

You Are Not Trapped

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[0 : 00] Well, I just got back from sort of three weeks in Southern Carolina, and they know who they are down there.

If you ask them their name, they give you their name. Their first name, their middle name, their last name, and junior, or the third, or whatever it is like that. They are very positive. There's an awful habit, I think, in our society of when you ask somebody's name and they say, My name's Peter, and as though I had no forebears and expect no descendants, I am just a unique event that has happened in the history of the world named Peter.

And it may be that we have trouble dealing with our background and dealing with our origins and all those things that we, in this modern, up-to-date society, the only thing we use is our first name, and lots of the most famous among us choose another name because they don't even want to be identified with the name that they have.

People like movie stars and stuff like that. So it was interesting to be down there and to see congregations of third and fourth and fifth and sixth and even seventh generations in one family who have been in one area going to one church.

The black population has not been assimilated in that area. We saw a huge, big high school that was the center of controversy during the days when they were trying to put the schools together, and it was a white school, and the blacks came into it.

[1 : 34] Now it's almost totally black, and the whites have gone off to private schools. But it's just interesting. I mean, this is just to build up to what I'm going to say about John, so I'll get there.

But I wanted you to sort of think about some of these things that I've experienced. They talk about the Christian faith in the paper a lot of times, and they talk about that the problems in our society started when they stopped saying prayers in school.

You know, that's front page article on the local paper. I can, nobody would say that. Well, supposing we ever had newspapers.

It doesn't seem likely that anybody would say that. And I can't, I've got to share with you this great line from, you know, in looking at the Christian right, and it's, and it's, uh, uh, did you see, did you see this?

I like, I thought this was really quite clever. I don't know whether it's brilliant or not, but it was quite, quite clever that the, the Christian right has become the Christian light.

[2 : 53] Like beer, sort of thinned down, uh, and not really dealing with what is essentially there.

Two things that I want to do today from the passage that you have in front of you, and, uh, and I want to do it bearing in mind that, uh, that, uh, these are the dark days, aren't they?

I mean, it's dark by five o'clock, it's raining all day, and, uh, this is, uh, the seasonal affective disorder takes hold of us, and we become depressed and discouraged and downhearted, and you go to meetings, and people need really to go home and have a rest, not to come to a meeting.

And, uh, it's that time of year, and so we need something to help, uh, revive and renew us. And, uh, I had a kind of reviving experience the other day.

I ran into a citizen of this great city of Vancouver who told me the most dramatic thing possible about his own relationship to God, that great events had taken place, that, that God, he said, I had a collision at the corner of, uh, King Edward and Oak Street.

[4 : 14] But it wasn't a collision with a car, it was a collision with God. God hit him like that. And he suddenly was aware of the whole fullness and love and grace and mercy of God in a highly experiential way, you know.

And when I meet somebody like that, I feel terribly rational and terribly cerebral and terribly sort of logical and mathematical, and think, oh, wouldn't it be great if there was just one great experience

around which I could build all this, and then, but then I don't know.

That's one of the great things that you notice, uh, in our Christian faith at the moment, that some of it is very positively experience-centered, and, uh, and some of it is, uh, knowledge-centered.

And you get, you get these two things in competition with one another when I think they probably badly need each other. But these are, these are the dark days, and, uh, the, uh, it's nice that, uh, that, that there is a kind of foreboding about Christmas coming and our being unprepared for it, and the idea of this, I, I'm mad at being politically correct today.

They, they are fairly scornful of that idea down there, and I, and I look hurt because the future of Canada depends upon our learning to be politically correct.

[5 : 43] May God have mercy on us. Uh, but it's a, it's a, it's a strange. I, I feel a bit guilty when I say things like that because I know there's a lot of sincere and honest, hardworking, thoughtful people who advocate being politically correct, but if someone could explain it to me so that it sounds like something more than a kind of new secular religious legalism, I would love to hear about it because I have trouble with it.

Well, those are the things into which we now want to, I want to look at one subject, which is, uh, the glory of God. Look at it in the passage.

It, it says it in the last verse if you look there. I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

Now, uh, to see my glory. Glory is, it's got to be an almost totally religious word, isn't it?

I mean, uh, I looked it up in the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations and appropriately enough it said that the, the, the quote, two of the quotations which, of the three or four that are there which use the word glory, uh, uh, referred to Dunkirk.

[7 : 11] And, uh, it said, uh, it said about them that, uh, that that was, uh, that was a glorious experience in the, in the, uh, in the life of, in the history of the world.

J.B. Priestley wrote, our great-grandchildren, when they learn how we began this war by snatching glory out of defeat, they also learn how the little holiday steamers made an excursion to hell and came back glorious.

You know, the, the, the idea of glory seems to come from the impact of the almost overwhelming power of evil and darkness encroaching on us.

And that it, it, it, it's power and authority cannot be questioned. And it moves in on us. And right from the midst of it there comes out something that is able to withstand all the powers of darkness. And that is a demonstration of glory. So that Jesus, on the eve of his crucifixion, says, in prayer for his disciples, that, that verse, Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because, before you, before the creation of the world, because you loved me and before the creation of the world.

[8 : 44] So somehow, glory comes out. You remember that Jacob wrestled with God and he saw, he, he, he, he saw the face of God.

You remember Isaiah said, I beheld the Lord high and lifted up and his train filled the temple. You remember the story of the transfiguration where Christ was, and Moses and Elijah were transformed before their eyes and shone with a brightness greater than the brightness of the sun. it was, that this, this sense of glory, the, the presence of God was marked among the people of God by the, by the cloud that preceded them by day and the pillar of fire by night.

And this was not God, this was a vision of the glory of God. We, nobody has seen God at any time, but we can see his glory.

glory. And, Stephen Neal says that when, when the, when they talk about a cloud, they're not talking about the kind of clouds that cover Vancouver right now.

[9 : 52] They're talking about one of those towering, massive, cumulus clouds. Is that the right name? That go up and up and up and up and reduce the mountains to just little molehills at the, at the base of them.

These huge things that are completely suffused with the light of the sun. That is glory. That is the demonstration of glory. That's a picture of what glory is.

So it's, it's something which breaks through and you see the glory of God. And Jesus on the eve of his crucifixion says of the, that his prayer to the Father is that those who have been given to him will see my glory.

The glory you have given me. The world had not seen it. He had performed miracles, he had taught, he had done all sorts of things and the world had not seen it.

Our world has not seen it by and large. They consider Jesus to be one among many and they have never seen in him the demonstration of the glory of God.

[11 : 03] and when we, they haven't seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. That's the, the, the demonstration of the glory of God is the overwhelming powers of darkness that come in and close in on him and he is crucified and remember there is darkness at noon and he is nailed to the cross and he gives up his spirit and his limp dead body is taken down from the cross and laid in a tomb.

And the glory of God is that he is raised from the dead and that people will see the glory of God in what happens to Jesus Christ.

So you get, you get that, you get that sense of glory as being something that really is important and that we need to see and the glory ultimately I think has to refer to God because it's too big a word for anything we can do.

We do associate it with you know occasionally on a cenotaph you'll hear about the glorious dead those who gave their life for their country and that they fought an overwhelming darkness and that they won a victory against that darkness.

But that is in a sense extrapolated I think from the life of Christ in his fight against the darkness and his overcoming it and that people would see that.

[12 : 53] Well that's one word that's in this passage. Another word that's in this passage that I'd like you to look at is in verse 21 you see that all of them may be one Father just as you are in me and I am in you may they also be in us.

and it seems to be the word unity that there may be that they may be one and I've thought a lot about that word because you know no Christian I think can do anything but cringe when people outside the church talk about the startling disunity of Christians you know that Baptists can't talk to Anglicans who can't talk to Catholics who can't talk to Presbyterians who can't talk to the United Church who can't talk to the Fundamentals who can't talk and on and on it goes and there doesn't seem to be any profound unity and and we have seen noble attempts to try and bring churches together to bring Christians together to try and create some kind of organizational institutional structure in which Christians can be obviously and apparently at one with one another that that unity would be there and you know that if you are honest about yourself that you are very particular about who you will associate with

I certainly am a Christian but I'm not that kind of a Christian or I'm not that kind of a Christian and we go on with that all the time in a sense giving expression to the fact that we don't know how this unity works or what it is and it would seem to me that in a world that is so hopelessly divided as our world is by ethnic groups and cultural diversity and all the things that divide us I mean it's harder to see what's happening in your own backyard but it's there in the same way but being in South Carolina and seeing how totally separated the black and white cultures are they don't go to church together they don't go to school together the idea of intermarriage it just is a shock to even think about it that nobody would sort of venture to stay in those parts if that took place that there is a tremendous diversity between people that they cannot seem to get together to establish some kind of unity and yet you have you have

Jesus asking that or in a sense teaching that that unity is meant to be there so if you think about these two words unity which is very much part of this passage and glory which is where this passage points to as it on the eve of the crucifixion then watch what happens in the passage if you will it works like this my prayer is not for them alone and them alone is those who have come to believe in him those who are his disciples for whom he had prayed in the previous part of this prayer in John chapter 17 my prayer is not for them alone I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message so Jesus is anticipating those who will come to believe through the proclamation of the gospel which is the message which is preached by the disciples those who encountered

Jesus personally who were taught by him who were witnesses to his death and to his resurrection who were present for the when the Holy Spirit came upon them then they were to go out with the message and the result of proclaiming that message is that people would come to believe in him and Jesus anticipates that when he says I'm not praying for those just my disciples but I'm praying for those who will believe in me through their message that is the the chosen means by which we

are the primary means by which we are to encounter God it's I I feel narrow fundamentalist conservative and when I say this but I'll say it and so that you can interpret it you see what what seems to me to be taught here inescapably is that the proclamation of the message of who [17 : 52] Jesus is and what he has done in the light of the teachings about him in the scripture the proclamation of the message is the way that the world comes to believe that's how it happened now most people would prefer to have some kind of more aesthetic experience on a mountaintop or in a woods or some kind of something that was a more romantic thing I mean I perhaps told you of my own almost conversion when as a youth of eighteen I walked home from church one night and it was a beautiful starlit night and it was the frost was there in the air and it was sort of crystal clear and I knelt down in the middle of a field and I asked God to come into my it didn't work it did subsequently

I want you to know but in a sense to try and state the terms on which you come to faith in Christ it is somehow hearing and believing the message it is a very mundane process but that is how it was going to happen he said that Jesus prayed for those who will believe in me through the message of the disciples that all of them may be one father just as you are in me and I am in you may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me so I mean I don't know if I can get this down here or not but if you were to consider that figuratively that this is God the father that God the father sent the son into the world to die for the world that this group here are the disciples who were taught by

Jesus they in turn gave the message to this group here who are those who came to believe through the message down through the age so you get the father the son the disciples proclaiming the message this group here and then that leads to the whole world knowing and understanding now that's what Jesus says is what he prays is going to happen and that what happens is that the unity and the indwelling of the father in the son and the son in the father is going to be true in terms of the disciples being indwelt by Christ and dwelling in Christ than those who come to believe being indwelt by Christ and being in unity with one another because of Christ's indwelling presence with them and then so that the world may come to know what the Christian faith is and I don't think it's being defensive to say that the big problem for the world in terms of the Christian faith is that they haven't any idea what it's about they've heard all sorts of slogans about it and all sorts of ideas about it they've heard all the bad press that the church has gathered over the centuries but they don't know what is at the heart they haven't experienced the unity or the indwelling presence or the reality of the love which the father has for the son and the son demonstrated to the disciples this love so that it went down so the world doesn't know that and here is Jesus preparing on the eve of his crucifixion he's going through that with them to warn them or to explain to them that that is what's happening that my prayer is not for them alone I pray for those who will believe in me through their message that all of them may be one father as you and I you are in me and

I am in you may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me that the world is spoken of in three ways in this passage in this way the world is to come to believe that this is the one whom God has sent the second thing it says about the world is in verse 23 that the world know that you sent me and have and that God loved the world even as God loved Jesus so that the reality of the relationship between God and the world is one of that they may know that God has revealed his glory in the person of Jesus Christ and that God's love for Jesus is the basis of his relationship to the whole world now that's

[23 : 09] I mean that's very it's very sort of kind of summarily presented to you but you see the way that it works and that's what Jesus is saying to them or not saying to them but saying in his prayer that he wants he prays of the father you see and when you go on to verse 22 he says I have given them the glory that you gave me that they may be one as we are one so that you see the glory of God in Jesus Christ you see Jesus conferring his glory on those who believe in him so that the world will see the glory of God in terms of the people who believe in him that they will not see the you know they'll not see the dignity and the achievement and the technical accomplishments of man but they will see in human beings the glory of

God now what I think has to happen here and the place where I think we are why can't Christians talk to Jews why can't Catholics talk to Baptists why can't black people talk to white people why can't people from this culture relate to people from this culture why is there this constant fragmentation going on why is it always blowing apart and we are you know that there is a negative

charge that sends us away from one another why can't two human beings sharing a sort of similar point in time in the history of the world talk about the things that matter most to them why can't you talk to people about the church why can't you talk to people about God why can't you talk about who this person Jesus is he doesn't belong to us he belongs to history he belongs to the history of the world he is he is the one whom we believe the one in whom the love of God is demonstrated why can't we cross these barriers and talk to why do we keep gravitating towards like minded people in like situations all the time why can't we break out of that why doesn't that happen and you know it becomes kind of critically important in our society that this should happen but you know and God I think has given us the stewardship of a priceless spiritual heritage in the history of the church and even in the history of the divisions in the church but somehow there seems to be at some level a kind of unity which should make it possible for us to speak to one another at some depth and I don't know why and I wonder about it and I wonder how it relates to that

I think one of the reasons is that most people consider orthodox Christian faith to belong to something to somebody about a thousand years ago that is hopelessly out of date it's not right up to date but it's not that at all the problem with Christian faith is it's hopelessly beyond where we are when that tragic shooting took place in Vancouver yesterday and people came on the radio and said this should not happen in Vancouver why shouldn't it you know it's because we're perhaps idealistic about our country but that there are basic problems beyond which we need to grow as a people there's something far greater meant for us and I think that's what that's what's being said here when Jesus prays and says

I pray read it again I pray for those who will believe in me through the message of those who have believed in me that all who come to believe in me may be one father just as you are in me and I am in you that this indwelling reality may be the basis of their experience that you find Christ in someone and you have fellowship with them not on not even on the basis of language sometimes not on the basis of culture or race or any of those things but that the reality of the oneness which belongs to those who have come to believe in Christ is something you experience in your relationship to one another we need somehow to break out of it oh Canadians look terribly conservative after you've been in South Carolina they are so hospitable and so kind and every waitress that comes to serve you at the table makes out she's your first cousin and that she's the best friend you ever had and it's a lovely thing because they're so wonderfully hospitable and Canadians feel very cold and restrained and withdrawn by comparison so warm it up you people but that that barrier of why we can't talk about it why we can't you know what what what is it that we're afraid of and I think

[29 : 12] Jesus is addressing that when he says that all of them may be one father as you are in me and I am in you may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me now you don't it's not you don't have to convince the world of it all you have to do is tell them we only have to get the message out so that the world can see what it is that God has done for us in Christ and I you mean what our society is trying to get us to do is to put all our religions behind all our Christian faith all our institutional life as Christians within denominations to dismiss all that and to come together on the basis of I suppose our materialistic technological secular reality but we find we have very little to say to each other then so we just sit down and watch television and it's that strange thing that we don't experience that profound oneness and just again in verse 22

I have given them the glory that you gave me that they may be one as we are one and it's a I mean even again to quote South Carolina I mean the culture was very different the language was very different the values were very different and when I get down into the United States I hope there's no Americans here right but they all look like they come from either the movies or from television shows I've seen you know that they all belong to that and I have this feeling that they're you know that they're living out a play like I've seen in the movies or in the television and that everything's going to work out for them in the most wonderful way it's hard to realize that they are real people living real lives the cultural difference I mean I don't know what they thought of me but that was one of the problems but when you get beyond that to the place where you're praying together and talking together and worshipping together and sharing faith together then the bonding takes place you begin to realize that across the cultural and all the other things that humanly speaking divide us there is a profound reality in terms of faith in

Christ and so it goes on to say that the world is it's going to learn by this who the father is and then Jesus ends this passage by saying I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world you see you can't people need to come to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ now you can't make that happen but it can happen and once it has happened then you can in a sense never go back on it because you suddenly realize that there is something more here there is something of the reality of God the father who has loved the son and that God has revealed his glory primarily in the person of Jesus

Christ the whole of creation is as far as I can see an unsigned painting nobody knows who did it but the one who did it has put his name to the life death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to make himself known in that and in him we are to see his glory let me pray our God the words of this passage go far beyond our minds our intelligence our imagination to a concept of your glory an experience of your love and an underlying unity which we haven't really touched yet and so we ask that as Jesus prayed this prayer for us that you will answer among us this prayer of our Lord Jesus that we may see your glory that we may know your indwelling love and presence with us and that we may find the unity with one another to which we are called in Jesus Christ amen of how faith