

There is Reason To Take Heart

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: 12 October 1994

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] Well, I haven't said anything important yet, so I... You know, I see you as coming out of your private world into this situation, being resentful if anybody intrudes upon your private world while you are here, and then when it's over, retreating to your private world.

And I would like to think that somehow we can break that down. And somehow we can understand what it is that we're doing here.

I... You know, the scripture tells me very clearly that life is like a flower that blooms, and then the wind comes, and the flower fades, and it's done.

Or it tells you like you're a puff of mist in the morning that's there momentarily, and then it's gone. Now, most of us have a higher opinion of ourselves than that, and think of ourselves as a more permanent building block in the whole history of civilization.

But that probably comes fairly close to the truth. But we have this... I mean, I have this enormously inflated ego that I have to live with, and it's very difficult.

[1 : 21] And I know you can be sympathetic because you have the same problem in your own way. Probably you handle it better. So that part of the function of this noon on Wednesday is to totally deflate your ego and mine.

So that we will recognize that our relationship to God is not on the basis of his being impressed with who we are, but of our becoming very impressed with who he is, and recognizing in our deflated condition the reality of his love for us.

So that's the first thing that we have to do. The second is to get our egos deflated so that we can stand in a right relationship. Not where we look at God to pass judgment on him, but where we're happy to submit ourselves to his judgment on us because that we know of his love and mercy.

The second thing I'd like to tell you is that your mind is much too small to really deal with what we're talking about here on Wednesdays.

Now what I mean by that is it's sort of, I thought the illustration of you going up in a little half-ton pickup truck to a massive mansion, knocking at the door and telling the lady of the house that you've come to move her furniture.

[2 : 49] You couldn't possibly get it all on board, the tiny truck that you brought. And so we very much need each other, that it takes all the saints to comprehend the length, the depth, the breadth, the height, and to know the love of God which passes knowledge.

So that we have to be reminded of the littleness of our minds, and that we can only grasp a very small bit, and that we need one another to help accommodate the reality of all that God has for us, and that our minds are so incapable of handling.

I see my job here as being kind of like a yapping terrier, that I get up like a small dog and bark at you for 20 minutes or half an hour on a Wednesday, but in the same way that a terrier might bark to tell you that the house is on fire.

So that even though he's only yapping, he's doing a very important service. If you can come to grips with the reality of which he's trying to tell you. Listening to me yap may just be irritating to you, but if you can see what I'm yapping about, then you'll find it extremely worthwhile.

And this is where my ego problem comes in, because I go away here often on a Wednesday feeling very depressed and discouraged and downhearted and saying, I failed.

[4 : 28] But then what did I expect? I would inevitably fail anyway, because to leave you impressed with what I have to say would be like that small dog thinking that you'd be impressed with his barking and wanted to hear some more.

The other thing that I think is important about this thing that happens here on Wednesday and for which I am trying to solicit your involvement and support and commitment is that I think we live in a

city where investment dealers can talk to investment dealers, engineers can talk to engineers, doctors can talk to doctors, bankers can talk to bankers, but for the most part when they come to talk to each other they have nothing to say, which is of any significance.

I mean you can talk about the Canucks, but what's there to talk about? Yes. So it's from the scriptures and from that ancient book, if you want, that you learn a language in which you can talk to other people about the most profound realities in your life.

That's what it's for. And most of us, when we come to that, are tongue-tied. We don't know what to say to one another. We probably are very articulate in the language which concerns the business we're in, but we can't talk to anybody outside that business about it because they don't understand the language.

Here you're learning the language of our most basic humanity, and that has to do with our relationship to God and God's relationship to us.

[6 : 30] So in a sense, it gives you the opportunity to communicate so that you have a language in which to communicate. And I have a...

Talking to another person, scripture teaches us how to talk to one another across all the language barriers that our culture imposes on us.

I... This advertisement shocked me. It's Calvin Klein.

I think it's depraved almost to the point of being demonic. I mean, you can look at it, but there it is. I'll pass it around so you can get a closer look at it. Imagine what would happen if a church put an ad on there saying, Youth worker wanted.

Here's the youth. And you look at it, and you'll see how language is broken down. How would you begin to talk to a group of people like that? I mean, those kids to me in that picture look so totally screwed up that it would be almost impossible to say anything to them.

[7 : 44] And that's what's happening in our society as a whole, is that we're breaking down into tiny groups that can talk to each other, but nobody can talk across the barriers that we're creating.

And you are in a ghettoized world of their own where nobody can talk to them. I came across, you know, in an editorial in Harper's Magazine.

This is the second Harper's I've ever talked in my life. But it had this statement at the beginning of the lead editorial in this month's Harper's Magazine.

And I thought this was a brilliant picture of our world. He quotes a fellow who goes by the name of E.A. Robinson, whom I gather was a poet who won Pulitzer Prizes early in this century.

But what he said about our world was this. Now listen to it. He said, this world is not a prison house, as you might imagine.

[8 : 57] He said, it's a kind of spiritual kindergarten where millions of bewildered infants are trying to spell God with the wrong blocks.

I thought that was a brilliant, brilliant picture of our world. Millions of bewildered infants trying to spell God with the wrong blocks.

That kind of frustration is right at the heart of our culture and of our society. May you drop your mic. Yes, well, if you hear something that sounds like my digestive system, you'll know what part of it that is.

So, that is a rather elaborate introduction, but I wanted you to really think about this most important event in Vancouver in any given week.

But I also wanted you to think about your participation and involvement in it because I think your place in it is quite as important as mine.

[10 : 30] only you're not liable to realize that and I'm liable to forget it. So, I'd like you to get on to that. Now, I want just to take the time that's left to be very specific about the text because I think the text, in a sense, is a kind of parallel situation in which Jesus is talking to his disciples and he's talking to them about, I mean, on the eve of his own crucifixion.

I mean, this brings you to the end of chapter 16. Chapter 17 is Jesus praying. Chapter 18 begins with Judas betraying Jesus into the hands of the authorities.

So, you see that this comes at this sort of poignant moment in the epistle or in the gospel of John. and what he says here, what the disciples say to Jesus, he says, they say in effect, Jesus, you've made a breakthrough.

Now, you are speaking clearly and without figure of speech. Now, they go on, we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions.

this makes us believe that you came from God. You see, what the disciples have been going on about and on about and on about and you can trace this through the gospel is that they really couldn't understand what it is, Jesus, that you're getting at?

[12:15] What is it that you're trying to tell us? How do you expect us to understand? Why do you talk in parables? Why do you use figures of speech? And basically, the reason he does is because their truck is too small and what he wants to put in it is too big.

And that's where we get, that's where the confusion comes from and why we need one another to help comprehend the nature of this. But now, there's been a kind of breakthrough and Jesus has said to them that which makes them say you're speaking clearly without figures of speech in verse 30.

29 in verse 30 he says, now we know all things that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. Suddenly, it becomes clear in this makes us believe that you came from God.

I mean, I've used this illustration before but I remember reading in a scientific journal of some kind where they were talking about doing an article on the eye and saying that all that modern medicine knows about the eye is 5% of what could be known about it.

Well, you can think of all the wonders that they can do with eyesight now and realize that the people who are in the field recognize that 95% of what's going on there they don't know and don't understand.

[13:49] So where are we with respect to the kingdom of God? At best, we can perhaps have just a tiny grasp of something of the reality of something which goes way beyond our knowing.

Like when you get to the end of John's gospel and he says, you know, I don't suppose that the book could ever be built that would contain all that there is to be known about the reality of Jesus and his purpose in the world.

So you get that in verse 30. But then Jesus comes back and talks to them. You see in verse 31 and he says he says to them, you are experiencing a moment of faith.

He's not saying you've now got it. It's all yours. It's there on your desk in your lap. It now belongs to you. He says, no, all you're doing at this moment is having a kind of eureka experience.

Ah, I see. Suddenly the disciples were given a glimpse of what it was all about. They didn't really understand it in any, and Jesus knew they didn't understand it fully.

[15:10] But they got a glimpse. And of course, I think probably in terms of this life, we never get to the place where we fully know.

Now we, well now we know in part, as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13, we only know a little bit. But it's those glimpses of a transcendent reality that goes beyond the comprehension of our minds altogether that the disciples had.

Now they suddenly saw that Jesus, well, look at it in verse, what they said. We believe that you came from God.

Jesus, in a sense, says to them, well, you know, to quote a friend, if that's all you know, you don't know much. You know, but for them, from Jesus' point of view, they hadn't really grappled it, but they had caught it.

And most of you, I trust, and certainly I feel, that I live on the basis of having caught a glimpse of the reality of the kingdom.

[16:20] And I live in the faith that that kingdom will come. God's will will be done. And that he is the source of life, and he is the one who has overcome death, and all that is just, it's just a glimpse of the reality which is so much bigger than, than we can comprehend.

So Jesus commends them and says, you believe at last. You, you, you've at least got to this point where you have, you've got a vision of what it's all about. And he commends them for that.

But then he says, you know, but the time is coming, you know, it's, hours away when you will be scattered, each one to his own home, and you will leave me alone.

You will retreat again into your own private world. You will abandon me. And you know how, you know, if God in his grace was to give you in this half hour a glimpse of the reality of his kingdom, you know that by the time you got back to your office, it would have evaporated.

And that's the way he was talking to them. And that's, that's in a sense the danger. But as he talks to them, listen how he deals with this.

[17:40] He says, you're experiencing a moment of faith which is good in itself, but it's not everything. And very shortly in verse 32 he says to them, you will retreat to your own private world

and you will abandon me.

Which would be devastating news to them because they, they, you know, they were still at the kind of bravery stage, you know, where they were, they were prepared to, as Peter expressed it in all his impulsiveness, he said, if, if, you know, no matter what happens, I will be loyal.

And within minutes or hours he was denying Christ. but, but Jesus says that's not just true for Peter, that's true for all of you. You will abandon, you will retreat into your own private world and you will abandon me.

And what, one of the things we need from one another is real help in helping us not to retreat into our private world, not to, to retreat into our introspective pondering, but to hold on to and be held on to by the reality of God's purpose in Christ which we have glimpsed in the scriptures.

He said, you will leave me alone. And yet he says to them, yet, I'm not alone. Your desertion of me, your failure with respect to me does not mean that I am left alone.

[19 : 14] Do you see how he says that so eloquently? in verse 32 at the end, my father is with me. Your desertion of me does not mean that I will be deserted because my father is with me.

And then he brings it to a conclusion when he says to them, you know, in the last verse he says, the last part of the last verse, I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace.

Now, it's fascinating to me that in one verse he tells them, you're going to desert me. He says that clearly and categorically and he means every one of them and as facts turned out, that's what happened.

He meant every one of them. You will leave me alone. I've told you this. Why? So that you may have peace. Now, that's strange, isn't it?

Would you find it a peaceful thing to be told that all your idealism and all your aspiration and all your longing and all your desire and all your ego inflated ambition was going to count for nothing?

[20 : 38] That it would break down completely? And Jesus would say to you, at the point where that happens to you, remember that I told you it would happen.

And having told you it would happen, I want you, I told you that so that you will have peace. In other words, you will have, when you've come to the end of your own resources, the reality of my commitment to you, which won't break.

You will have peace. My peace I give unto you. This is from me to you. In the midst of your abandoning me, in the midst of your disappointment and discouragement and failure and pessimism and depression and all those kinds of things, my relationship to you hasn't broken. When all your pride and arrogance about the high road of spirituality which you walk has been ripped out from under you, the reality of Christ's relationship to you is still there.

At that moment of your most complete failure, Jesus says to them, I'm telling you that you're going to do it in order that you may have peace.

[21 : 57] And then he goes on to explain it to them as best he can. he says the nature of this world is that you will have trouble. You will be constantly under the assault of trouble.

That is the way the world will work. And it will hit you intellectually so that you will struggle with your doubts. It will hit you emotionally so that you will struggle with your feelings.

It will hit you relationally so that you will try and understand how you relate to people and what happens. All these things will happen. I've told you because you have to sort of stand back when you say it.

But the wonderful Greek word for this in the world you will have flips us. And it's this real stress which is the constant hallmark of the world in which we live.

That's the nature of our relationship to our world. It's that it produces flips us. Trouble at every level. What he says, remember that when you encounter that you are to take heart.

[23 : 14] There is reason to take heart. And the reason that we have to take heart is the last words which Jesus says, I have overcome the world.

The great force in your life is not the world. The great force in your life is the reality of God's love for you revealed in Jesus Christ by whom the power of the world is overcome and broken so that it can no longer hold you or me.

And that's the focus of our trust and of our faith. that's where it is to be. And when he says it, take heart, I have overcome the world.

You see, do you know what happens all the way through this chapter and all the way leading up to this moment? And we did it two weeks ago, I think we talked about it.

for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross. He already was possessed of the joy that was set before him.

[24 : 37] That was the great thing. The depravity and blindness and cruelty of the cross which anybody would have to see as totally overwhelming.

Jesus saw it only in terms of the joy that was set before him. The joy of the triumph which in God's name he was to accomplish by submitting himself to death on a cross.

and it's he that says to you in this world you will have the cross but be of good cheer I have overcome the world and that's what he has for us.

Let me just pray for a minute. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, we thank you for the magnificence of the city in which we live, the country in which we live, the times in which we live, the tremendous challenge of them.

And we confess to you the trouble and agony and hardship that's there on every hand. And yet, and the fact that we are so capable of abandoning you, of abandoning you, even at the moment when we think we know and understand it all as the disciples did, and then the next moment abandon you.

[26 : 23] Thank you that in this world, your promise is very clear that we are to be of good cheer, to take heart, because, peace, and to know your peace, the peace you had in facing the cross, and the peace that can be ours in facing our situations.

We have your peace, we have reason to take heart, and we have reason for confidence in the fact that you have overcome the world. Help each of us to be grasped by this, and then not to let go. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.