quite convinced he has to go up to Jerusalem. But now, all of these disciples, as he meets them in each place, are saying, please, Paul, don't go. The Holy Spirit is coming to us, and the Holy Spirit is telling us, don't go up, because if you go up there, you're going to be arrested, and all manner of things that are not nice are going to happen to you.

[8 : 31] And so, you sort of have a conflict. No doubt in Paul's mind, he has to go there. No doubt in many of his followers' minds that he should resist going, if he could, because of what it would do.

And I guess they used arguments, you know, Paul, you're far better to us alive than if you were dead. You know, that sort of thing, trying to persuade him otherwise. They told him that in Tyre, and then when he came to Caesarea, that interesting episode that I got to do more study on later on, I didn't realize it until I got into it this week, that Philip, who's referred to here, Philip was one of the original deacons, one of the seven, with Stephen.

And now, Philip is an evangelist. And Philip has these four daughters, four unmarried daughters, and each of them were prophets in their own right. And yet, Luke does not mention a single word that these girls say.

Yet, obviously, they were prophesying at the time. More dramatic than Philip's daughters, whose words can't be recorded, though, is the prophet, the man known as a prophet, a man proven to be a prophet.

Agabus comes down, takes Paul's girdle, and wraps himself up, ties himself up in it, in much the same way, say, as Jeremiah, when he put the yoke up on his neck, or some of the Old Testament prophets did these dramatic, outward, visible things.

[9 : 59] And Agabus says, the man who owns this girdle will be tied up just the way I've been tied up in it now. So what more direct warning did Paul want to receive?

Obviously, he didn't want to receive that either, because in verse 13, which so painfully shows a side of Paul we don't often see.

Paul says to them, why are you weeping like that? Why are you breaking my heart? Don't you know I've got to do what the Holy Spirit is telling me to do? And I thank you that you're revealing through the Spirit what's going to happen to me, but I'm prepared to do this regardless of what the consequences are going to be, because I've been told to do it.

And there's no doubt in my mind that that's what God wants me to do at this part in my ministry. And that would leave us actually to a very interesting application of that into our ministry today.

God willing, I'm going to be back in June to do a confirmation. At confirmation, we will sing or say an invocation to the Holy Spirit to guide us to do the right thing.

[11 : 18] Maybe back here for an ordination. I've had ordinations here. At the ordination, again, we pray to the Holy Spirit. Please, Holy Spirit, come amongst us. As I said in the prayer which I started this sermon with, be here amongst us as a living presence and work with us.

We invoke the Holy Spirit at synods. We invoke him at vestry meetings. Guide us. Show us the way to go. But the interesting thing about it, and we all know it, is that even after invoking the Holy Spirit, we don't always get the same answer.

I recall when I was working in Labrador, there was an elderly clergyman there of another denomination who had come to the conclusion that he no longer had to prepare his sermons.

He was following the scriptural injunction that the right words will be put in your mouth at the right time to say. His wife whispered to me and she said, you know, Donald, sometimes the Holy Spirit lets my husband down very badly.

Even more dramatic was when I had a young priest who I called into my office. I had prayed about it. I had consulted about it.

[12 : 39] and I felt he was the ideal person to go into a vacant parish that I had. I didn't want to be, you know, the way bishops are accused of being autocratic, heavy-handed.

So I said, go home, go home and pray about it and come back a couple of days' time and we'll get your ticket ready to go. I wasn't quite that bad.

Anyway, he came back two days later and this is the serious part of it and I believe he was telling me the truth. He said, I woke up from sleep and the Holy Spirit was saying that's not the right place for you to go.

And I said, well, I called him by name, you know, that same Holy Spirit woke me up last night and said, that's where you should go. You're the man he had picked for that particular position. And I mean, that's sort of an extreme case but we must realize that the Holy Spirit speaks to us in different ways.

And sometimes the Holy Spirit gets blamed for saying things the Holy Spirit never said. For making decisions he never made is our decision that we put into the mouth of the Holy Spirit. It has to be a process whereby we go about this in a very responsible manner because not only do we hear the Holy Spirit, we have to discern what really the Holy Spirit is saying.

[14 : 03] Always remembering that all prophecy does not come from God. All prophecy does not come from the Holy Spirit. There's prophecy which comes from the evil one. Satan puts evil thoughts in our minds and our hearts even to deceive the very elect, we're told.

People would think it is God speaking to us and it is not. And so, we must, I always remarked to clergy how often the Holy Spirit called them to go to the nice urban parishes with multi-staff and all of the nice things that went with it as well as responsibility, I know, nice things that went with it. But that same Holy Spirit very rarely ever called anyone to go and serve in the remote areas of the Labrador coast where they would be isolated for part of the year. And maybe that was me getting a little bit cynical sometimes, but I have tried, as I hope you're trying, to really see how the Holy Spirit

speaks to us.

I admire people. I really do. And I'm not being, trying to be funny with this. I admire people who say to me sometimes, you know, I was getting ready for my shower this morning when God suddenly said to me, you must do this today or you must go see somebody else today or make my mind on a certain thing.

And that's wonderful. Would to God that we all got that kind of message. I've never got it once in my life that kind of a message. The Holy Spirit doesn't speak to me that way. He speaks to me very slowly over a long period of time.

[15 : 35] And ultimately I come to what I hope He wants me to do. But it is one thing to hear the Holy Spirit.

It's another thing to interpret it. And that has to be done through prayer and often through fasting. Remembering that, as with Paul and his disciples, is that one size doesn't fit all.

And different people hear the Holy Spirit in different ways. Now, I'd really frighten you if I've said I've gotten halfway in the sermon. But there is another whole section to that passage which I'm not going to go into with any depth.

But Paul gets to Jerusalem. And in Jerusalem, he finds that James, the Lord's brother, says to him, look, you've been accused of spending, you're getting too Gentilized.

You've forgotten the traditions of your fathers. You've forgotten the traditions of the Jewish church. And so I recommend if you want to get anywhere at all in Jerusalem with what you have to say about Gentiles, you better prove to them you're a good Jew first.

[16 : 38] You better go and go with these other fellows and shave your heads and do the purification act. And Paul does it. Some people say, well, maybe he compromised too much. But really, you know, Paul was a very devout Jew.

His complaint with Judaism was that it didn't go far enough. Judaism was predicting the Messiah. The Messiah comes and it doesn't recognize him. He wants to carry it all that much further.

And so, even going through that purification, when he comes out, the rabble rousers stir up the people and while he's in the very temple trying to preach the word of God, he's body handled and brought outside and the doors of the temple are shut on him.

and next week you will learn if you go on to Acts 22, one of the best sermons Paul ever preached and he didn't preach it in the church.

He preached it on the steps outside and his life was under threat. And my dear friends in St. John's, without stretching it too far, you know what I'm talking about.

[17 : 52] It may well be in your desire to preach the word of God. It may be, I am not a prophet, I'm not making a prophecy today, I'm just making an observation.

It may well be that the time would come that these doors will be shut for you and you won't be able to preach the word of God within these walls. And if you can't, you must take the example from Paul.

And if you can't preach it in here, preach it on the steps, preach it in the highways, preach it in the byways, but make sure that people know why you've taken the stand you've taken and why you want to hold Jesus Christ up as the one and the only true way, the way, the truth, and the life, whatever that involves.

And we pray to God that will never happen. But if it does happen, there's plenty of precedent and you heard about it this morning in that part of the Acts of the Apostles.

Since we've been involved with the Anglican Network in Canada, over and over and over again I've been impressed with the similarities between the Acts of the Apostles and what many of us are doing and going through.

[19 : 03] And it is my prayer that the same joy that the Apostles received even going through these sufferings will be ours also. The Book of Common Prayer, we're using it here today, in one of its colleagues, and I didn't have a copy with me last night to figure out which one it was.

Maybe that's something you can do sometime today, but a bit of homework. But there's a colleague which is very precious to me, and that's what I'm going to end on.

The colleague prays that we may perceive and know what things we ought to do. Pray that we can perceive and know what things we ought to do.

And then, when we have discovered what we ought to do, not what we want to do necessarily, but what we ought to do, then we would have grace and power faithfully to fulfill the same.

That's my prayer for you this morning. I hope it is your prayer for me. And as we stand here in this middle of Lent, let us be encouraged by the message that we have heard from God's Holy Word. [20 : 20] Let us remember that it never stopped at the death of the apostles. The power of the Holy Spirit has continued on, and may that Holy Spirit lead, guide, and direct us in all we are called to do. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. God bless you. Let us kneel together in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we ask that in a moment of silence you quiet our minds and hearts. Enable us to embrace and absorb your most holy word that we have just heard.

We pray that during this time of prayer, our souls will engage with your spirit at the very center of our being where you are. For you are here now with us, Father.

Father, you have told us so. Heavenly Father, over the last few weeks we have been greatly inspired by the incredible feats of skill, endurance, and bravery of world-class athletes.

[21 : 47] During the competitions we have seen the ecstasy of triumph, the tears of failure, and the face of compassion. We are at the Olympic stage where the best of the best are competing at the highest level.

The Olympic flame is a focus for a hungry world in need of inspiration. The theme of the opening of the Paralympic Games is One Inspires Many.

Let us be truly inspired by those who have learned to live and thrive inside changed bodies and lives. For as the gospel touches us, so too our lives and aspirations must change.

A change from a life of consumption to one of service, a change from a life of rebellion to one of unity with you. Father, you acted powerfully through the ministry of Paul.

His truly was an Olympic feat worthy of inspiring many. Without Paul's fortitude and his relentless teaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, often in the face of adversity, many would not be saved.

[23 : 04] The gift he left behind us goes far beyond anything we can muster with our own worldly resources. His gift goes beyond this world. It is truly divine.

We thank you, Father, for all those who, down through the ages, you have called to the ministry to relay the message. We give thanks for those of strong faith who have accepted your calling to preach the gospel, often at great personal risk to themselves.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. At this time of year, Father, this time of Lent, we are in anticipation of Easter and the heart of the gospel, the crucifixion, the death, and resurrection of your Son and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Be in our hearts and minds, Father, in our preparations as we look inwardly at our sinful selves and the lives we are living. Give us penitent hearts and minds that seek your blessed will, Father, for we have been changed by the indwelling of your Holy Spirit or our profession of faith is but a sham.

We, like the Paralympic athletes, are not our former selves. We must leave behind our old selves that cling to addictions and idols. Help us to draw closer to you, Father.

[24 : 36] In our consuming secular lives, we are challenged in how to make time to serve you, Father, and serve one another. This Lent, we pray that you might lengthen the time we spend in prayer and meditation of your most holy word.

The values of our world have crept in and would overrun our lives, Father, like the weeds among the good crop. We cannot serve two masters.

Give us the will, Father, to make daily time for you to sacrifice some of our earthly endeavors and passions which by their very nature will soon pass away as we will too someday.

We would build our lives on the solid rock of the gospel and garner eternal riches. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the fractious nations and groups all over the world and their leaders who feed the guns of war and the misery which war generates. May they come to know your loving mercy and your gift of grace to mankind.

[25 : 47] May they come to know and follow you in peace and harmony within a global community of your adopted children. children. We pray for the innocent people tormented and displaced by war around the globe.

We cry out with the victims of persecution and lament with them also. Especially we lament and pray for those Christians murdered in Nigeria just this last week.

Oh, how much longer, oh Lord, oh, how much longer must we suffer. we pray for the people of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan.

Let the end of their days of torment be near at hand. We pray for your guidance and protection to Canada's own armed forces that serve in Afghanistan. Let their mission be one of mercy, healing, and reconciliation.

Father, bring them home safely to these shores, to their loved ones and those who love them. let us be counted amongst these, for they are our own.

[26 : 55] Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. We pray, Father, for ministries which we at St. John's support.

We pray for Richie Spidell of Navigators, Kirsten Rummery of Living Waters, Jeremy Curry of YWAM, and Erica and Jess Cantillon working in Jerusalem.

We pray also for Jan, Chris, Carol, and Graham who are on a short mission visit to Cambodia supporting the Rathenak project. We pray for Dave Carter currently in Haiti.

Protect these missionaries from harm and fill them with your Holy Spirit, Father, that their work may be profitable and glorify you, Father. In the strong name of Jesus Christ, we pray these things.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. We lift up to you now, Father, our fellow parishioners who suffer at this time and their families, be it through the loss of a loved one, the loss of health, loneliness, loss of employment, the need of challenging work.

[28 : 07] We pray for your comfort, your guiding wisdom, and your strength for the following. We pray for Rowena, Harold and Fran, Ken and Gail, and Helma.

And in a moment of silence, let us offer up our personal prayers and petitions for our own needs and others known to us who suffer. We close with a prayer from Elson's pen.

Eternal light, shine into our hearts. Eternal goodness, deliver us from evil. Eternal power, be our support. eternal wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance.

Eternal pity, have mercy upon us, that with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, we may seek thy face and be brought by thy infinite mercy to thy holy presence.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. My staff.

[29 : 50] Okay. Thank you very much. Just to, I'll do some announcements. What we're going to have is in the white sheet that's in your bulletin, everything you need to know about what's happening this week is there, so you can take a look at that.

And I'd like to invite Manya Edgerton to come up for a moment, and she's got an announcement to make. Last week, these things were handed out, and they're called A Thousand Wise.

It's an evening in support of youth in Canada. And they're at the doors as well. I just want to ask you two questions, Manya. The first is, there's an evening on the 9th, April 9th, that's important.

Why is it important for us to go to that? This is an event for all Christians because we all have teenagers and young people and actually children in our lives who will one day be teenagers, people we care about.

And sometimes it's hard for us to face the fact that they are being influenced by a very permissive and suggestive culture which is as close to them as their iPhones and laptops.

[30 : 57] And Living Waters wants to help young people take on the challenge of living godly lives in our culture today and has developed a program called The River. And this is a new initiative which works in partnership with youth groups and churches and Christian schools.

It addresses the tough issues that Christian young people face and helps them understand God's desire for relationships and sexuality. And we have already, we've been to the Carver Christian School in New Westminster and we've been to several churches and we already have got feedback telling us that the young people really appreciate the leaders sharing openly their stories of struggle and hearing and seeing the dramatic presentations that are involved in the river.

and they are saying that this work that is already being done helps them look honestly at their own lives and also helps them seek to make Christ-affirming rather than life-destroying choices.

Okay, and this is going to take place on April 9th at First Baptist Church downtown. Who is going to be the speaker? Daryl Johnson who was at Regent and now at First Baptist and his wife Sharon will be speaking.

They are strong supporters both of Living Waters and especially of the river and they are going to launch a trust fund that evening in honor of their son Alex who died last summer.

[32 : 26] It is their desire that this trust fund will be used to support the work of the river. Okay, thank you very much. And you can pick these up at the doors. I'd like to have Leslie Bentley come or is it David Averin is going to speak about legal fund and as he's coming up I'd like all the trustees

to come on up too because we're going to have Bishop pray for you after David's finished.

So David, come on up and share a few words about how we can give to the legal fund. Yeah, good morning everyone and one size doesn't fit all with these microphones. I just want to give a brief update on the litigation.

I'll take the 7.30am approach quick and concise. You'll see in the parish life notes that we're seeking a five member panel for the hearing of the appeal.

That's extraordinary but we felt that was appropriate given the nature, the scope and the importance of the issues. Usually it's a three man panel. We're also seeking a hearing date in September rather than the May, June time frame we'd originally anticipated and I guess predictably the diocese is not agreeable to those things so we will probably be asking the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to resolve them for us either by a short oral hearing or a written application.

We're continuing to work on an extension of the standstill agreement with the diocese which is really just to preserve the status quo pending conclusion of the appeals.

[33 : 56] That's still up in the air hasn't been resolved and we are working very hard on potential avenues for negotiations so stay tuned on those things.

Now you'll recall from the several discernment meetings that we had in December and January that there was strong support for the appeal so it's very timely now for those of us who are willing and able to support the appeal financially to begin to do so.

Costs of the appeal are in the order will be in the order of \$300,000 and most of that is still ahead of us so we're asking and hoping that those of us who have made pledges already will be able to begin to fulfill those in the next week or so in the very near future anyway and for those who have not made pledges but would like to support the appeal financially it would be very timely to begin to do so.

If you haven't pledged but would like to do so to indicate support a little ways down the road this is the form this puff coloured form which is at the north X at the back and then on the table to my right at the north exit and you can complete that payments can be made in several ways sorry this will be a bit confusing payments can be made in several ways the best way to address the check is to the ANIC legal fund or ANIC legal defence fund ANIC but if you're you've made a check or are making a check to St. John's Vancouver or to the ANIC St. John's project and clearly indicate it's for the legal fund not to worry it'll find its way home so I think that's all I wanted to say and thank you all very much and happy Sunday you can stay up here I'm going to ask the trustees to come up as well because we want to pray for you so anybody who's here as a trustee come up to the front of the church and we are very very blessed indeed to have these trustees who have been elected by the congregation that God has raised up and it's wonderful that Bishop Don is here too to pray for you all and I want to introduce them and then have have prayer for them as well so this is Kevin Unger we don't have time to interview all of them unfortunately this is Kevin Unger and there's Leslie Bentley who's the people's warden and George Edgerton is with the corporation trustees and he's the chair of church committee and then there's David Averin who's the rector's warden and Wade Larson who is on St. John's Vancouver and sharing the duties with George on chairing church committee so it's wonderful that you guys are trustees and these are people that you should pray for pray for them weekly or even daily we need your prayers God's wisdom and guidance and decisions that we'll make and I think strength too in the days and the months to come and I'll ask Bishop Don if he can come and pray for all of us too let us pray heavenly father during the ministry of your son

[37 : 18] Jesus Christ he shared so fully with all of his apostles and all of those who came to hear him but he also selected Peter and James and John to be a type of inner circle to bear some of the extra burdens and cares and to be with him at the most intimate moments we thank you that these people now before you have responded to your call to be raised up as trustees in this part of your family we pray that they will be given physical and emotional strength to carry out some of the difficult decisions they will have to make we pray that they will be ready to listen to those who want to share concerns with them when the time comes and they have to make decisions in the words which we used earlier may they then perceive and know what things they ought to do and may they then have grace and power faithfully to fulfill the same and unto

God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you to this ministry and to this work now and forever more amen amen bless you yea