

How Can A Man Be Born Again

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 0 0] Our God and Father, as we focus our minds and hearts on the words of your Son, Jesus Christ, will you, by your Holy Spirit, inform our minds and inflame our hearts with love for him, the kind of love that finds expression in obedience.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, you seem a very small congregation this morning, and I'm slightly deaf in my left ear, and you're not singing very well as far as I can tell, but that may just be because I'm slightly deaf.

But I must say that I wish for you all that you were at family camp this weekend. It is a sheer delight. The weather is magnificent. The setting is beautiful beyond all comparison.

And the wonderful reality of fathers of 40 and up playing capture the flag with children of 4 and up is something to behold.

And it breaks through all the loneliness and the isolation and the artificiality of our lives, and it's just a delightful camp, and it's going extremely well.

[1 : 2 1] And Stephen James is holding forth on Matthew chapter 6, beginning with, Beware of practicing your piety before men.

And he's working through Matthew chapter 6. So it's a lovely weekend. If I had my way, I would like just to lock up this airplane we're all in and take you off to an island and force us to spend a week together doing such things.

And I'm sure that God would bless us. You get to know people, and there's so many good things about it that I hope the very next time a weekend conference of any kind is announced that you will be the first to sign up.

Item number one. Number two, Mother's Day. Mother, here's to you. I was brought up in a very strict home where Mother's Day was considered a purely commercial venture, and we weren't too indulgent at all, all seven of us.

But somehow that broke down at Father's Day. And things changed around.

[2 : 4 0] So anyway, the thing that really, I really feel convicted about on this Mother's Day, and it's probably partly the question of feminism that's raised so many very difficult problems and very real questions that we need to answer.

And we need to understand a whole lot of issues very much more profoundly than we do. But I don't think it's a matter of giving in to the pressure of feminism in itself, but I think it's a matter of hearing the questions that are being asked and going back to the source book of the scriptures and trying to understand those questions in the light of the things that Christ himself has taught us in the scriptures.

The thing that really tears at my heart is seeing so many single parents raising their children. And though this is considered in our materialist and secular world to be a great, great emancipation, I have my doubts about it.

The women are coming out of it very, very strong indeed. Just by sheer dint of the situation they find themselves in, the men seem to be retreating into a kind of wimpdom, which is not very happy for anybody.

And so I think that there are big issues that are there and that need to be looked at and we need to go back to the scriptures and back to our Lord to be taught something of the issue of our maleness and femaleness and our family life.

[4 : 37] One of the great mothers of the parish died this past week in the person of Mrs. Stratton, who by reason of her faith and by reason of her loyalty and by reason of her love and charm as a person, will be very much missed by us as a congregation.

And she is, it's interesting that on this Mother's Day we mark, I suppose, with great thanksgiving, her life and the blessing that she's been to many in this congregation.

Now I come to the scripture lesson, which is all about fathers. I'm sorry about that, but that's the way it turned up in the lectionary and so we're going to look at it and I really think you'll find it very helpful.

It begins with John chapter 14 and verse 8 where Philip makes the great declaration. Remember after Jesus has said, Let not your heart be troubled.

In my Father's house are many mansions. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me. And Philip, in a sense of exasperation in one way, perhaps of hope in another, and perhaps with prophetic vision in another way, he turns to the Lord and says in chapter 14, verse 8, Lord, show us the Father and we shall be satisfied.

[6 : 08] Well, I would love you, instead of listening to this sermon, you occupy yourself in this way.

Just take out a pencil and a piece of paper and put in one sentence what would really deep down satisfy you.

It would be a good place. It would be a kind of a marking stone as to where you are in your life if you could write down that on this 14th of May, this Feast of Pentecost, this Mother's Day, this is the great thing that I would love and which would most profoundly and deeply satisfy me.

I suspect you'd have a hard time doing it. That's why I'm not afraid of you stopping listening to this sermon. The reality is, you see, that Philip has enunciated something which is after three years of discipleship and having heard all that Jesus had to say about the Father.

He said, show us the Father and we will be satisfied. I really, you know, we get all sorts of wonderful statistics about what a pagan community we live in here on the West Coast and how secular and materialistic it is and how spooked it is by mysticisms and spiritualisms and new life theologies and all sorts of things like that.

[7 : 45] But I am sure that the sheer basic content of our Christian faith is of such value that God must be going to turn us back to him in great numbers because I don't know where anybody else has anything even remotely comparable.

Fran was at a conference all weekend of psychologists and counselors and she said, their great new discovery is that what happens when you have a family broken by child abuse is to teach them repentance and forgiveness and to get them down on their knees saying they're sorry.

Now that's not a religious conference but it's a recognition that that wonderful reality of repentance and forgiveness and the infilling of the Holy Spirit is the thing that alone can deeply satisfy us.

That is the way that we see the Father. We see him in Jesus Christ. The province this morning says that we have a cocaine epidemic in Vancouver.

Well, I don't take the province headlines too seriously but they're quoting somebody important and they're putting their finger on a reality in our city. And then they give a kind of an obituary column of all the people in Vancouver who died last year as a result of taking cocaine.

- [9 : 19] And who are they? They're 28, 27, 29, 31. People right at the prime of life with a longing and a hungering and a thirsting for something and they think it might be a little white powder on a teaspoon.
- You see that strange, deep, deep longing there is in people's hearts and how driven people are to try and satisfy that hunger and that longing.
- And I think that's the same quality as the question that Philip asked. The same question is being echoed in the hearts of people who are taking cocaine.
- Lord, show us the Father and we shall be satisfied. If only they could understand how utterly satisfying and how exclusive that satisfaction is.
- To satisfy the craving which alone causes all our profound restlessness. Our sexuality, we've exploited almost to the limit without finding a place of satisfaction.
- [10 : 33] Cocaine has not satisfied but killed. Accumulation of wealth does not satisfy. Read Matthew chapter 6 if you want to hear about it.
- Success never satisfies. And I might say religion never satisfies. So many people get involved in religion for its own sake and think surely this is the answer but it turns to ashes in their mouth too because the reality that that represents isn't there.
- There is a reality that people who take cocaine are looking for. A reality that people that make money are looking for. A reality that people who strive for success are looking for.
- a reality that people that get involved in religion are looking for. But it's only when they find that that they're going to find the satisfaction which Philip talks about when he says Lord show us the Father and we will be satisfied.
- The same satisfaction that Jesus spoke about to the woman at the well when he said to her if you will drink of the water that I will give you you will never thirst again.
- [11 : 48] That's the kind of satisfaction. It's the kind of satisfaction that is spoken of in the Beatitudes when Jesus says blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.
- They are totally addicted. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness for Jesus says they will be satisfied.
- It's the hungering and thirsting that's spoken of in Psalm 42. Remember how that begins? The lovely words that all of you I'm sure are familiar with.
- As a heart longs for flowing streams so longs my soul for thee O God. My soul thirsts for God for the living God.
- When shall I come and behold the face of God? my tears have been my food day and night while men say to me continually where is your God?
- [12 : 55] Well Philip has asked the question and Jesus turns to him I don't know how you would interpret what mood Jesus was in but he turns to him and he says have I been with you so long and yet you have not known me Philip?
- He who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?
- the words that I say to you I don't speak on my own authority but the Father who dwells in me does his work and then he pleads with Philip and says Philip will you believe?
- Believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? That's the point of faith to which Jesus pleads Philip to come. Can you not see that after these years together?
- Can you not see that that is the answer? I am in the Father and the Father in me? Can't you see that? Then he says Philip if you can't see that may I suggest one other possibility to you?

[14 : 22] And he goes on to suggest what the other possibility is. He says to him believe me for the very work's sake.

who could do these things that I have done? You've been there and you've witnessed the parables taught. You've seen the miracles performed. Who else can do this?

How can you ask to see God when you have seen this? So Jesus goes to take this doubting disciple and to work him through and to tell him what he must come to.

And this is what he says to me. Four things. Four things for disciples that are struggling like you are and I am and we are.

Four things. He says believe me believe me that I am in the father and the father in me. Believe me because as you examine the record of the New Testament you are intellectually compelled to believe in me.

[15 : 34] He who does these things must be God. So he says believe me. The second thing he tells him is to be involved and he describes that in a wonderful way when he says he goes on to explain to him greater works will you do.

That sense that stuff if you will be involved not just in the kind of ordering of your own private kingdom but if you will be involved in this faith to which you are called then you will see great things happen because this is the moment of transition for Christ with his disciples the moment when his earthly life and ministry comes to an end and the moment when God the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples and the disciples take up the work of the kingdom.

They take up the work of Christ and Christ has done all things and turns to his disciples and says you will be involved in greater things than these.

The whole world may come to acknowledge Christ that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord and the good news of the gospel will go out to the whole world and to every culture and to every time and generation you will be involved in that great work.

You will share God's longing for his world. The craving which you have for your own satisfaction will be changed into a longing for the righteousness of God in the hearts and lives of people.

[17 : 35] I would like to confess to you something but I mean it's just to arouse your interest that I tell you that but I'm reading a book called The Bonfire of Vanity.

It was recommended to me by an Anglican minister. But it's a book about contemporary life in New York City and it is Ecclesiastes all over again in up-to-date language.

And a lot of not very proper language too. But there it is and it's vanity upon vanity upon vanity. It is emptiness upon emptiness upon emptiness brilliantly described, incisively written about.

And there it is. And I just read that book and I say will somebody please stand up and tell them what the gospel is. Because the hunger and the longing that is there on every page for some word of redemption seems to me to be overwhelming.

And to be involved in the work of coming to our time and our generation and sharing with them the gospel of Jesus Christ seems an enormous privilege to which we are called as the disciples of Christ.

[18 : 57] Christ. It's not that you retreat into a private mysticism in the cultivation of your own religion. You get involved in a work that Christ has done and by his spirit continues to do so that Christ can say of you greater works than I have ever done will you do when this craving and longing for the kingdom takes hold of your life.

believe, be involved, be counseled. And so Jesus announces to them the coming of the counselor. I will give you another counselor to be with you forever.

People are finding out that counselors are fairly necessary people nowadays and I would commend most of you to one. Not perhaps all of you.

It may just be your husband or your wife or somebody like that. But the position of being counseled by someone who has some objective awareness of who you are and who you can share some of the struggles you have, that seems to me to be a very healthy thing to do.

And primarily in the fellowship of Christ's people that we should confess our sins one to another and being able to counsel one another so that we can get at some of the issues that have hold on our hearts and in a sense are squeezing the life out of us to find some relief.

[20 : 36] We need somebody to help and counsel us. We live in a very complex time and we close in on ourselves all the time so that the only counsel we ever get is the counsel of our own hearts.

And the counsel of our own hearts is so afflicted by fear and anguish and anxiety and we distort things so much that our own counsel is worthless.

And to have some group of people with whom you can talk, with whom you can pray, to whom you can open your heart and whose counsel you can receive seems to me to be a necessary part of the life of each one of us.

I can't think of anybody I would want to exclude from the blessing that that can bring. We are meant to have that, I'm sure. In our time and in our world, the way it is constructed with so much isolation, so much loneliness, so much separation between people, we desperately need it.

Every young couple beginning on their marriage needs a counselor. counselor. Every couple that's been married for 25 years needs a counselor. Every single person needs a counselor.

[21 : 54] And we all desperately need to be able to open our hearts. And when Christ says to you that if you love me, you will keep my commandments and I will pray the Father, and the Father, he will give you another counselor to be with you forever, even the spirit of truth.

whom the world cannot receive, that this isn't available to everybody because in the world, pride and arrogance and self-sufficiency all stand in the way of the spirit of truth breaking in upon our lives.

And we desperately need counselors. counselors. And we need to be counselors one to another. And as we, in Christ's name, take on that counseling, so God the Father gives us his Holy Spirit to counsel us as we counsel one another and to bring us into touch with God himself.

So we desperately need to believe, to be involved, to be counseled. And the fourth thing we all need, in which I pray we might all claim on this Feast of Pentecost, is we need to be at peace.

Christ, on the eve of his own crucifixion, having already submitted to his betrayal, and hearing perhaps the marching of feet that are closing in towards his arrest, his trial, his scourging, and his crucifixion says, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.

[23 : 47] Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let them be afraid. What a wonderful way Christ invites us into discipleship.

What a wonderful way he answers Philip's question. When Philip asks, show us the Father and it suffices us.

And Christ says, believe, be involved, be counseled, and be at peace. Those aren't accomplishments that you achieve.

That is what it is to open your heart to that. And I'd like, I was, I would like to suggest to you that you try and experiment with this.

That you just give yourself a month. And consider the possibility of acting out as though this was really going to happen. You can dismiss it easily.

[25 : 05] At the end of the next hymn it can be gone and forgotten. But if you can take hold of it and begin to work it out in your life in practical ways.

If you as a disciple of Jesus Christ, if you want your life to be marked by believing intuitively or because you are intellectually compelled to, by being involved with other people of whom you are mostly disdainful, and I am, so I suggest that you are.

I get that lately. The devil tries that not on me all the time. But be involved, be counseled, and be at peace. Those things belong to you.

The basis of them are in this passage that we're reading this morning from John 14. May God, the Holy Spirit, so work in your heart that you express with your lives the things you've heard with your ears.

Amen. We have changed the number of the offertory hymn.

[26 : 29] It is now 170. 170. 170. 170. 170. 170. 170. 170. and the to beared and onanna on the lo the through the love h h he Every child's unmasked here, King of the Holy Night.

It's the Father's pleasure, we should hold Him low. For all the heavy ones that are living in the world.

All the world has designed, filled in the air. The Father comes near, on your holy hay.

Faithfully keep your hair, spotless to the cloud. The rich and victorious will come to me.

The King of the Holy Night. The King of the Holy Night. He is God the Savior.

[28 : 27] He is Christ the Lord. He is Christ the Lord.

He is Christ the Lord.

He is Christ the Lord. Let His will enfold you in its life and love.

The King of the Holy Night.

For your heart's God bless the beauty of God. Amen. Let us pray together.

[31 : 04] God of peace, God of grace, and God of love, we bow before you in these quiet moments in gratitude for the grace of your salvation, for heaven restored, for love and creation.

We thank you. On this day, we celebrate the festival of Pentecost, and we thank you that you did send us the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth which teaches us all things.

We thank you for the peace that your Spirit brings to us, and we ask that you would remind us daily of your abundant, abiding peace. And may our longings always be for your Spirit.

We thank you for your Church, the Body of Christ, and we pray for its vigor and vitality all over the world, wherever Christ's name is proclaimed. We thank you for your devotion to the Church, and for the sacrificial love that you have shown to your Church.

We celebrate today our affection and respect for our mothers. Bless our mothers and the mothers in this parish, and may they feel honored and appreciated on this special day.

[32 : 24] We thank you for the glorious sunshine which graced the family camp, and for your blessing there this weekend. Strengthen and enhance the family bonds in this parish, and bring refreshment and renewal to these families.

May we also delight in our friendship families, our close and warm friendships with others in this congregation. We remind ourselves that you have placed the solitary in families, and that you are a friend that is closer than a brother or sister.

We're thankful to you, Lord, that you have dedicated and committed leadership from Harry and Ernie and Stephen. Give them energy, wisdom, love, and guidance as they lead this parish.

Bless their families also. Give us your direction at the upcoming Bestry Meeting, as we make important decisions that will affect the future of this parish.

And may we all work together in harmony for your great good. We ask also for your guidance at the Synod Meeting next weekend. And may those who make decisions be always mindful of your presence.

[33 : 36] We offer our prayers for those who are suffering, depressed, or grieving today. We think particularly of the Stratton and Peake families.

May they be aware of your healing presence, and remember that your will is for faith, not fear, and joy, not sorrow. We pray that you will increase our faith, that opening of our inward eye to be filled with the presence of your divine light.

We know that this is the very key to our knowledge of you and to our ultimate happiness. And may we share our faith with those around us. We ask that you would help us to dare and risk for your sake and give us a fervent faith and purpose.

We pray now in silence so that we may hear your voice as it speaks to us about your vision for us. Amen. Amen. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Could we close our prayers this morning by saying together the prayer that is printed on the front page of your bulletin, a prayer attributed to Sir Francis Drake, which starts about two-thirds of the way down the page.

[35 : 16] Could we pray together? Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves, when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little, when we arrive safely because we sail too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess we have lost our thirst for the waters of life. Having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of eternity.

And in our efforts to build a new earth, we have allowed our vision of the new heaven to dim. Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly to venture on wider seas where storms will show your mastery, where, losing sight of land, we shall find the stars.

We ask you to push back the horizons of our hopes and to push us in the future in strength, courage, hope, and love.

This we ask in the name of our Captain, who is Jesus Christ. Amen. Please be seated for the announcements.

[36 : 34] Good morning and welcome to St. John's, this day of Pentecost and Mother's Day.

We most especially want to welcome all mothers who are here with us today. And one of our parishioners, a mother herself, wanted each of the mothers to have this bookmark to take with them as a little gift from her to you, mothers.

There are some at the back of the church or some just as you go out this door. So on your way to coffee, do pick one up, mothers. Secondly, just to draw your attention to the bulletin announcement, Thursday noon Bible study, this will be the last one until the fall.

So anyone who has been regularly attending or attends them intermittently, by all means, come out this Thursday. And finally, there will be a card for Brian Campbell's ordination.

He will be ordained shortly. And for anyone who knows he and Janice, you might want to sign the card. It will be at the information desk during the coffee hour. And that brings me to invite you all for a cup of coffee or tea immediately after the service in the Trendle Lounge.

[37 : 49] And by all means, bring someone you don't know. Introduce yourself and bring somebody you haven't met before. See you there. I published the bands of marriage between Jeffrey Thomas Hyatt and Susan Marie O'Reilly.

This is the third time of asking. And between Brian Douglas Hancock and Elizabeth Megan Spring. This is the first time of asking. If any of you know cause or just impediment why these persons so mentioned should not be joined together in holy matrimony, you are to declare it.

Our recessional hymn, 478. still not death. H ■■■■■■■■■■ in person. We are aestial part today. So we participate in many others. The earth that's in the papain, which is such a public service. We are Dodge ■ Nous Day. The earth that. If you who have committed us toodi, we will always be joined together in eternity.

We will always be joined by the ally of James and the ■&gane.;

We will always be overran cars, as we try to see acontecer. What else can we do like to happen with prettyurai present? We will always be found. It will always be found out there. Yes i will never want to submit something like. is because there's a possible connection between because there's an entire cast. Amen. Amen.

[39 : 54] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. And will you kneel? Just as we close the service, the service in Toronto at St. James Cathedral where Brian is to be ordained a deacon will be beginning.

And I'd like you to remember Brian and Janice in your prayers at this important day in their life together. Amen.

Peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. Blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

[42 : 16] Amen. Don't i■i be upon me, Father. Let your thoughts strengthen vida just as weUREN your will, C. Amen. Amen. debris that leadnis, of uit- Sahaca, esum SS, etEs, iso T. James ■■■■ is strong.

I keepojung of heavycommerce in you in some segwayes, through your heart, from the Son, and Jesus were sealed, taking vacations to a new ■■■■ konst is■■■■ in your heart. If you are sans chi, God, there o isolp ■■■■meric with jen Glennonri, that Reign. my Megan Howe is mortar■■■atra Paul and peace sand is Thought saint ■ Of Johanna ■■■■■■■■ He has made a place where God. Paul Bloom of God, his holy priest, was Tucker's ever able to die since Januaryet européically a ■■■■■■■■. It's money after a William of God. Thank you forares now. Thank you.

Thank you.