

Sunday 6th December 2015 AM Bible Verses that Changed the World - John 7v37 (David Brainerd)

Title: Bible Verses that Changed the World - John 7v37 (David Brainerd)

Purpose: To encourage people with bible verses that changed people that then went on to change the world. In particular here to encourage people with the great simplicity and wonder of the gospel call: for any who are thirsty to come to the Saviour and drink and be satisfied.

INTRODUCTION

Q. What do the following dozen people have in common?

- Sir Ernest Shackleton (Polar Explorer - leading expeditions to the Antarctic)
- Martin Luther (Leader of Protestant Reformation)
- William Wilberforce (Slavery Abolitionist)
- John Wesley (Preacher and founder of Methodism)
- Michael Faraday (Scientific discoverer/Inventor)
- Hudson Taylor (Pioneer missionary to the Chinese)
- David Brainerd (Pioneer missionary to the American Indians)
- Abraham Lincoln (16th American President - led the country through the Civil War)
- Elizabeth Fry (Social Reformer - on back of current £5 note reading to Newgate Prison inmates)
- Lord Shaftesbury (7th Earl of Shaftesbury - Lord Ashley - Social Reformer)
- Catherine Booth (Co-founder of the Salvation Army)
- John Bunyan (Writer of one of the best-selling books of all time - 'The Pilgrim's Progress')

I could go on but: **Q. What do they all have in common?** (Take a guess)

- **YES** - they are all people that at some stage have come to a real and personal knowledge and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ in their lives.
- **& YES** - they are all people that have at some level have significantly "**CHANGED or SHAPED HISTORY**"
- **BUT ONE FINAL THING TOO** - every one of these people have in common the fact that there was **ONE PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT BIBLE VERSE** that essentially "**CHANGED & SHAPED THEM**"

So over the next number of Sunday mornings (not including the Sundays over the Christmas period) we'll be looking at some of these people and more CENTRALLY at the Verses that "TURNED THEIR LIVES AROUND".

Today's Scripture

Today's Scripture is in the NT and is in the 4th Gospel - the Gospel of John and the 7th chapter - verse 37:

(John 7 verse 37) where we read:

"On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice: 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.'"

A single verse! Like getting blood out of a stone?

Now you could be forgiven for thinking - well he's got half-an-hour and just a single measly verse - isn't this going to be a bit of a stretch - after all: Q. How much is there in just one verse?

Well - hopefully it won't be a classic case of using what they call "**THE 3 RULES OF PUBLIC SPEAKING**":

1. **Tell them what you're going to tell them**
2. **Tell them again**
3. and then **Tell them what you told them!!**

Dr Martin Luther King - I have a dream speech

Apparently Dr Martin Luther King, in his famous "I have a dream" speech, uses the word "dream" no less than 9 times and the phrase "I have a dream..." 7 times, and this all within just 3 minutes!!

Well - I'm not a Martin Luther King - and I probably won't be repeating the same thing 16 times over.

1. The Setting

Now before we get into the main part of Verse 37 - I want to draw your attention to **TWO PRELIMINARY THINGS** that are there in the introductory part of the verse.

THE FIRST is **THE SETTING** - it starts "**On the last and greatest day of the Feast...**":

As you probably know the Jews had three main festivals that would take place once every year up at Jerusalem and we know from Verse 2 of this chapter that this is the last of the 3 annual feasts - this is **the Feast of Tabernacles**.

Q. So what was this feast about? Well, as with the other feasts, they were meant to be reminders - here the people of God, the Jews would call back to mind their wanderings in the wilderness under Moses before they got into the promised land.

And during the 7 or 8 days of this feast they would build temporary shelters, lean-to's or huts and sleep outside - and in this way they remembered how God took care of them through all those many years. **THEIR GOD WAS A GOD OF PROVISION.**

Another thing they did (and this is one of the things that Jesus is here picking up on) - is that each day the priests would go to the Pool of Siloam, draw water, and put it in a golden jug and then there would be a grand procession back up to the temple where the people would sing from Isaiah 12 "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation".

Then at the altar they would pour out this water - this was reminding them of yet another provision - those times when God poured forth water in the wilderness from the rock.

If you were around a couple of months ago we covered the occasion where the people were thirsty and Moses struck a rock with the rod of God and out flowed life-saving water. And we covered the true meaning of this OT picture - how the rock symbolised Christ being struck with the rod of God's judgment so that the life-saving water of eternal life might be released for any that would choose to quench their deepest spiritual thirst.

And every day Jesus is just watching this going on - day after day after day.

And that leads us on very naturally from **THE SETTING** to **THE SPEAKER**:

2. The Speaker

Once again if we were to flick back to the opening verses of this 7th chapter in John we would see that Jesus is quite reluctant to go up to this feast. Q. And why would that be? Q. Because, deep down he is not really a very good Jew?

No not at all - it is because he knows that the Jews have it in for him and want to arrest him and take his life. And so Jesus delays coming and then, when he does come, he comes in secret not wanting to attract any more attention than need be.

In fact, it is not until half-way through the feast, that he begins to teach the people in the temple courts and now people are getting completely amazed at his words - Verse 15 "How did this man get such learning without having studied?"

Moreover, when they had listened to what he said in Verse 37 - the religious dogs-bodies - the temple guards go back and report: Verse 46 "**No-one** ever spoke the way this man does!"

So Jesus bides his time, but not for ever and now that it is the greatest day of the feast, now that the water has been poured out for the last time - Jesus BOTH **STANDS UP** and **SPEAKS UP**:

Jesus stood and said in a loud voice: **'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.'**

Evidently Jesus has now lost his shyness, he has something to say which is crucial and so he makes sure everyone can see him and everyone can hear him:

- WE KNOW - from Verse 31 that "many put their faith in Him"
- WE KNOW TOO - that there were some people present who were rightly identifying who Jesus was.

From Verse 41 we hear some of them saying "He is the Christ."

Crash Test - EURO NCAP

Now if you've been into purchasing a new car of late you may well have been interested to see what Euro NCAP safety rating your intended car has from 1-5 stars.

And we've all seen these film clips of cars been driven into a concrete wall and then you watch the dummies inside responding to the crash in slow motion.

Well I want to introduce someone by the name of **DAVID BRAINERD** for whom this Verse - **John 7v37** came crashing into his life and ultimately changed him for good and for better.

David Brainerd

The scene is a lovely evening in the early summer of 1744 - a tall youth who has hiked his way through dense woodland to the Susquehanna River.

He watches a colony of beavers building a dam and as he watches them he too is being watch by wolfish eyes deep in that impenetrable forest wilderness.

He has been told of a ferocious tribe of Indians that live far back in the forests of New Jersey an their insatiable curiosity means that they are marking and watching his every step. His resolve had been to pitch his tent for the night

and then enter the settlement of these Indian natives fully expecting that their reception might be somewhat hostile.

Well to his complete astonishment the whole tribe came out to meet him soon after sunrise as he approached the wigwams.

It was only later that he came to learn that when they had first learned of this white man approaching through the forest that they had dispatched a party of warriors to intercept him and kill him. However, as they had drawn near his tent they beheld him kneeling - and while he prayed a rattlesnake crept to his side - and lifting its head as if to strike, flicked its forked tongue almost in his face and then without any apparent reason, glided swiftly away into the brushwood.

From this moment the Indians said: "The Great Spirit is with the paleface!" and they accorded to him a prophet's welcome.

Back to the Beavers

Well back for a moment to David Brainerd and him watching the beavers - while he did so he was reading his open Bible and it lies open at that page which is more thumbed than any other - John chapter 7:

"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

Well while this 26 year-old youth was sitting there in the forest poised to make a first expedition to the American Indians - John Wesley was at the same time stirring England as England had never been stirred before.

One of Brainerd's biographers wrote:

"...he belonged to a class of men who seem to be chosen of heaven to illustrate the sublime possibilities of Christian attainment..."

To this somewhat "heroic" class John Wesley was also a member and he recognised his own kinship with David Brainerd for at one conference he asked the question: "...what can be done to revive the work of God where it has decayed?". He answered his own question by answering: "Let every preacher read carefully the Life of David Brainerd."

3 Encounters with this text

Q. So how did this young man - (who only lived to the age of 29 and who yet achieved so very much in converting the Indians - and this was by the way prior to the days of the modern missionary movement) - how did this young man come to be such a great missionary pioneer?

Well through his Journal we learn of three very different stages OR encounters that he had with this verse and they are all very distinctly different:

- **THE FIRST STAGE** was one where it distinctly IRRITATED him.

As a boy he was genuinely quite serious in nature and from the age of around seven until he was 21 he wrestled on and off with a certain amount of darkness and distress over the state of his sin and his soul.

One morning he was walking in a solitary place and he felt as though he were "a man reeling on the edge of a precipice".

Now he had been given a while back a book called "Stoddart's Guide to Christ" but in his own analysis he was very angry with the author BECAUSE although he described with great accuracy the distress that he was feeling - it did *not* describe the way of deliverance.

It merely told him to come to Christ (John 7v37) - "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

But he was exasperated not knowing what it meant "to come", what it meant "to believe".

I knew I was to come, but I did not know what it was that I was to do that would bring me to Him.

And so, all-in-all, the verse brought no comfort whatsoever - instead it only provoked a great amount of inward consternation and opposition!!

Well thankfully God is one who knocks more than once at our doors and the second time this verse came knocking things were different.

- **STAGE TWO** - it was **Sunday evening, July 12, 1739** and he was out walking again and in **the same solitary spot** and this time:
 - rather than IRRITATING him
 - it **CAPTIVATED** him

In Brainerd's own words: "At this time the way of Salvation opened to me with such infinite wisdom, suitability and excellency that I wondered that I should ever have desired any other way of salvation. I was amazed that I had not dropped my own contrivances and complied with this lovely, blessed and excellent way before.

If I could have been saved by my own duties, or any other way that I had formerly conceived, my whole soul would now have refused it.

I wondered that all the world did not see and comply with this way of salvation."

'If anyone is thirsty...' THAT IS THE ONLY CONDITION

'let him come to me...' THAT IS THE ONLY COMMAND

'let him come to me and drink' THAT IS THE ONLY SATISFACTION THAT A THIRSTY MAN DESIRES.

And David Brainerd at age 21 was a THIRSTY MAN.

That night his soul was full of song - for he thirsted, he came and he drank!

A century later Horatius Bonar wrote what became a well-loved hymn "I heard the voice of Jesus say" and the second verse reads:

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,

'Behold, I freely give the living water; thirsty one, stoop down and drink, and live.'

I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life-giving stream; my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,

and now I live in him.

Now I did say there were three times in which this verse came crashing through David Brainerd's life:

- **STAGE THREE** - it was not so long after his own thirst was quenched he went from being CAPTIVATED to being **ACTIVATED**.

When he thought about his own soul thirst being wonderfully slaked by simply coming to Jesus, by simply believing in the work of Jesus on his behalf at that cross of Calvary - he began to see that he David Brainerd did not have any monopoly on being spiritually thirsty.

The text came to him again with power: John 7v37 "If **ANYONE** is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."
Yes - **anyone** - all of a sudden he was looking out on a thirsty world and for him this was not yet an age of missionary enterprise.

In fact William Carey, who is usually considered the Father of modern missions - took up John Wesley's counsel to read the Life of David Brainerd and it was through this that he could his vision.

As one writer nicely summarized things: (JM Sherwood)

"His story (that is Brainerd's) proves him to be one of the most illustrious characters of modern times; it has done more to develop and mould the spirit of moderns missions, and to fire the heart of the Christian church, that that of any other man since the apostolic age."

The end of the story

Now you might be asking: Q. So what did happen to all those American Indians to whom Brainerd went?

Well let me read a couple of entries from Brainerd's own Journal:

February 17, 1745 "On the sunny side of a hill in the wilderness, I preached all day, to people who had come twenty miles to hear me, on 'Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink?' I was scarce ever enabled to offer the free grace of God to perishing sinners with more plainness."

In one place he tells of any Iroquois woman who confessed that, from the moment that she first heard him, her whole heart had cried out for the gospel.

In another - he tells of preaching to a great assembly of tattooed warriors and he preaches on "Here is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and gave his Son as a propitiation for our sins." - he goes on there were scarce 3 in 40 that could hold themselves back from tears.

Truly Brainerd had no monopoly on being thirsty.

CONCLUSION

I want to end up:

***NOT* by us being STUNNED** at what this verse did to one man

OR by us being AMAZED that even the native Indians had the same ultimate encounter with this verse

BUT RATHER by letting this verse encounter us

In considering our own encounter there are 3 questions that naturally arise from this verse (John 7v37):

#1 the verse says: "If anyone is THIRSTY..."

So Q. Are you aware

have you ever been aware ... of an inner thirst
a thirsting deep within
a soul thirst?

This is the ONLY CONDITION.

Perhaps you've spent a good part of your life till now PUSHING that down - SILENCING those inward voices that are asking the bigger questions of life:

e.g Q. What am I here for?

Q. Where did I come from?

Q. What will happen to me when I die?

Q. Will God one day judge me for living entirely for myself?

Q. Is there such a thing as a heaven to be had and a hell to be avoided?

#2 the verse says: "(If anyone is thirsty) Let him COME TO ME..."

So Q. Was there ever a day that you know about

ever a period of time in your life
when you came to Jesus
when you partook of the work of Jesus completed on the cross - at a personal level,
when you repented and believed?

This is the ONLY COMMAND.

Notice: that it does *not* say GO - go and do some community service

go and straighten out your life
go and attend a bible college!

He say COME - COME TO ME - it's so very simple, it's so very & it's very personal.

#3 the verse says "Come to me AND DRINK."

This is the ONLY SATISFACTION - satisfaction that will last a lifetime

that will last, in fact, into the next life, unto eternal life.

Q. I wonder whether this most important of all INVITATIONS has ever dropped through the letterbox of your life?

Q. I wonder whether this most penetrating of PROCLAMATIONS has ever come crashing into your life and turned you around?

Q. No? Q. Well, what is it exactly you are waiting for?

If you are still thinking - well let me encourage you to hear the simple words afresh again AND let me encourage you to look at this example in David Brainerd - Yes - irritated, BUT then CAPTIVATED and ACTIVATED.

Let us pray AMEN