

Advent Mission High Adventure 2

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[0 : 00] My name's Lindsay Risk, and I'm one of the eight youth of St. John's that went to Montreal on a mission for children this summer.

The mission, Anglican Summer Day Counts, was centered in Montreal, but many of the traveling teams went to different places all over Quebec. Some of the places my team went to were a couple places up in the Laurentians, and two towns in the Gaspé Peninsula.

The working day was set up in five different sections in the morning, starting with singing, and then a skit, a play, film, and ended with devotions, all of which were related to that day's story.

The stories were different each day, and they were all taken from the Gospel of Matthew. In the afternoon, the climbers, the youngest ones of the children, went home, and the older children stayed, and we played games and made crafts with them.

A special time in each day for the kids was when a very special friend of theirs made an appearance. Their friend's name was Lamb. The kids from Vancouver talked so much about Harry and Archie that Lamb got so excited he wanted to come and meet them.

[1 : 26] So I know that you're all sitting on the edge of your seats wanting to meet this Lamb character. So I'll call Lamb. Lamb, are you there? Hi!

Hi, Lamb. Hi, Lizzie. Lizzie, here's a lot of people. Yeah, well, Lamb, they all came to see you. But I just want to see Harry and Archie, and all these people.

That's okay. Hi! Yeah, well, they're pretty happy to see you. Um, I hear you have some business to take care of, Lamb.

Oh, yeah, I do. Well, everybody talks about Harry and Archie so much, that I had to come, and, you know, give them a little token of what we did, you know, for the kids back here.

Could they come off so I could get a better look at them? Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

[2 : 23] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. They're all talking about■■■.

OK. OK. You finished? Yes. Oh! Okay.

Is it always like this, Lindsay? Yeah. Okay. What's my best hat? Teasers. What?

Daytans! You're welcome. What are they for, Matt? These are for Aryan artists so they can wear and tell everybody about the ancient summer daytans that he's sort of plebiscity.

Sorry, what's that? I can't say it. Poblisity, not plebiscity. I don't know that. Thank you. I hope these are very smart.

[3 : 46] Watch it. Is that all you had to give to on Aryan artists? Yeah, that's all. I've got to go real quick because I've got to see my present.

I'm going to visit him in Barbados. Barbados? Can they sit down now? Yeah. Okay. Thank you very much. Bye! Bye! Well, I guess you better go catch your plane on it.

Yeah, it's too cold here. Yeah. Bye! Bye! Bye! Bye! Bye! Bye! Bye! Bye!

Bye! Well, now that you have an idea of what we did in Montreal during the day, I want to tell you what I learned in Montreal.

At the beginning of the summer, during the training week at Quebec Lodge, Vina Sweetman, the director of Anglican summer day camps, said to all of us that we were there not because we wanted to... or we chose to be there, but God chose us to be there.

[4 : 45] And, well, that was pretty easy to believe then when you're in that atmosphere of everybody believing that and, you know, not really working that hard and relaxing on the water and stuff.

Well, things changed after the first day of real work, and I came home, and my views were definitely different. The fact that I had only become a Christian in May, through my involvement with youth group, I began to doubt what Vina had said, that it was God's purpose for me to be there, when I found myself teaching well-known Bible stories to four-year-olds that I had never heard before. One, I guess, really embarrassing part of the summer was when a whole bunch of kids were talking about the story of Jonah and the whale, which is pretty well known. I'm sure most of you know it. Well, they were saying how good a story it was, and I guess I just kind of had to nod, because I had never heard the story in my entire life. And they were asking me how I liked it, and I said, oh, it was good, good, good. But, you know, that was one situation.

[6 : 05] But, yeah. In the second week, I was teaching a craft. The craft was a memory verse chain, where the children wrote down that day's memory verse on strips of different colored construction paper, which they then put together to form a chain like the ones you put around your Christmas tree at Christmas.

Anyway, day five's memory verse had no real value to me then, but as I look back on it now, it had great significance. The verse is Matthew 20, Matthew 20, verse 28.

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. Looking back at that point in the summer, I can notice a change.

I had come to the realization that there was actually a purpose for me in Montreal, that that purpose was revealed through the memory verse, to serve others, through the gifts God had revealed to me. I could have thought of better ways for God to have made me realize that point. I mean, he could have just sent down a piece of paper and dangle it in front of my face saying, you know, this is a situation, realize it.

[7 : 19] But I found out God doesn't work that way. He chose to put me through a lot of things that I was unfamiliar with. He took all my securities away, put me in unfamiliar places and lifestyles that I hadn't been accustomed to.

And like in the first week, I was quite homesick. I remember phoning my family four times in a row in the same week.

I mean, I'd never really been away from home for more than two days, I think. I felt discouraged, lost, and I was questioning absolutely everything under the sun that was happening.

I had absolutely no faith whatsoever. Towards the third week, those feelings were beginning to leave me and I was getting stronger, I felt. I had a lot more energy to entertain and teach children, which puzzled me somewhat.

So I asked myself who was giving me the strength to do this? Who was refilling me after each long, hard day with even more energy than I had the day before? I came to the conclusion that it must be God refilling my strength each day.

[8 : 28] At that point, I found myself with a little more faith than I had had. It was, I guess, the only way God could work through me, by breaking down the old wall surrounding nothing and building from the inside to the outside.

He stripped me clean of my outer shell. The armor that protected me, he took away. I was standing there with nothing to protect me, but I believed strongly that he would protect me.

He made me conscious of the gifts he had blessed me with, but not to use them for my own glory, but to use them to serve others. When I was asked to give this testimony by Tama a few weeks ago, I said yes right away, not really thinking about what I really was doing.

I was kind of laid back and casual about the whole thing until about three days ago when I actually had to face reality and try to think of something to say in front of people.

I had never really before now had a chance to reflect on what I learned in the summer. But now that I had to do this, I had a real reason to sit down.

[9 : 49] Well, one night when I was sitting down thinking about it, I was reading the Bible. And it so happened that I flipped, I opened the Bible, and I found myself staring at a passage in the Bible.

And it was 1 Peter 4, verse 10 to 11. And I want to read that to you.

And I think, because basically I think it says what I learned in the summer. Now, I think it says it's important to me. We have continued to do this. Each one should use whatever gifts he has received to serve others, faithfully and illustrating God's grace in various forms.

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides so that in all things, God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

For me to grow strong in my relationship with God, I had to make a sacrifice of comfort and security. security, allowing everything that protected me and kept me safe to be taken away so that I could grow stronger.

[11:02] Thank you. Let's pray, just bowing your heads where you stand there.

Our Father, you are Lord of Lords, and you are the God of Gods. And we are very transient creatures who live in a tiny speck of space through a tiny span of time.

And in some wonderful way, you have chosen to make yourself unmistakably known to us. And yet we too are big and important, and we can offer an enormous amount of resistance.

And you, in your grace and in your love, are prepared to stand at the door of our hearts and knock and await our invitation to come in.

Lord, may we all hear you knocking at our hearts this night. And may we have the grace to invite you in.

[12:10] And even that we acknowledge is a gift from you. We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Amen.

Somebody came late for the mission last night, several hours late. They were looking for treasure and nobody was here.

So they cracked a window and then another window and reached in and opened the window and went inside and stole some of the church's silver.

If only they'd come earlier. They think that stuff's worth something.

[13:06] And indeed it is, I'm sure. But it's not nearly worth what we are trying to give away free night after night after night which is worth a million times more.

So I hope for that person that they might discover where the true wealth of the church is and that is in the gospel which we preach, not the silver that we use and the communion serve.

Some people are still very confused about that. Can I tell you to look at the passage that's for tonight and it's Psalm 107.

It's all printed out for you. But each night, just so you know what we're doing, we've added the introductory paragraph at the beginning and always close with the last epilogue line at the end.

And then the passage we're dealing with runs from, he turns rivers into a desert down almost to the end.

[14:23] And that's the passage we want to look at. I was very impressed to meet Lamb because I'd heard a lot about Lamb and there is some hope that Lamb is going to move west and become part of a program of children's missions out here in British Columbia.

So that's very nice and I was very grateful to hear from Lindsay and the things she had to say. And that trio was magnificent, that's all you could say about it.

And I hope that we'll hear from them again and again. It's so surprising to me to see them here and I was delighted to hear them here as well.

If you look at the passage that's on for tonight, you'll see there's wonderful contrasts running through it. And I would like you just to think about the contrasts for a moment.

Rivers and deserts, springs and parched ground, desert and pools of water, fruitful lands and salty waste, hungry people.

[15:43] And over against the hungry people comes by the provision of a sovereign God, water, a dwelling place, a city, sown fields.

I don't know if you've ever flown across Canada and seen Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba looking like great patchwork quilts of sown fields.

They also had vineyards, high yield. They got children. They had cattle. The Lord dealt with their oppressors and with their troubles and with their sorrows.

These were all the things that happened to the people that were hungry. God, in accordance with his sovereign purpose, dealt with them.

Those princes or those men who rose up and lorded it over them were treated with contempt and ended up wandering in a trackless waste.

[16:47] Men who were living by their own power and exerting their own authority. There's another contrast in the same passage between the needy who were raised up from their need and who were set in families.

Then it says at the conclusion of the passage that the upright are glad to see this process going on and the wicked don't say anything at all.

Well, the reason is that if you look carefully at the passage, you will see that the problem of rivers and deserts, springs and thirsty ground, fruitful land and salty wastes is because of the wickedness of the inhabitants.

Now, what I want to tell you about this is fairly simple.

The people in British Columbia are living at a time when apparently we have exploited the fish off the coast to such a dangerous level that we might be left without them.

[18:08] We have stripped the trees off the coast to such a dangerous level that we have stripped the trees off the mountains. We have exhausted the minerals in the mines.

And we're in danger of creating a wasteland. It's happened before in the history of the world.

And the thing is that it says here is that the wickedness is the wickedness of the inhabitants of the country. Now, what I think that means is that the true resource of a country is not its mines or its lumber or its fish or its industry.

It's its people. If a country is wealthy, it's because of the people of that country. And there isn't enough mines in the world or trees or fish that if you have a country of greedy people that it can't meet all their needs.

It just can't happen. And so, you see, the needs of our greedy society are exhausting the natural resources of our country.

[19:33] And it's not because there wasn't an abundance of them, but there is a terrible distortion in the amount that we think we need.

You people who are young people growing up in our society, what you're going to be told as you are let in in the secret of how our society works is that there's just a very few basic rules.

And as long as you don't break any of those rules and you are out for yourself, number one, only and exclusively, you will prosper and the land will prosper.

And that just ain't so. And the reason it's not so, we have known for a long time and we are reminded of in this song when it says that he turns rivers into a desert.

A river of resources are turned into a place that is dry and totally infertile. Because of the hearts of men and women.

[20:52] Because of our greed. We think at the moment that if you want to know how the country is going, you should check the value of your brick shares, find out what happened on the Vancouver Stock Exchange, note the Dow Jones Industrial Average, and find out where the Toronto Stock Exchange Index is for the day.

But that's not it at all. We need much more sensitive equipment than that. What we need is something that can measure not 300 stocks on the Stock Exchange, but a million hearts of the people that live in this province.

And measure the level of greed in their hearts. That'll tell you more about the prosperity of the country than anything else.

If you get another instrument that will measure the level of thankfulness in people's hearts, that'll tell you a lot about why a country is prosperous.

If you have something you can measure people's capacity for worship with, if you could only do that on a wide sample hour by hour, and the results fed into your computer, you would soon find out where the prosperity of the country comes from.

[22:16] God considers men to be responsible. We're responsible for the way we live our lives. We are responsible for the condition of our hearts.

And the land we live in is a reflection of the hearts of the people that live in it. And that's what this passage is saying.

And a lot of people feel sorry for young people because there's no jobs. And they want a government that's going to provide jobs for people.

And in that way we want the resources of industry and mining and so on, so that we can go on being as greedy as we are and exploiting the resources.

And God says that's not the way it works. God says, I'm in control. And I will turn rivers into a desert and springs of water into a thirsty ground and a fruitful land into a salty waste because of the wickedness of its inhabitants.

[23 : 30] And so this passage opens up the condition of our hearts. We don't live as we looked at last night.

We don't live by right. We live only by permission. And the one who gives us permission, who gives us grace to live our lives, is God.

And we have to live as responsible to him. But it's not just land and resources. It's the wealth of our minds as well.

And our minds can go from being, you know, rivers of information, you know, streaming with new ideas, streaming with creativity, streaming with ideas.

It can move from that into a completely barren, depressed, discouraged, fruitless, meaningless sort of operation that's going on up here. And there's no ambition and no drive and nothing.

[24 : 36] Nobody's going to solve that problem for us unless there is some change in us. When there is a change in us, then he turns desert into pools of water, parched lands into springs of water.

And the hungry, the people who are really hungry, are going to find a place to dwell, a city to live in, fields to grow, vineyards to provide for us, and fruitful yields from them all.

All those things are going to belong because of that. And that's where a fruitful, creative, artistic people are going to come from.

The essential condition is the condition of men's heart. There isn't enough, there isn't enough wealth in the world for the capacity, I mean, it's a completely bottomless pit, to try and satisfy the greed of men.

But where you're hungry, hungry for, and in need, you get a different situation developed.

[25 : 54] I'd like to show you how it works. And this is a little illustration I have to try and demonstrate for you. You take this point right here, which is the central point, you can all see that?

I don't imagine you can, but there it is anyway. And up here, this way, you have this. And this is the rich.

Got it? That's the rich. Down here is, the contrast is, the hungry.

Got that? And this contrast is brought out in scripture because it says that he fills the hungry with good things, and the rich he sends empty away.

Now, there's all sorts of, there's all sorts of variations on that. There's a lot of people who think they're rich and don't know how poor they are.

[27 : 14] And one of the great discoveries you can make is to discover your own poverty, the poverty of your own heart. That's why Jesus says, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We can discover our own poverty, but we can also mask our own poverty with what we think is riches. And what Mary says in the Magnificat is that the hungry he fills with good things and the rich he sends empty away.

So this thing is traveling on a fulcrum like this so that it's going, the rich are going down and the hungry are coming up and they become rich and then they go down and then they come up and then they go down.

And she says that's the cycle the way our world works. Now if you only belong to my generation, we started off poor and we've become richer ever since.

Guess what happens next? The great advantage of young people today is that they're hungry. They're looking for something.

[28 : 24] And if only they can realize the full extent of their hunger, then I think the hungry will be fed with good things while the rich are sent empty away.

Now what I mean by that is that if you look here you see the way we live our lives is that we all want to share the riches of our world.

We all want a piece of this. Nobody wants to get caught hungry. We're really afraid of being caught hungry. But what this psalm illustrates to us is that the hungry are filled with good things and the richer sent empty away.

And what I think that means is that we need to be looking at this.

Who are the hungry people in our world? We have a doctor in our congregation who's for most of his life been a missionary among the Muslims.

[29 : 40] And he is I warn you to be careful about meeting him because you might be on your way to the mission field within weeks. But he is very much aware of the hungry people in the world.

Hungry for the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. he's aware of what resistance there is to the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ too.

But he knows that the hunger is there in men's heart. And that hunger is going to be satisfied by our God. And that's one of the things that's happened.

But you see there's more than that. It's sort of the awareness that when we find ourselves in the place of need, that's where God can meet us. That's where God can provide for us.

And that's why as Christians we should not be orientated in getting a piece of the pie up here, but sharing the action down here because this is the place of God's blessing.

[30 : 54] This is the thing that God is doing in our day. And this is why we need to be concerned with the prisoner and the poor and the third world and the neglected and the wounded and the handicapped and the retarded and the people who are hungry, spiritually hungry for something from God.

Those people are prepared. Well, it's not just that they're prepared, but God is prepared to meet them in their distress and to provide for them. And our orientation in this direction is only like joining a sinking ship.

And young people, you get mixed up about this because your parents very often want you to share this. But if you're wise about what God is doing in our world and how God runs our world, you will know that he turns rivers into a desert and springs of water into thirsty ground, that the hungry are fed with good things and the rich are sent empty away.

Well, that's the picture. But then there's another picture which goes with that. And that's this one. And it's a picture of utter and abject poverty.

You can't it's the person of Jesus Christ on the cross. And you see, what he does and what we're told by Paul that he does is that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become wonderfully rich.

[32 : 58] And that what we need to do is see that our lives are gravitated towards this person in his dire poverty. Most people think that if God was to come among us, he would come among us in some demonstration of his tremendous wealth.

But he doesn't. He comes among us as one who is the poorest of the poor. And not only is he the poorest of the poor, Isaiah says that he's not the kind of person that would attract you.

He has, we're told, no form or comeliness. He's not somebody who by his physical appearance would attract you.

He is despised by people and you don't have to travel far to find him despised.

he is rejected by people, proud and self-sufficient and arrogant people, like we are so often, reject him.

[34 : 20] I still find it hard to name the name of Jesus Christ. It's all right as a preacher to stand up here and do it. But in conversation with ordinary people, without having on my disguise here, it's hard to talk about Jesus because he is the rejected and the despised person.

And you don't want to join in with the rejected and the despised, but that's who he is. He is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

He is stricken, smitten, afflicted, bruised, chastised, and nailed to a cross.

And I tell you that this has deeply offended many, many people in our world, the terrible poverty of Jesus Christ.

it's deeply offended because he cannot be who he claims to be if this is the appearance that he had.

[35 : 39] And this is the appearance that he had. For though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor. That we through his poverty might find a kind of eternal riches.

And so that's why St. Paul says about him that in his letter to the Corinthians he says I am resolved to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

him. The thing that you've got to know is the absolute poverty of who you are.

You see in our materialistic and self sufficient scientific world we think we have most of what it's possible to have and know most of what it's possible to know.

that's the way our world thinks that's the way our world behaves and we think we're spending the years of our lives trying to get the two or three percent of what there is to get our hands on it and it's a scramble.

[37 : 06] But when you come to know the man who is despised and rejected stricken smitten afflicted bruised and chastised then you will discover that all your riches are as filthy rags that you just don't have anything in terms of what it is meant that you should have.

You will I hope you lie this is one of the really nice verses in scripture nice and hard on people. But in in in in revelations chapter three it talks about people saying I am rich I have prospered I need nothing not knowing St. John writes that they are wretched pitiable poor blind and naked so that when you see Jesus Christ on the cross smitten afflicted bruised chastised you suddenly discover he's like me he's the one that I belong to there's the person that understands who I am and so he asks us to put our faith and trust in him and to be obedient to him he asks us not to be surfeited with the fullness of all that we have in our world but to recognize the poverty of mind and heart and spirit in pocketbook to recognize that poverty as being the true condition of our lives and to recognize that the way our sovereign

God works is that he is concerned for the poor for he himself though he was rich yet for your sake and my sake he became poor he became despised he became rejected he he fell under the curse of God and as such he's the one that we're to turn to and you see young people all of us human beings we don't move that way we move for the satisfaction of our greed and our desire we want and we want and we want and we want and if we really want Jesus says we will identify with the poverty of our world we will identify with the despised and the rejected

Jesus Christ and we will recognize that he by his poverty has made us rich beyond all that we can imagine I want to stop and sing a hymn now and the hymn is number 56 in your book and it describes in the words of one man John Newton how rich we are turn will you to 56 let's verse once again please be seated

I feel a little bit lost in talking to you and trying to to share with you this point this one point that I want to make but you know we've talked about the the wanderer and how the wanderer came to the point where he cried out to the Lord in his distress and the Lord heard him and then we talked about the the prisoner who from his stinking dungeon cried out to the Lord in his distress and the Lord set him free and then how the sick fool filled with guilt and not deserving anything cries out to the Lord in his distress and the Lord hears him and rescues him from all his distress and then how the person who is totally overwhelmed by the raw violence of the nature of the world in which we live cries out to the

[43 : 01] Lord in his distress well the thing that all those pictures are saying is that God is in control the way for the wanderer freedom for the prisoner healing for the sick and peace for the overwhelmed this section we've dealt with tonight is to say that the man on the cross is in control he's only in control of you consciously when you let him in that that verse from revelations chapter three and I read a part that part where you say I am rich and I have need of nothing and don't know that you're poor wretched miserable blind and naked you don't know the poverty and what you should do is you should cry out to the

Lord and say Lord I will not live with this poverty I will not live without knowing you I will not live without the riches that you promised me I will not try to do this thing on my own and I don't care how rich or powerful you might be unless you come to terms with your own poverty in terms of God's loving purpose for you you are badly deceived the Bible is all in favor of great wealth except for one thing that the people who have it are very easily deluded there was a time when when the saints you know the monks and people like that used to used to try and live with begging bowls in their hands so that everything they ate would come by the mercy of

God they used to seek to be ill so that in their illness they would see the grace of God at work some of them subjected their bodies to freezing water for hours and hours in hope that in their physical suffering they might see the reality of God you don't have to do that your poverty and our our need is all around us and you just have to see it and to see that that poverty has been met through Jesus Christ the one who says to you I stand at the door and knock and you open the door I don't kick it down and you acknowledge me to be sovereign in your life

I don't force my will upon you he says you can go to hell and mean it quite literally because you have the freedom to do that he says if you will open the door I will come in and sup with you and you with me and that sup you know that's what the song is all about it's not that you are born to be

the captain of your faith and the master of your destiny it's not that you are to live your life for the gratification of your own grief it's that you are to consciously and deliberately choose the thing which

God has prepared for you and that thing which he's prepared for you is to live in fellowship with his son Jesus Christ you might mistake who Jesus Christ is because he is despised and rejected and yet he is the king of kings and lord of lords and is not going to force himself upon you the epilogue service which follows over in the chapel right after this service is a very simple way of in a sense saying lord i open the door i want you to come in and be my master and my lord i want you to i want you to be my true wealth my true riches and and that's what you have an opportunity to do i think i told somebody earlier this week that in a sense we're looking for a verdict from you and your verdict doesn't take very long to give a trial may last many months and the jury may be out for many days but when the verdict is given it only takes a moment and the purpose of the epilogue service is to provide a place where you can give the verdict to the person who's knocking at the door and you can say come in or you can say

[49 : 30] I'm busy let us pray Jesus Christ is the light of the world oh gracious Lord feel right to hear not in all in heaven oh Jesus Christ holy Christ now is coming to heaven in heaven God is the earth in heaven Jesus you you are perfect in heaven all the time and you do you do your mercy of all time to become a spirit and come

God to give God to be glorified to all the Lord be light in our darkness oh Lord and in your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night for the love of your only son our Savior Jesus Christ let us give thanks to the Lord our God our Lord God we thank you all the Lord for our heart and life for our homes and loved most for all his people and the people who give you God help all and thank you for giving your son to our Savior and friend may you all this honor of true joy and helping others to know for Jesus Christ let us bless the Lord the Lord bless us and keep us the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us the Lord look upon us with favor and grant us his peace amen during the last