

Hear The Preaching Of The Good News

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[0 : 00] Our God and Father, take from before us the illusion of our great riches and reveal to us the reality of our great poverty. We might count ourselves as those poor to whom the good news is preached.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Recently I was given by a member of the congregation a copy of Fortune magazine which had on the front of it the shining countenance of that man who was labeled the top entrepreneur in the whole of the United States.

The story inside of his computer business and the tremendous personal wealth that he has accumulated by the diligence with which he's gone about the work.

It all began apparently when he was asked by the minister to be the superintendent of the Sunday school in Park Road Church in Boston, Massachusetts.

[1 : 24] I tell you that only to let you know that we have some openings in our Sunday school. That's only part of the reason I told you, but I just wanted to, I couldn't miss that.

This week I was given an article from Atlantic Monthly, which is very much on the subject of our text this morning from the Gospel.

On the front page of the Atlantic Monthly is a picture of Jesus Christ. And the lead article this month is, Who do men say that I am?

There is the terrible possibility, you see, I should say the awful possibility, that when history is all rolled up and the total accumulation of scientific and technical achievement has been measured, the great empires have been explored, the pinnacles of cultural achievement have been wrecked, civilizations have been examined as they come and go, that the man who preached the good news to the poor, Jesus Christ, his life, and his death, and his resurrection, may very well prove to be the greatest event in the whole of the history of this planet.

Now, if you ask the question in Vancouver, Who do men say that I am? the probable answer is, who cares?

[3 : 33] This week you may have seen the film on television on the, her imperial highness, the princess, Anastasia, who spent the whole of her life trying to prove who she was.

People were not prepared to conceive the reality of who she was. If, in fact, she was, who she claimed to be. It's a fascinating story.

And in our city, and our society at the moment, equally futile seems to be the claim that Jesus Christ makes to be honored as the one who proclaims the good news of a kingdom.

In comparison to which, all the cultural and scientific and political achievements of our whole history will ultimately pale into insignificance.

The article in Atlantic Monthly says that in the past 20 years, more books have been written on the subject of Jesus than in the past 2,000 years.

[4 : 57] The intent of the article is basically to tell us a very novel event is taking place in our century. And that is that Roman Catholic scholarship has suddenly turned on the Bible.

And many of the eminent biblical scholars are now Roman Catholics. Like those previous Roman Catholics, John Calvin, Martin Luther, Thomas Cranmer, they're having some difficulty with the establishment.

But it used to be the business of Anglicanism, I think, to be close to the forefront of biblical scholarship. It's not there anymore, nor does it seem to want to be.

And I think we are very much impoverished by that. But inevitably, we will be very much enriched by the results of biblical scholarship.

Because God's word does not return to him void. Anybody who takes it seriously can't help, but that their life should be heavily impacted by that event.

[6 : 21] So, that's where we live. Perhaps we're fortunate in Vancouver in that we must be down almost to the last dregs of those who will go to church on Sunday morning.

There's not many left. the question which Jesus puts to the people who went out into the wilderness to hear John the Baptist.

He says to them, what did you go out into the wilderness to hear? Go out to see a reed shaken in the wind, a man clothed in soft raiment.

what did you go out to hear? It's long been my ambition to have enough nerve to do what I'm going to do now without very much sensibility at all.

That is, to make that question applicable to you right here and right now. To ask you, what did you come to church this morning? I'd like to give you three minutes while we all are quiet and answer that question.

[7 : 40] John the Baptist said, what did you go out or Jesus said, what did you go out into the wilderness to hear? John the Baptist is the one they went out to hear.

What did they expect? What did your wildest dream be true? Your deepest longing was realized. what did you even came face to face with what it is that you want to put first in your life? Could you do it?

I want you to look at the passage of Scripture this morning. But as those who first heard it, I want you to do what they did and that is answer Jesus' question.

What did you come to this place on this morning before? I want you just to be quiet for three minutes and try and answer that question in the quiet of your own heart.

[8 : 40] The question will remain your secret. But I want you to ask yourself that question. Could we then just be quiet for those three minutes?

You may find those three minutes very long. But the reason is that I spend so much time up here it seems to me speaking to you and preaching at you.

Yet I'm sure that there are things you need to preach to yourself. There are questions you need to hear from your own heart and to take those questions very seriously.

Jesus calls John the Baptist the greatest man born and woman up to his time and until the coming of the kingdom which Jesus announced.

But John the Baptist had to spend a lot of time in the silence of his dungeon cell under arrest and awaiting as it turned out his own execution.

[9 : 58] He asked Jesus in the midst of that he asked Jesus the great question are you he that should come or do we look for another?

Because John the Baptist was familiar with that passage in Micah in Malachi chapter 3 in verse 1 where it says behold I send my messenger to prepare thy way the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.

That one who was to come was very much on John the Baptist's mind that he wanted to know if Jesus was the one who was to come.

so Jesus answers that question he answers it in a with a kind of collection of things some of which we've read in our in our Bible readings today he answered the disciples of John and told them that they were to go back to John and tell him what you hear and see these were the things that they were to see in the ministry of Jesus that the blind receive their sight the lame walk lepers are cleansed the deaf hear the dead are raised up and the poor have good news preached to them blessed is he who takes no offense at me.

we would perhaps here prefer Jesus to say that the secret cancer has been found and we can heal it spinal cords can be repaired the medicine for AIDS has been discovered the handicapped have been set free we might hear it better then but all those words whether it's AIDS cancer spinal cords handicaps blind lame leper deaf or dead raised all those are prefixes or prelude to the essential activity of the Christ the essential work of

[12 : 34] Christ and that was that the poor should have the gospel preached to them all those in a sense were signs of that one central activity that the poor should have the gospel preached to them you see that's what we are meant to be as a parish we're meant to be a community of the poor who can hear the gospel you know somewhere in one of the ancient manuscripts which is purported to be a record of this gospel you know want to know how the list goes it says the blind see the lame

walk the lepers are cleansed the deaf hear the rich are made poor the dead are raised up and I tell you that because because it seems to be the considered opinion of New

Testament scholars that when it talks about the gospel being preached to the poor it's not primarily talking about people who are destitute it's talking essentially about people who recognize their need may in fact be talking about us as a congregation and the central reality of the presence of the kingdom is that we should be a community of those who are poor and yet hear the good news of the kingdom the supreme difficulty that we have is that the illusion of our will deafens us to the hearing that we need so desperately we can't hear and yet the good news of the kingdom is there to be heard now corroborating the good news of the kingdom and the preaching of that good news are some miracles miracles that were marked the life of

Jesus the blind seeing the lame walking lepers cleansed deaf hearing and dead being raised so accompanying our hearing should be these kinds of miracles taking place among us perhaps taking place in each one of us that is that in our blindness we should see in our deafness we should hear crippled as we are the work to which we are called we suddenly should find a spring in our step that our sin should be cleansed that we should be raised from the death of sin to the life of righteousness so that those miracles do have a personal application to each one of us blind lame deaf lepers dead as we are but beyond that there is something more because where the proclamation of the age of grace and the rule of God is made we're told that it creates a healthy state in every respect bodily disorders are healed man's relationships are set right man in his relationship to God is renewed all those things you see are to accompany now

I because of my position in this congregation become very much aware of the terrible poverty under which we're living in so many respects because I'm all the time having to read about the riches of the kingdom and face the poverty in many personal lives and situations the terrible poverty in many lives and situations in our parent but with that poverty goes a terrible pride which won't let us share which won't let us give thanks for the blessings that we do have there is pride and there is shame somehow we can't acknowledge our poverty to one another and instead of finding in the person next to you the person with whom you can share the reality of your own experienced poverty it becomes terribly important to us to prove to the person next to us that poverty is very far from having hold on us and that's the illusion of our wealth which makes it impossible to hear the good news of the kingdom and if

God could so work among us that we could acknowledge and accept the reality of our poverty maybe we could then hear in a new way the wonder of the kingdom because we desperately need to it's very important that we should and I fear for us as a church sometimes because of our terrible self-sufficiency because of the pride that makes us hide our own poverty because the shame that we're unable to confess to one another and the result is that the message of the kingdom is not heard the result of that is that our blindness doesn't give way our deafness holds us bound our feet remain crippled from walking in the way to which we are called we are defiled by our sin we don't hear we simply don't hear all that

[19 : 20] Christ has come to make known to us in the proclamation of the gospel listen to it again Jesus says the mark of my ministry is the blind receive their sight the lame walk lepers are cleansed the deaf hear the dead are raised up and the poor and the poor have good news preached to them and that's the pinnacle of it that we are to be a community in which the good news is preached and the good news is heard and the impact on the good news in our life is to be seen by people in invisible ways and we are to be careful to be thankful for that we are to be careful to bear witness to what Christ has done for us in the hearing of the good news and to share that with one another you see what Jesus does by saying this is to turn our whole order upside down and the proud and the arrogant and the self-sufficient and the wise and the intelligent and the sophisticated cannot hear the good news they simply can't it's categorically impossible for us to hear the good news in that condition when we don't hear the good news the burden of our sin remains heavily upon us we spend most of our life trying to deal with it in a totally inadequate way because because we can't hear the good news

I see when a stranger comes among us he should hear from the lips of each one of us the good news he should hear from the lips of each of us to each of us the news of the blessings that come with the hearing of the gospel then Jesus ends it all with a solemn warning he says one other thing could happen and this he said you must be careful he said in his reply to John the Baptist blessed is he who takes no offense at me Jesus recognized that his disciples would be offended by the

message the gospel records that his family were offended by the message so it's perhaps not surprising that we too are offended by the message so can't hear it
God grant that in this season of Advent when it's so terribly important we should hear the good news preached and see the results of that in our lives and in our world God will grant to us to know our poverty and in knowing our poverty enable us to hear the preaching of the good news I want that I desire that for us as a congregation I just long that as a congregation people may come into that experience of hearing the good news with trumpets and organs and choirs and lessons and lovely music and beautiful candles and beautiful decorations and all this trying to scream at us the reality of the message preaching of the good news to catch our attention
God grant that we may be able to hear it Amen Now our offertory hymn which is number 199 We're good to be able to keep it on Chancellor Sc Frankfurt ██████mzship versteck verify Ephraim lin strata origins seul village Ira strata █ Construction ankle ice Thank you.

Thank you.

[25 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.