

Peters Sermon To The Aristocracy

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

- [0 : 0 0] Our Father, we remember the man who sat at the beautiful gate of the temple. And we regard this as a kind of gate to the true temple.
- And we are here, and we hold up our hands to you and ask that you will in some way, beyond our understanding, meet the deep needs of all our hearts in the particular way that each of us have needs to be met.
- Father, may we, in the faith of Jesus Christ, by the power of Jesus Christ, in the name of Jesus Christ, reach out to one another and say to one another, concerning the faith of Christ, in the name of Jesus Christ, stand up and walk.
- We ask this in that name. Amen. Great thing is that if it was raining in Vancouver this morning, you wouldn't have to sit there with the sun in your eyes.
- So these are things you just have to learn to put up with. National Thanksgiving this weekend, and all that that means.
- [1 : 3 8] It's a very amazing nation to which we belong, and for which we give thanks that God has set us in this country to live out our lives.
- I'm thankful that the Queen and the leaders of the Commonwealth are gathered here and pray that for them Vancouver 87 might not be the dissolution of the Commonwealth, but might be a renewing of that most unique organization.
- So while giving thanks for it, we also have the responsibility to pray very much for the deliberations of those who are meeting this week. I find myself a little depressed this morning because Rick Hansen wasn't married in church.
- I mean, he didn't have to get married here. He didn't have to get married anywhere, but he is undoubtedly the sort of number one man of 87 in the whole of the province of British Columbia and probably the country of Canada.
- It's very significant that he didn't get married in church. I think it may largely be the fault of the institutional church that it didn't happen, but I think it means something to us as a nation that it didn't happen, perhaps not to us as a nation, certainly to us as those who profess to believe in Jesus Christ and in the marriage covenant which is derived from our relationship to God through Christ.
- [3 : 1 3] So I pray for him, give thanks for the tremendous courage and example that he's given to our country. But I have that little caveat which I can't help but tell you about.
- In the province this morning there's a statement by the Sikh Society of British Columbia, I guess, or maybe of Canada.
- And it may give this quotation in that page. Sikhism is a universal world faith with a message for all men. Sikhs must cease to think of their faith as just another good religion and must begin to think in terms of Sikhism being the religion for this new age.
- Religion preached by Guru Nanak is the faith of the new age. Sikhism. It completely supplants and fulfills all the former dispensations of older religions.

Books must be written proving this. The other religions contain the truth, but Sikhism contains the fullness of the truth. I am not thankful for that statement particularly, but I'm very thankful that we live in a country where people have the right to make such a statement.

[4 : 45] And to be open, as they apparently are, to what truth is and how we are to understand it. And I quote this largely because the sermon today suggests that there is another alternative to which we, if Christian faith means anything to us personally, are committed deeply.

And so that we must accept the invitation to seek the truth in encounter and dialogue with people who are convinced it is other than we believe it to be.

So that it is a good thing, because in many countries of the world, I'm sure such an advertisement would not be allowed in the papers, the daily papers of many countries.

But it is allowed here, and it is to be respected here. And J.V. Klein stood up and said that he wished Canada would reserve its English and French heritage, and he was confronted by quite a maelstrom in the press, at least.

I think he raised a good issue. I don't think, only in this sense, that where does it all come from?

[6 : 04] Where does this freedom come from? How did we come by it? When you live in a country where the inside postal workers have tied up the postal service for the nation, that's a terrible freedom which they have and which I suppose they must use with caution.

But it's a freedom which this country gives them, and I guess we need to be thankful for that kind of freedom in this country and the right to debate the issues that such strike action raises.

So it's that kind of a world we live in. And there are those kinds of issues that confront us on a day-to-day basis.

And I don't know what you think our reply should be, but I would like to commend to you Acts chapter 4 and the third in a series of sermons contained in the book of Acts which confront us with what is essential to the faith of Christ, which we, by our participation in the baptism service this morning, have committed ourselves afresh and anew to that faith.

And that faith is carefully defined in this sermon. It's a good sermon, I must say.

[7 : 41] It has the virtue of being 90 words long. But that doesn't establish a precedent because next Sunday's sermon is a whole chapter long, so you can only enjoy this as a possibility.

That this extremely cogent sermon is preached in 90 words. And I want you to hear the sermon as David reads it for us.

And it's taken from Acts chapter 4, verse 8 and a half. If you'd like to follow it on page 115 of your pew Bibles.

Acts chapter 4, verse 8 and a half, following. Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a cripple, by what means this man has been healed, be it known to you all and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.

This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

[9 : 12] This sermon had a peculiar and wonderful congregation. If you read just before that passage, you will see that the congregation was made up of the rulers, elders, and scribes of Israel, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the people in authority.

They were in authority because the Roman emperor had given them authority. He had given them authority because they were related by blood to the emperor's family.

And they were by blood of the family of the Hasmoneans who were the high priests of Jerusalem. And so they were wonderful sort of cross-cultural creatures, you might say, because of their Roman connection and their Jewish connection and the attempt that Herod had made in appointing them to bring Rome and Judaism closer together.

And the party of compromise among the Jews were the Sadducees, and they were the people who represented the kind of coalescing force of creating a religious universalism which would get rid of the terrible scourge of Jewish exclusiveness as they saw it.

And so this company of rulers, elders, scribes, Caiaphas, Annas, John, and Alexander, and guess who Alexander was named after? Well, he shows the tremendous impact of Greek philosophy and language into this.

[10 : 57] So you have Roman authority, Greek culture and language, and Jewish faith all coming together in this congregation that heard this sermon preached.

Greek, and it was like speaking to the aristocracy of Israel, the upper classes.

And it's a good test by which you can measure whether it's possible for upper classes to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. And if you pride yourself on belonging to that group, you should pay very close attention indeed.

Because they were the ones who heard. They brought Peter and John out of prison where they had kept them overnight because of the sermon preached the day before.

and they brought them before this company to give them a hearing and they put this question to them. By what power or in what name have you done this?

[12 : 11] And that seemed to be a good question because most of us admit that some very intriguing phenomena happened in the realm of religion.

and every newspaper bears witness to it. There are peculiar things happen. And most of us, like this congregation, want to know by what power or in what name was this done?

Is this manipulation of crowds? Is it emotionalism? Is it black magic? Is it witchery? What is it that causes this to happen?

Is it mind control? Is it drugs? How do you create this effect? And we ask on a very broad spectrum the question, by what power and in what name has this done?

Has this been done? And so this congregation asked Peter that. And Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, answered that question as David has just read for you with those words.

[13 : 19] Peter said, it's not just for you that I'm speaking, Peter said, it's for all of Israel. I want everyone to hear this.

The name in which this is done is the name of Jesus Christ, the man you crucified and whom God raised up.

Peter said, now when you are pulled off to the side of the road, the policeman does not say to you this, but this is what he intends. In the name of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, I demand that you hear me and receive this summons to appear before her representative on this day.

It was in the name of Queen Elizabeth. Now if Peter and James had reached out to that beggar and said, in the name of Caiaphas, the high priest, stand up and walk.

This might have been a different meeting that's recorded in Acts chapter 4. If Peter had said, in the name of Augustus, the Roman emperor, stand up and walk, it might have had a quite different result.

[14 : 35] If Peter said, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk. And the man stood up and leaping and jumping and praising God, he went with him into the temple.

And that's what they were being tried for because they wanted to know in what name you had done this. And they wanted to know by what power it was done. How come you have the power to do this?

How was this miracle performed? where is the power from? Peter's answer is very simple. He said, that same power by which Jesus, whom you crucified, was raised from the dead is the power that was at work when this crippled man was caused to stand up, to leap, jump, and praise God.

that was the power that was at work. It wasn't anything in us, he had been careful to tell them. Then Peter was bold enough to draw a certain conclusion for them to understand.

He went back to their scripture, the Psalm 118. He said, there it says, you, and he quotes this to them in chapter 4.

[15 : 58] He talks to them about the headstone of the corner you builders have rejected. The one on whom the structure of our society was to be built, the structure of our nation was to be built, the basis and foundation of our hope was to be built, was on this one whom you have rejected.

And I tell you, I'm not going to tell you you know this, and I'm not going to tell you as though I know it and you don't know it.

I'm going to tell you because I think it's true that every freedom we enjoy, every privilege and right that we have in our country on this Thanksgiving weekend is built on the cornerstone of the God who has revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ.

I don't think there is any other cornerstone. Now we can debate that and we can argue it and we can dialogue about it, but I don't think there is any other cornerstone.

The rejected stone, the man whom you have rejected by crucifying, has become the head of the cornerstone. And then he goes on and makes this statement which is terribly embarrassing to loving, broad-minded Christians the world over.

[17 : 30] That there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus Christ. And from the very depths of our being we say there must be another name.

Other cultures, other languages, other civilizations, other people have found some other way in which to approach God. Peter, who is called, if you were, you know, if you were to examine the Greek you could possibly translate this, Peter, who was an illiterate idiot, stood up and said there is no other name.

And we are caught between the high priest, Caiaphas, Annas, the family of the high priest, the tribes and rulers of Jerusalem, some who have inherited all the order of the Roman Empire and the Greek philosophy and culture, all came together and this illiterate idiot stood up and said there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus Christ.

There isn't another name. Now, you may think that that's terribly narrow-minded, but remember that this is something fairly central to the whole of our understanding.

The Jews drew back from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and much of their faith is our faith but at the point of which Peter speaks today we don't share that faith that there is no other name.

[19 : 20] The Muslim world went back from this faith which they held for hundreds of years to a world of the prophets and a fierce monotheism and the conclusion which the Sikhs claimed to in that paper this morning.

They went back to the conclusion that the fulfillment of the revelation of God was in God's speaking to the prophet Muhammad.

They went back to him and said that's where it is. The Buddhists of our world and Buddha was a contemporary of Isaiah in time they exclude the whole idea of God that of which nothing greater can be conceived.

They don't like that. Their ultimate reality is nirvana a release from the burden of existence and it's not based on the name and power of God.

Marxism is an attempt to make salvation the goal of a political economic system and not a spiritual kingdom.

[20 : 44] It's different. Many people in our world subscribe to it and give their lives for it. The Sikhs who have been so prominent in our society tried about the same time that Martin Luther was alive and preaching to form a new religion to coalesce Hinduism and Mohammedanism and they tried to bring these two elements together and they have ended up a very strong people with very clear objectives politically to read in this morning's paper.

They worship one God which is interesting since they have come from a Hindu background. They believe in humility sincerity they reject superstition they demand strict morality and they live by the source.

Those all come together in Sikhdom. In the Hindus are in a sense a kind wisdom people whose wisdom goes back many centuries perhaps beyond the wisdom of the Old Testament and certainly back beyond the Greek philosophy.

And so they regard with some contempt our more recent engagement with human wisdom.

and so it's beneath them to consider that secular materialists whom we perhaps best understand life consists in an increased capacity for consumption of material goods and an increased variety of goods and services to be consumed.

[22 : 51] That's how our world works. Well there we are. Now you see the position for us I'm sure living as we do in a pluralistic I had the word for it here a pluralistic multicultural multiracial society is not to say well I'm indifferent to the whole lot of you.

but within that kind of amazing opportunity that has come to this generation in this city province and country at this time it is our business as Christians to stand up and say we believe that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus Christ.

now you may think that that's a very impolite thing to do to people who have large investments of time and centuries of dissent in those particular religions religions but truth and love go together and it's not simply a matter of loving everybody in a multicultural multiracial society it's a matter of being able to dialogue with one another to examine with one another the deep riches that may be brought to our understanding of who God is and how he has made himself known we all have to be engaged in that that's our responsibility and it's no good sidestepping if you want to know what you believe I challenge you to go to your secularist neighbor your

Marxist neighbor your Buddhist Hindu or Muslim neighbor and explain the Christian faith to him he will be very interested I'm sure and you will be enormously helped by the responsibility you have taken on yourself of trying to do that it's something we are required to do as Christians it's something that we that is at the very heart of our faith if we believe it to be true then we've got to try and explain it and share it with other people it would be wrong not to and Christian charity does not demand that we sacrifice convictions about truth Christian charity demands that we overcome all the obstacles which make it extremely difficult for a Hindu to talk to a Christian or a

Jew and a Christian to talk or even for a Buddhist and a Hindu to talk or a Sikh and a Hindu to talk or a Jew and a Muslim to talk I think we have in Christ some ground of the concept of truth which makes it necessary for us to actively engage in that kind of dialogue in order that we may come to know and understand what this illiterate idiot this common and unlearned man Peter meant when he said there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved you may not want to be saved and for this I respect you too but I am convinced that God wants you to be that that is his will and purpose for you and it might be worth considering what his will and purpose for you is

[27 : 00] I find this very hard this passage because I know so many nice people whom I think it would offend seriously offend but I think it probably the celebration of the freedom that we have on this Thanksgiving weekend to recognize that when two children are baptized into the faith of Jesus Christ they are baptized into a faith they claim the inheritance of God's salvation through Christ and they commit themselves to sharing that faith with their world for the whole of their lives that that will be the priority of their lives ultimately that will be what gives meaning to their life let me pray remember remember again will you that following this sermon

Peter and John were thrown into prison because what they had to say was intolerable and yet those authorities which threw them into prison it is recorded that five thousand men and women and children came to put their faith in the word that Peter and John had preached oh Jesus you create for us in our multicultural multiracial society a very awkward problem and we don't want to sidestep that problem but to learn what it is to be obedient to you in sharing the good news of your gospel in our sometimes confused and disoriented world give us grace and boldness we ask in Jesus name amen now we sing together our offertory hymn number eleven hold niin oh o o

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