

Who Is Jesus Christ

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 December 1985

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] There came a man who was sent from God, and his name was John.

He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light, he came only as a witness to the light, and the true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

[1 : 09] Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

I would like you to know that I am a man of some considerable importance.

I have a number of things which I can call as claims to fame. In fact, back in New Brunswick, I think there must be several people who know who I am.

I anticipate that one day Toronto is going to claim me as one of its native sons, and they're going to do the honorable thing.

And I expect that that will be something in the form of a statue. I have a number of things that I have seen.

[2 : 23] I have seen it in the form of a statue, and I can see it in myself sitting upon the white marble horse, with a sword held up high, and underneath the words in black Roman letter, Harry Robinson's brother.

You'll appreciate the fact that I have suffered more than usual during this past week. But I would like to say at the same time, it's been very nice to be here.

It's been very nice to be part of the mission and to see some of you and to meet some of you. I've been in British Columbia before, 27 years ago or 28 years ago.

I've been in Vancouver for a week. I've been in the past week this time, but I was here for about three months last time. And again, one of my claims to fame is the fact that I've probably seen more of British Columbia than many of you.

Because I had the privilege when I was here 27 years ago of serving on the Columbia Coast Mission. I visited most of the places between Vancouver and Victoria and Alert Day and almost everything in between.

[4 : 08] And I'm not sure how many people in British Columbia can make that kind of a claim. I have a claim. I have a claim. I have a claim.

I have traveled widely. But I have gone places other than British Columbia. I have a claim. But I have a claim.

I have a claim. That's not how you measure people. I'd like to share this with you from a book by Frank Laubach.

And I suspect probably that the name of Frank Laubach is known to many of you. He was a very famous man.

He died about 15 years ago. He is described as being one of the greatest educators of our time. He was Times Man of the Year.

[5 : 16] He wrote over 50 books. He did a wide number of things for which he might have won fame and for which he is well known.

At the beginning of the year 1930, he wrote this in his diary. Last year was a lonesome year.

In some ways, it was the hardest year of my life. There were few, if any, conspicuous achievements.

But, he said, there has been a succession of marvelous experiences of the presence of God.

The Apostle Paul wrote this.

[6 : 31] If anyone else thinks he has reason to put confidence in the flesh, I have more. I was circumcised in the eighth day.

I was of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin. I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. In regard to the law of Pharisee, as for zeal, persecuting of the church, as for legalistic righteousness, I was faultless.

In other words, what he's saying, if anybody would like to boast about their claims to fame, about who they are or where they have been, he says, I can out boast the best of you, because I have the best of all possible credentials.

He goes on and he says this. But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ. And that really is what Frank Laubach is saying.

[8 : 04] And that's what I want to talk to you about and what I want to challenge you about tonight and ask you to think with me about. Sheldon Van Elken won fame for a book entitled The Severe Mercy.

The Severe Mercy was a description of his going as a student to study in England, to study under C.S. Lewis, and in due course to become a Christian.

But before he wrote The Severe Mercy, which was the account of his becoming a Christian and of his wife's becoming a Christian and then of her death, he wrote a little book entitled Encounter with Light.

The Severe Mercy was a Christian and the Severe Mercy. And in that he said something that I think is tremendously important, something that I think will strike home to the hearts of many of us, and something that needs to be thought about.

The beginning of my conversion was, I suppose, the moment that I abandoned my childhood Christianity and became a small, fierce atheist.

[9 : 32] There seems to be in the lives of many rather thoughtful and independent persons, a progress of three steps.

First, abandonment, often rebellious of an imperfectly understood, childish Christianity, and then the second step of the world.

He said that he was held only on adult authority. He's talking about the steps for him of becoming a Christian. And the thing he said that came first was an abandonment of childish Christianity, which was held under parental authority.

Second, re-acceptance very gradually of many of the moral principles and some of the insights of Christianity.

And thirdly, conversion to the faith. But of course, each step may be one's last.

[10 : 47] In other words, we might get to step one and never get to step two. We might get to step one and two and never get to step three. Rebecca Tipper in her book, Out of the Salt Shaker, talks about meeting a professor on a plane.

And as they went on and as they talked and shared together, she told him something of her commitment to Jesus Christ. She said, she said, she said, she said, She said, she said, you know, as a child, I blindly accepted Christianity.

As an adult, I equally blindly rejected it. Let me read to you just a little bit from the third chapter of the Gospel according to St. John.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.

Sheldon Van Alken, if I may go back to him for a minute, says this. The necessity of this process is explained by the aphorism, to believe with certainty one must begin by doubting.

[12 : 34] And I suspect that Nicodemus, though he was a member of the Sanhedrin, though he was a Pharisee, though he was a ruling and a powerful Jew, there were some questions going around in his mind and in his heart.

He had been hearing reports and he had been hearing rumors about this man who was going about from town to town preaching and speaking and doing all kinds of very wonderful and very miraculous things.

But of course, also he was a proper, leading, religious figure and prominent person in the community.

So one night after supper, he went out for a walk. And as chance would have it, he suddenly found himself, I presume, in front of the home, where this preacher was staying.

He went in to speak to him. And as they sat down in the study together, face to face and eyeball to eyeball, he says to him, Rabbi, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform the miraculous signs you were doing if God were not with him.

[13 : 59] And in spite of his position and in spite of his power and presumably in spite of his wealth, Nicodemus had questions going around in his mind and he needed to have answers to those questions.

I don't know you very well. So I don't know who you are.

And I don't know where you are in your thinking. But I do know that in this world in which I live and in which you live, in one of the words in which we share, there are a lot of people with a lot of questions.

There are a lot of people who are in category one who have basically rejected the Christianity of their youth and the beliefs of their youth, but maybe they have not got to step two or to step three. I guess I would like to go back from that to the words that are in John's gospel right at the very beginning when John speaks and he says, I have come to bear testimony the fact that a light has come into the world and that light exists in the world today.

[15 : 31] I hope because you have taken some part in the mission, you have been hearing during the course of this morning's service or the services each night during the past week, you've been hearing people share and talk about the coming of light and the way that they have come into their lives.

And the eve of my departure for Vancouver, I went to visit an elderly lady in the hospital.

There was some considerable question as to whether she would be alive the next morning or the next day.

She had a long and hard life. She had lost one son to heart disease. She lost a daughter to cancer and they only had two children.

I came into her hospital room that night. She said to me, you know, I've never known the peace of God in my heart as I know it right now.

[16 : 47] I've never known the peace of God in my heart as I know it right now. I wondered a little bit and I wondered, well now I wonder why that is.

I wonder why she should be feeling as she does. Was it perhaps a prayer that I had said with her? Or maybe it was some of the medicines she'd taken.

Or maybe a long list of other things. Mary and I had the tremendous good fortune a few years ago to stand beside the bedside of a young mother who had very recently come into the light or into whose life the light had come.

She's a young mother, two, three lovely children, a good husband, wealthy, beautiful home.

She was to die the next morning of cancer. She said to those of us who were gathered around her bedside that night, she said, you know, if I were to have a choice between living the life that I used to live and dying with the peace that I now have, she said, I wouldn't have to hesitate a second as to which one I would choose.

[18 : 35] my shoes are very shiny.

They're very shiny because in our congregation there's a young man by the name of John and he comes into my office two or three times in the course of a week and usually once or twice in the course of that week he takes my shoes and he shines them.

And on this occasion because I was coming away he shined both my pairs of shoes. And I have walked through the slush and the snow of Calgary and Vancouver and Victoria during the past week and if you'd like to look at my shoes when you go out they're still shiny.

John is 30 years old. He's got an education to grade three. He has spent a good part of his life in prison.

And when we first knew him three or four years ago he carried a knife with him all the time 24 hours a day.

[20 : 07] He would come into my office and he would sit down across from me and he would tell me who he was going to murder. And how he was going to get his revenge on this person and that

person and the other person.

John isn't like that anymore. I suspect he probably knows his Bible better than most of us do. I suspect he probably prays more than most of us do. I suspect he probably has more passages of Scripture memorized than most of us do.

I think the thing that I would like to say to you in the context of all three of those little illustrations is that there is still among us one who is still performing the miraculous signs that he did of old. and whom like Nicodemus we need to come to we need to ask him and say to him who are you? [21 : 30] Because I want to assure you if I had used all the counseling knowledge I have gained in the years or others had if I had known everything there is known to know about medicines if I had known all the techniques of modern science I could not have done for any of those three people anything near the kind of things that were done in their lives there is only one person who can do that and that is the person and the character of Jesus Christ somebody during the course of this week I think it was probably my esteemed brother was mentioning Malcolm Muggeridge he is esteemed I assure you and Malcolm Muggeridge is a man who spent much of his life away from the church and opposed to the things of the church but in a little booklet called Another King which I believe was a sermon that he preached in Glasgow when he became proctor of the university there he talks about being in Israel with the CBC or BBC and making a film about the Holy Land and in the context of that film he says he together with others one or two others were walking along the road to Emmaus he said as it has happened before he said

I became conscious of the fact that there was somebody else walking with us and that's someone else who was walking with him and who has walked with many others down through the pages and down through all of time and history is the one Nicodemus came to that night and ask that question and ask that question he is the one of whom John speaks he came to that which was his own but his own did not receive him yet to all who did receive him to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God children born not of natural descent nor of human decision nor a husband's will but born of God

I don't know whether you ever think about what's going to be written on your tombstone and I don't suggest that you become morbid but I'd like you to think about what will be written down as a description of your life and I'd like to challenge you with that because you know we get caught up in very many things we get caught up in the busyness and we get caught up in the world of this life we get running so far and so fast that we forgot where it was we were going and why it is we were running and some of us would have to look back over a trail of 5 and 10 and 15 and 20 and 25 and 30 years and look way back and say well now why was it I started all this anyway somewhere along the way we got lost somehow somewhere along the way we've never really resolved the most critical question of all time and the most critical question for us of all time is who is Jesus Christ He was into his He He das He das He Teller Never to Him He to