

## When Jesus Comes Preaching

A sermon by Larry Kirkpatrick

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Jesus is still preaching. He has gone to heaven to make atonement for us in the Most Holy Place of His Heavenly Sanctuary (John 14:1-3; Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:23, 24). He is still presenting truth to us through His Holy Spirit.

Today, three things: (1) A look at our passage of John 16:12-15, (2) A consideration of why and what God has called Seventh-day Adventists to, and (3) suggestions particular to our evangelistic meetings this month.

Now, consider this Sabbath's Scripture passage again:

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you (John 16:12-15).

Jesus still had many things to say to His followers, but His time had run out. He had more to teach, but there is a limit to how much can be presented and absorbed in the space of a certain time frame. We may be sure that He advanced no more rapidly than His disciples could bear. Now the time had come for Him to depart back to the Father.

But there was more to reveal. How much more? The entire New Testament had yet to be written. The persecution of the church, its contamination by Greek philosophy, descent into illicit union with the Roman Empire, the Protestant Reformation, and the challenges of our past two centuries—all this was yet future.

And why did God permit the suffering and sorrows of life to continue for two millennia after Jesus' crucifixion? What was He thinking!

## **The Great Controversy is On!**

Obviously, in His working out of the Great Controversy War, God is still accomplishing His objectives. He did not start the war, but He will end it. And yet, not prematurely. When all of its issues are settled, then and only then, will the end come.

Jesus had not just a few, but “many” things to say to His disciples. But they could not bear them at that time. They were about to experience the greatest disappointment and upheaval of their lives. Many things remained; they were crucial. And yet, they would have to be offered to His followers through another agent. The Holy Spirit would carry forward Jesus’ teaching ministry.

His work would be to guide them into “all truth.” We must remember that this is not purely intellectual understanding. Truth is what you do more than what you think. Sadly, our fallen race is adept in disconnecting intellectual pursuits from ethical ones. The Holy Spirit would bring to the followers of Jesus (us!) both an intellectual understanding of God’s purposes, and bring us into the practice of His truth. He would help us, strengthen us, combine with us, so that our lives are permeated and saturated with His presence.

This would take time. The apostle Paul worried over his charges: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Galatians 4:19). It is not enough to talk Christianity or linger at its fringes. We must be salt and light in the world.

That does not mean forcing the world to see as we do, but demonstrating before the world that being a follower of Christ changes people. We are to be the living, breathing evidence. If the only sermon some people will ever hear is your life, then you must be Jesus come preaching. “How shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14).

## Why Seventh-day Adventists?

But now, an important point: why has God sent Seventh-day Adventists into His world? How would our preaching be any different than the preaching of a generic Christian? Here, our passage helps again. Not only is it His purpose to guide us into all truth, but also to show us things to come and to glorify Christ. This is the special work of Seventh-day Adventists.

Other Christians are to glorify Christ. But not all are willing to be shown things to come, things especially pertaining to the end-time. Not all are willing to be led into “all truth.” “Some truth” is what most are contented with; “some” of Jesus, “some” of God’s insight for living; “some” of the gospel; “some,” but not all. There is a divine purpose for time’s end. God is fresh; there is always more to see. Even the mightiest prophets and apostles have not seen it all.

God by His Holy Spirit especially directs His servants on earth in the great movements for the carrying forward of the work of salvation. Men are instruments in the hand of God, employed by Him to accomplish His purposes of grace and mercy. Each has his part to act; to each is granted a measure of light, adapted to the necessities of his time, and sufficient to enable him to perform the work which God has given him to do. But no man, however honored of Heaven, has ever attained to a full understanding of the great plan of redemption, or even to a perfect appreciation of the divine purpose in the work for his own time. Men do not fully understand what God would accomplish by the work which He gives them to do; they do not comprehend, in all its bearings, the message which they utter in His name (*The Great Controversy*, p. 343).

Satan had sought to be worshipped; to depose God and mount His throne (Isaiah 14:12-14). How easily God could have destroyed Satan! But rebellion was not to be overcome by force. The use of power to compel is found only under Satan’s government. God’s authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love. These principles are His means of revealing who He is. Time was given for Satan to show himself a toxic rebel. Are his principles superior to God’s? Time will tell.

From the time of the cross the conflict continued. Immediately Satan worked to mingle his principles with those of God. The church compromised itself with the state. But God brought forth the Protestant Reformation. Its leaders were coming out of an extraordinarily compromised situation. The corrections could not be accomplished all at once.

Why was the work of reformation left unfinished? The tendrils of the world were rooted very deeply in those believers, just as they are in us. They had accepted the ideas of men instead of permitting the Bible to be its own interpreter. They had to climb out of the matrix they were birthed in; to leave behind every plant that our heavenly Father had not planted (Matthew 15:13). We appreciate what they accomplished, even as we recognize that even they were not rigorous enough.

Look at what God says He will do: He will produce a people who stand victoriously with Jesus:

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads . . . And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God (Revelation 14:1, 3-5).

These stand with Jesus. They have chosen to conform themselves to a character like Jesus. They have a song, an experience, such as no other people have ever had or ever will. Their lives are not tainted by false churches, not bent via admixture of church with state. They are not

drunken with the wine of Babylon. They are not defiled with women, not shaped by the unbiblical teachings of false churches.

In this sense they are pure. They have followed the injunction to purify themselves even as Jesus is pure (1 John 3:3). They have conquered through Christ and sat down with Him in His throne, even as Christ conquered and sat down with His Father in His throne (Revelation 3:21).

Thus, they have learned to follow Jesus completely. No other generation has done this. Always there remained nagging contamination of earth, persistent misunderstandings of the necessity and the method of becoming like Jesus. In the end, God shows—through His people—that it can be done. There can be such a thing as a Revelation 14 Christian.

### **There Will Be a People Who Receive**

This is what God is doing. He is demonstrating that His laws are right, His character, just, His ways, merciful, and that His plan is life. Satan says, This is all mere flowery talk; where is the evidence? And God says, It is on the way. So, the whole conflict between good and evil is hanging fire, waiting for those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:22).

So what remains? What is needful? Return to our initial text. John 16:5: “He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.” The Father and Holy Spirit will take what is Christ’s and show it to us. And we will receive it. At last, a generation comes so close to God that nothing worldly intervenes. God reveals to them all that they need, and they receive all that they need. That is the high calling for this generation.

That is why we cannot consent to be generic. God is doing something bigger, less conventional, closer, more personal, more intense: He is cleansing His sanctuary. He is strengthening us to overcome all sin and to be a just people, true examples, in a darkened world, of the light of God. We were once darkness but now we are light in the Lord (Ephesians 5:8).

Therefore, issues such as God's Sabbath, moral purity, becoming kinder than anyone anyone has ever met, these things are in play. The final showdown may not be far off. Will this people receive the mark of the beast, or the seal of God? The answer to this, as implausible as it may sound to contemporary ears, is seen in whether a people can follow Jesus in Present Truth.

### **No Shortcuts in Soul-Winning**

We tell others about Jesus in many ways. One of the ways we do is through evangelism. Old-fashioned, conventional, Seventh-day Adventist evangelism.

One of the lessons the church needs to learn is that in soul-winning there are no shortcuts. How many projects and fads are brought in which are not compatible with a Bible-based faith. New converts are promised by the hundreds, but these numbers are rarely, if ever, delivered. Those who do join the church may not have been evangelized with anything identifiable with the Third Angel's Message. Money and energy are spent but the starting place is wrong. And so is where such projects end.

We should seek to develop creative means for soul-winning, but in tis late hour, anything not founded on the message of Scripture, and particularly the Apocalypse, is more motion than substance. There is nothing wrong with good, old-fashioned Bible studies given across the kitchen table, or with a conventional series of prophecy meetings.

These things mean hard work face-to-face with souls. There are no shortcuts in them. This is why some are always trying to replace them. But smoke and mirrors only produce illusionary results. We need to start with a truly Seventh-day Adventist message and then do serious work. God will provide the souls.

### **Suggestions for Our Evangelistic Meetings**

What then of our imminent set of meetings? Paul counseled young associate pastors Timothy and Titus instructing them in how to set things in order in the churches (Titus 1:5), and how those who were copying his pattern (Titus 2:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:7, 9; Hebrews 13:7) were to behave in the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15). On that basis then, we offer counsel, several short items, for our time and place.

First, we understand that some cannot participate as much as others. We know this. We have planned with this in mind. May the Lord bless and guide each of us, and may those who, for whatever legitimate reasons are unable to join in, keep in the peace of Christ.

Having said this, we offer these few suggestions.

1. If needed, take time, starting today, to reestablish your own walk with Christ. You should have a living connection with Christ; you should be talking with Him every day. That which is real is that which is persuasive.
2. If Present Truth is important, then show it. Put your presence where your mouth is. If you say it is important, then arrange your schedule so that you can come and support the meeting with your presence in the meeting.
3. Come to church for these meetings smiling, not because you are faking but because the presence of Jesus is operative in your life.
4. Plan to come to the meetings early and linger for awhile after. Why? To mingle in a friendly way with our guests. And remember, they are not “visitors”; they are “guests.” A law enforcement officer who comes onto your property unbidden is a visitor; someone you’ve asked to come is a guest. We are asking these people to come. Guest is warmer, but more important, it means a different attitude on our part.

5. You know the basic approach the evangelist will take in presenting topics. If you are speaking with someone before or after the meetings, and a topic comes up that is a sensitive one or one that has not been dealt with yet, then find a way to defer that particular point of discussion until the evangelist has addressed that topic. I assure you, that as the meetings proceed, our evangelist Darrin Bartell will address topics like Ellen White, church standards, and so forth. We did not just get Evangelist Bartell's name out of the phonebook. We called him to come here because we have knowledge of his work. He is a faithful presenter. He will not round the corners.
6. Do not bring up "issues" in the church, like Woman's Ordination, worship music questions, the nature of Christ, the New Theology, *etcetara*. What is needed at this time, is for you to be an influence in helping our guests focus on Present Truth as the evangelist presents it. The Bible makes clear that there are best times for particular things (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Hebrews 5:12-6:3).
7. Please do not give out random books, tracts, CDs, DVDs, etc. We have a serious stock of material here from Amazing Facts covering all the topics appropriate during the meetings.
8. Our best—very best—advertising for the meetings, is your word of mouth to friends, neighbors, work associates, etc.
9. If you don't have a personal mobility issue, then please park near the back of the parking lot in order that the most convenient spaces are left open for our guests.
10. Keep a watchful eye out for people who might somehow be being neglected or overlooked in the busyness of the moment. Be a fresh, friendly face for our guests.
11. Avoid the use of what we might call "Adventist lingo." We have certain phrases that we use: "EGW," "Present Truth," "Spirit of Prophecy," "The Shaking Time," etcetera. The use of this language with those who do not know what it means is psychologically exclusive. When they hear a term they do not understand, it leaves people feeling left outside of the circle of those who are "in the know." People can and inevitably will learn the phrases and words used in the church. Every church, every religious group, has its own such language. We do too. It can be learned later, as people get used to the church. They need not have any such difficulties set before them right now that may cause them to feel excluded. Present Truth itself is a serious barrier to entry; let's put nothing else in their way. Let us do all that we can to smooth their kingdom journey. Do not use any of this kind of language until the evangelist has used it in the meetings. They will be faced with the strong convictions sent by His Holy Spirit; they will feel the need of making difficult and aggressive changes in their lives.
12. We still need helpers. See our personal ministries leader. He can guide you in how you can fill the remaining gaps.
13. Make allowances for our guests. They may come and use foul language in your presence. Ignore that they are doing so. Some may come with metal rings sticking out of their bodies in strange places. Let not your eyes be drawn to them. Some will be dressed very informally, even sloppily. Pretend you do not see it. Some will talk loudly in the church sanctuary. Make no issue of it. There is time for our guests to learn, and we will teach them. We will help them grow. We may be sure that Jesus delivered many of His messages in dust and sweat. This is about love. We can afford to bend and make room for lost slaves coming to glory. We can relate, because we ourselves have been there. We have been without Christ and alone in

the world and not knowing where to turn. Then someone with Jesus in their heart reached out to us and refused to be offended by our bad smell, or filthy language, or ungodly behavior. They lifted us up to Jesus. Now it is our turn to do the same.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, when Jesus' walk took Him to the cross, neither His work nor His teaching was ended. He promised to continue to send advanced truth to His followers through His Holy Spirit. He has always searched down through the ages for those who would be willing to shape their lives according to His divine life. In Seventh-day Adventists He claims to have found them.

We are called to demonstrate what God's gospel creates when all the impurities are removed; we are called, in our sphere, to echo Jesus. There is no shortage of those who would follow Jesus through the ages, but there is a shortage of those who would surrender all, cut away every entanglement, and live on faith's leading edge—particularly now, when the everlasting gospel stands glowing in unveiled brightness.

Evangelism may be conducted in many ways, but the most successful are often the most humble. If we are faithful, we will see the power of God here in our meetings. Plan to be here Friday night, April 17, and bring several friends that night when Jesus comes preaching.

**Biographical Note:** Pastor Larry Kirkpatrick is a convert to the Adventist faith. Since 1994 he has served in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He holds degrees from Southern Adventist University and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. His work has included research assistant for the Ellen G. White Estate, pioneering Adventist internet ministry, involvement in GYC, and presenter at the 50th Anniversary *Questions on Doctrine* Conference. He is author of the books *Real Grace for Real People* and *Cleanse and Close*. For many years his sermons and papers have been published on the internet. Larry and wife Pamela have served churches in Nevada, Utah, and California. The Kirkpatricks presently serve at the [Mentone church](#) near Loma Linda, California.