Beginning At Jerusalem

Luke 24:46-47
46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:
47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Consider Jerusalem
• I want to ask you for a few moments this evening to consider Jerusalem.
  ○ That incredible city that was the epicenter of worship in the Old Testament.
  ○ From the earliest of ancient days,
    ▪ there has always been something special about Jerusalem.
  ○ When Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek
    ▪ he revealed a character in scripture
      • that we know very little about,
    ▪ except that he was the king of Salem,
      • which was the ancient name for Jerusalem.
  ○ When God called Abraham to offer Isaac
    ▪ on the sacrificial altar
      • he led him to Mount Moriah,
        ○ outside of Salem.
  ○ That site would later become the foundation of the temple of God at Jerusalem.
• There is something about Jerusalem.
  ○ It is significant to God from the very beginning.
    ▪ Over the course of the Old Testament,
      • as God fulfills his promise to Abraham
        ○ and makes of him a mighty nation.
    ▪ It is Jerusalem that becomes the very center of that kingdom.
  ○ For generation after generation,
    ▪ the blessings of God rested on Jerusalem.
      • It was that exalted city set on a hill,
        ○ the place of God’s worship
          ▪ that was blessed with God’s favor.
  ○ God’s house was there,
    ▪ God’s priesthood was there,
      • God accepted the sacrifices
        ○ that were offered there,
    ▪ and God promised Solomon
      • that his eye and his heart
        ○ would always be perpetually
• There was a great heritage at Jerusalem,
  o a vaunted history of service to God
    ▪ and the requisite blessings
      • that followed the servants
      • of the most high God.
  o However, when the command was given to the disciples
    ▪ that repentance and remission of sins
      ▪ should be preached in his name
    ▪ among all nations,
      o beginning at Jerusalem,
        ▪ that storied city
          • was only a broken shadow
            o of what she had formerly been.
    o When you push past the history
      ▪ and you get past the highlight reel
        • of the many wonderful things about Jerusalem,
      ▪ you get to the seedy underbelly of a city
        • that had turned her back on God.
• The Jerusalem of the first century
  o was a city in decay
    ▪ in more ways than one.
• It had been many long years
  o since the wealth of David and Solomon
    ▪ had made Jerusalem a city
      • of unmatched beauty.
  o The years had taken their toll.
• But the real decay was not in the architecture;
  o it was in the heart and souls
    ▪ of the people that inhabited
      • that once great city.
  o That city of legends
    ▪ was now the house of apostasy
  o and the inhabitants of that great city
    ▪ were backslidden degenerates
      • who now worshiped the creation
        o rather than the creator.
  o They had replaced God’s laws
    ▪ with their own moral code
  o and had rejected the blessings and favor of heaven
    ▪ for godless immorality
      • and pagan rituals.
• Just as much as Jerusalem was the place
  o where the worship of the one true God was established.
• It was at Jerusalem
  o where that worship was defaced
    ▪ and the value of the word of God was denigrated.
  o It was once the house of worship
    ▪ but it was now the seat of sin and hypocrisy.
  o Its rulers were consumed with evil, hatred, and blasphemy.
• The light of the world
  o first shined upon them,
    ▪ but having loved the darkness
      • more than the light,
  o they turned away from truth
    ▪ and hid themselves in the darkness of sin
      • and immorality.
• Jerusalem, that once great city, was now a spiritual slum.
  o It was the graveyard of the prophets,
    ▪ the place where men of God
      • were laughed to scorn,
        o horribly persecuted
        o and murdered.
  o This was the city that rejected Jesus Christ.
    ▪ These were the people that cried out to Pilate,
      • “Let His blood be on us,
        o and on our children.”
• Though Jesus Christ did nothing but good,
  o though he healed their sick,
    ▪ opened their blinded eyes,
      • even raised their dead back to life again,
        o they reviled against him.
  o He brought peace to troubled souls
    ▪ but they despised him.
  o He showed a love beyond measure
    ▪ but they answered it with hatred
      • and the vile venom of hell.
  o He was a teacher,
    ▪ a counselor,
      • and a friend to those in despair
    ▪ but they closed their ears to his words,
      • closed their eyes to his works
        o and closed their hearts to his promise.
  o Though he reached to them with compassion
    ▪ and even from his cross
      • he prayed that no charge would be laid upon them,
      • they mocked him,
        ▪ spit upon him
          o and celebrated the terribly tragic injustice
• This is Jerusalem.
  ▪ The blood of the prophets is upon her doorstep,
    ▪ her leaders have willingly abused the law of God
      ▪ for their own profit,
    ▪ her citizens have readily rejected their savior
      ▪ choosing a thief and a murderer
        ▪ over the miracle worker
    ▪ and the precious blood of Jesus
      ▪ is upon their hands
        ▪ and their children’s hands
          ▪ for generations to come.

Begin At Jerusalem
• This is why I find it interesting, tonight,
  ▪ that when Jesus commanded his disciples
    ▪ to preach repentance and remission of sins
      ▪ in His name,
    ▪ he commanded them to begin at Jerusalem.
• Jerusalem, that city that first rejected Jesus Christ,
  ▪ would receive the first opportunity
    ▪ at the mercy of God.
  ▪ Jerusalem would be the first place
    ▪ that the gospel would be preached.
• God is not willing that any should perish
  ▪ but that all should come to repentance.
    ▪ The gospel of Jesus Christ is not a Jewish gospel.
      ▪ It is for the whole world.
    ▪ People everywhere needed to hear
      ▪ the saving message of Jesus Christ.
    ▪ But God chose to first
      ▪ make it known in Jerusalem.
• There, where they had persecuted the prophets.
  ▪ There where they had rejected the mercy of God,
    ▪ where they had turned their back
      ▪ on the light of the world,
    ▪ where they had lifted their collective voices
      ▪ and cried, “Crucify him.”
  ▪ That was where the gospel would first be preached!

• Let’s be honest.
  ▪ Surely there was somewhere else
    ▪ that was more deserving of the gospel
      ▪ than Jerusalem.
  ▪ Surely there was another place
• where evil wasn’t so prevalent.
  o Surely God should have commanded them
    • to take the gospel to a people somewhere
      • that had not just demonstrated,
        o in such a flagrant manner
        o that they were the enemies of Jesus Christ.
  o Surely there were a group of people, somewhere
    • that was more deserving,
      • more worthy,
        o more ready for the gospel.
  o If I were Jesus,
    • I would have said,
      • “Go into all the world,
        • and preach repentance
          • and remission of sins
            • among all nations;
        • and, after that,
          • go preach it to Jerusalem.”
• But Jesus said, begin at Jerusalem.
  o Go and tarry there
    • until you be endued with power from on high.
  o And you know the story.
    • When the day of Pentecost was fully come,
      • there was a sound like a mighty rushing wind,
        o tongues of fire sat upon each of them
          • and they were all baptized with the Holy
            Ghost.
  o They all spoke with other tongues
    • as the spirit of God gave them the utterance.
  o Before long
    • a great crowd of onlookers
      • gathered in the street below
  o and Peter, being anointed of God
    • for this very purpose,
      • stepped out on that balcony
        o and began to preach to the crowd that day.
• He preached Jesus to them
  o and he charged them with murder
    • and when conviction fell upon them
      • they cried out men and brethren
        o what shall we do.
  o And Peter preached the salvation message first in Jerusalem:
    • Repent and be baptized everyone of you,
      • in the name of Jesus Christ,
      • for the remission of your sins
• Listen to me for a minute.
  o This was Jerusalem.
  o It is likely that there were those
    ▪ in the crowd that day
      • who had taken part
      • in the plot to kill Jesus.
  o But Peter preached to them all,
    ▪ Repent and be baptized,
      • EVERY ONE OF YOU
      • in the name of Jesus Christ
      • for the remission of your sins
    ▪ And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy ghost
      • For this promise is to you
      • And to your children
      • And to all who are afar off
      • Even as many as the Lord our god shall call!
  o It is very possible that there were,
    ▪ gathered in the crowd that day,
      • some of those that bore false witness
        o against Jesus at his mockery of a trial.
  o But Peter preached to them all,
    ▪ Repent and be baptized,
      • EVERY ONE OF YOU
      • in the name of Jesus Christ
      • for the remission of your sins
    ▪ And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy ghost
      • For this promise is to you
      • And to your children
      • And to all who are afar off
      • Even as many as the Lord our god shall call!
  o It is even more likely
    ▪ that among the crowd that day,
      • there were many that had lifted their voices
        o with the multitude
          ▪ and chose Barabbas over Jesus.
  o Those same men and women
    ▪ had likely screamed at the top of their lungs
      • with a bloodthirsty vengeance,
        o “Crucify Him!”
  o But Peter preached to them all,
    ▪ Repent and be baptized,
      • EVERY ONE OF YOU
• in the name of Jesus Christ
• for the remission of your sins
  ▪ And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy ghost
    • For this promise is to you
    • And to your children
    • And to all who are afar off
    • Even as many as the Lord our god shall call!
  o It is likely that some of those
    ▪ who mocked him,
      • who spat upon him,
        o or who even went so far
          ▪ as to strike him
          ▪ were in the crowd that day.
  o But Peter preached to them all,
    ▪ Repent and be baptized,
      • EVERY ONE OF YOU
      • in the name of Jesus Christ
      • for the remission of your sins
    ▪ And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy ghost
      • For this promise is to you
      • And to your children
      • And to all who are afar off
      • Even as many as the Lord our god shall call!

Why Jerusalem?
  • Let me explain to you why the gospel was preached first at Jerusalem.
    o Because if God can raise up his church
      ▪ from the midst of that multitude
        • that had just rejected him,
      ▪ if those men and women
        • can receive the mercy and grace of God
          o who least deserved it,
    ▪ then no one,
      • anywhere,
        o is beyond the reach of God.
    o The gospel is first preached at Jerusalem
      • because the sinners of Jerusalem
        • were guilty of the vilest charges
          o that could ever be laid at the feet of humanity.
        ▪ And that didn't stop the grace of God!
  • Let me tell you something, my friend,
    o if that didn't stop the grace of God in their lives,
      ▪ then nothing in your life is enough
        • to keep you from experiencing
• the wonders of the grace
  • and mercy of God!
• One of the biggest lies that the devil ever told
  • was to tell some poor human soul
    • that you’ve gone too far
      • for the mercies of God to reach you.
  • You’ve done too much
    • for God to ever forgive you.
  • Your sin is too great,
    • your rejection is too flagrant,
      • and you’ve waited too long.
• I come to this pulpit tonight with a message of hope and mercy.
  • Listen to this preacher,
    • **the gospel was preached first at Jerusalem**
      • **FOR YOUR SAKE!**
  • Peter lifted his voice to the crowd
    • from an upper room in Jerusalem
      • because God wanted you to know
        • that his arm is not short
      • and he is more than able to reach you
        • right where you are!
• Jesus told his disciples
  • to go back to that spiritually destitute place
    • called Jerusalem
  • and forever establish the fact
    • that the very gates of hell
      • cannot prevail
        • against the church of God.
  • Nothing in this world
    • can stem the flow of God’s
      • wonderful mercy and grace.
  • If he can start a world changing revival
    • in the streets of Jerusalem,
      • then he is more than God enough
        • to finish the work that
          • he has started in your life!
• Don’t believe the lie
  • that you’ve gone too far
    • for God to save you.
• If he can forgive the very people
  • who mocked him
    • and spat upon him,
      • he can forgive you.
• Don’t believe the lie
  • that you’ve done too much
• for God to save you.
• If he can forgive the men and women
  o that lifted their voices against him,
  ▪ then he can forgive you.
• Don’t believe the lie
  o that some sin in your life
    ▪ has disqualified you from the mercy of God
  o or that you’ve walked away from his mercy
    ▪ one time too many
    • and now there remains
      o no further chance for forgiveness!
• Let me tell you why the gospel was preached first at Jerusalem,
  o because God wanted you to know
    • that he can forgive anything that you’ve done.
      • His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting!
• I want you to know
  o that there were hypocrites in the crowd that day.
    ▪ There were men and women who were all show.
  o Who professed to know God and walk with God
    ▪ but their hearts were far from him.
• But God loved them enough
  o to send a preacher to them to preach to them
    ▪ a message of mercy!
    o That’s why the gospel was preached at Jerusalem,
      ▪ because someone in this house tonight
        • needed to know that God didn’t reject
          o the religious hypocrites
        • but he reached to them over and over and over again
          o with a message of hope and healing!
• Peter commanded all of them
  o to repent and be baptized.
    ▪ The hope of salvation was
      • for everyone in that crowd that day!
• There were men and women in the crowd that day
  o that were tired of religion,
    ▪ they didn’t want anything to do with church.
  o They had rejected the religion of their fathers
    ▪ and they didn’t want to have anything to do with it.
  o They had seen too many charlatans and fakes,
    ▪ they had seen too many people
      • who professed to be godly
        o but were consumed with selfish pride
        ▪ and they had rejected all forms of religion.
• But something drew them to that place.
  o Something about what happened in that upper room
• attracted their attention.
  o And God reached out to them in mercy and grace!

**Let me tell you why the gospel was preached first at Jerusalem.**

**It was preached there**

• because somebody in this room needs to know
  • that God reaches out to people just like you.

• That something real and life changing
  • happened in that upper room
    • and those men and women
      o that heard Peter preach that day
        • were forever changed!

CLOSE

• The message tonight is simple.
  o Yet in simplicity we sometimes find
    • the most profound of truths.
• Paul tells us, in Hebrews 7:25,
  o that Jesus Christ is able to save
    • to the uttermost.
  o That is a unique phrase
    • that appears nowhere else in the scripture.
• It implies that the ability of God to save
  o is infinite and perfect.
    • No sinner is beyond his reach.
      • No soul is beyond his grasp.
  o No man has fallen so far
    • or sunk so deep into the miry clay
      • that he cannot lift him out again.
• That’s why the gospel was preached first at Jerusalem.
  o An everlasting testimony
    • was established there
      • that God is mighty to save.
  o That his arm is not short,
    • that his mercy is not limited,
      • that his grace can reach
        o even the chief of sinners!
  o None are so bound up
    • in the horrible oppression of sin
      • that God cannot reach them.
• Can I humbly tell you, on a Sunday evening,
  o that the church began at Jerusalem
    • so that you and I could know
      • that nothing that we have done
        o disqualifies us from the grace of God!
• The Devil is skilled at figuring out ways
To disqualify people from the blessings of God.

- He is called the accuser of the brethren in scripture
  - and he loves to interject his logic
    - into your thought process
      - and try to convince you
  - that you aren't worthy of the grace of God,
    - that you don't deserve God's mercy.

- Listen to me, I have a revelation for you.
  - You aren't worthy.
    - You don't deserve it.
      - Neither did the people of Jerusalem.
  - But that didn't stop a world-wide revival
    - from breaking out on the streets of that fair city.
  - Let me tell you something, friend,
    - God isn't waiting for you to get good enough,
      - or for you to earn his blessing.
  - He's only waiting for you to respond
    - to his merciful plea,
      - come to the cross,
        - come to an altar of repentance,
          - the grace and the mercy of God
            - is for every man.

- If he can save those in the crowd at Jerusalem,
  - then he can save you!
- If he can build a revival church in Jerusalem
  - He can build one here!