

“ARE YOU READY FOR JESUS?”  
 Acts 2:42-47, I Peter 2:19-25, John 21:1-14  
 April 29 & 30, 2023

“There was a fire in a building and the building was burning profusely. A little boy was too high up and would soon be engulfed. However, there was an external pipe that one of the firemen used to climb up in an attempt to rescue the boy. The pipe was blistering hot. Even though he had gloves on, his gloves were smoking. Despite the extreme heat, the fireman got to the boy and then climbed back down that same pipe. When they got to the ground, the fireman immediately removed his gloves and rinsed his hands in water to relieve the pain that he was experiencing from climbing up and down on that pipe that was so hot.

“The boy had been brought to safety but he sadly lost his parents in the fire. Some months later, he came up for adoption. There was a professor who came into the courtroom and said, ‘I can make this boy a genius. I want to adopt him.’

“There was an engineer who said, ‘I want that kid, I want to adopt him.’

“Then there was a third man who came in. The boy looked at him, and said, ‘Your honor, can he have me?’

“The judge asked, ‘Why that one and not the others?’

“Because I see his hands and I know who he is. He’s the one who saved me.’

“It’s nice to have an engineer, it’s nice to have an educator, it’s nice to have a doctor, but when someone loves you enough to burn their hands, then they love you enough to share your pain. When they love you enough to hurt when your hurt, ache when you ache, and be there when life is falling apart, when they can show you their hands, and you know they paid the price, then they ought to have the privilege of the relationship. If you want to know who loves you, look at the hands. Jesus Christ has paid the price, and He alone deserves the relationship.”<sup>1</sup>

So the first question I have for you today is, **Are you ready for Jesus to save you?** Do you find

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<sup>1</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 2009] pg. 165, #497)

yourself in a very difficult, if not precarious position that is out of your control? Do you find the fires of life raging all around you with little to no hope of safety or rescue?

Folks, let me tell you that Jesus died on the cross that first Good Friday, paying the price of your sin and mine, so that we would not have to suffer an eternity of fire and brimstone away from God's presence. He endured the pain of crucifixion because He knew that it was the only way that we could be saved from certain death because of our sinfulness. Jesus gave His life for us in order that we might not be lost, but to become a part of the family of God in the safety of His kingdom. But in order for us to be saved by Jesus, we need to trust in Him and give ourselves over to His care so that He can rescue us. He won't force us to turn to Him. We have to willingly see the danger that we are in without His help, humble ourselves to Him - knowing that He can save us - and then let Him bring us to safety. It's a choice we have to make to trust in His care to save us.

The next question is, **Are you ready for Jesus to call you?** You might be at work, or running errands, or attending a meeting, or even driving down the road. You never know when Jesus might call you into His service or want you to stand out to be His disciple. What would you do if on your way home from a meeting, and it's dark, and you distinctly hear God call you to stop at the next gas station convenience store and pick up a gallon of milk and a loaf of bread?

One young follower of the Lord heard just that as he was on his way home, and instead of dismissing it, he asked, "Lord, I hear you asking me to get a gallon of milk and a loaf of bread, but what am I supposed to do with it?" Not hearing a direct answer, the young man decided to do step one before asking for step two. So he got the milk and the bread, and he spotted a half-dozen day old doughnuts on the counter as he was paying for the other stuff and decided to get them, too.

Getting in his car, he asked again, "Ok, Lord, what next?" But there was no direction given yet. So he started the car and began driving toward home. All of a sudden, he heard a voice, "Turn left here." Trusting that the Lord was directing him, he turned left onto a road leading off into some woods. After about a half mile, the young man heard the voice again, "The next driveway on the right."

Shaking his head, but fully intent upon following the Lord's direction, he pulled into the next driveway on the right, which led him down a dirt road, pulling up to a country house. As he pulled in, the light on the porch came on, and to his surprise, as he got out of the car with the bread, milk and doughnuts, a woman came out onto the porch holding a little girl in her arms.

She asked, "Can I help you?"

The young man, a little uncertain as to how he should present himself, looked up at her and told her, "Ma'am, you may not believe this, but on my way home I heard the Lord tell me to pick up a gallon of milk and some bread. While at the store I also got some day old doughnuts. God directed me here to your house, so I think I'm supposed to give you these," and he held them up to the woman.

To his amazement, the woman burst out into tears, holding her daughter real close to her. Finally coming to a point when she could speak, the woman said, "My husband is away on work and won't be back until tomorrow, my daughter is sick, and we didn't have any food in the house. Not knowing what else to do, I had prayed to the Lord for His help, and He called you to get milk, bread and doughnuts. Now we can eat."

Because the young man was open to hearing God's direction, he was used by God to meet the need of a poor woman and her daughter. How awesome was that!

Likewise, the disciples were very surprised when Jesus called out to them. Listen to the account found in John 21:1-14. (READ John 21:1-14)

Now, just hearing the voice from the shoreline giving instructions will not get you what you hope for. The disciples heard the voice, and told the person on the shore that they had been unable to catch any fish (John 21:4-5). They may have thought that they had lost their touch at fishing, having followed Jesus for the three and a half years. They were working so hard, but coming up empty. They were doing so much to try to bring about a product, but nothing they had done was working.

So when the person on shore called out, "*Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some*" (John 21:6), they were probably ready to say, "Well, we've tried everything else. Why

not put the nets out on the ‘other side’ of the boat?” They could have argued with the one on the shore, telling them that that’s just not the way fishing worked, or that because they were fisherman, they would certainly have had more experience to know where to fish than one on the shore. But, because they heard the call to try something new, and they obeyed what was told to them, and an unbelievable number of fish were caught. Their obedience brought about success because they heard the call and just did what they were told.

Jesus is calling out to each one of us, inviting us to do sometimes very strange things (we think). It might be as simple as listening to what’s going on in a person’s life, or talking to about them our faith. It could be caring for the neighbor’s children for a couple of hours while mom can get some shopping done. It could be offering to help out another person in their financial struggles. It could be as drastic as changing jobs, or visiting someone hours away from you who’s sick, or confronting a friend about something they’ve done to hurt you. It could be going on that mission trip that your church has set up to evangelize with a church in Ecuador. Can we trust it when Jesus calls out to us with a very strange invitation? Can we merely take Him at His word and do what He tells us to do? If you do, you’ll have some marvelous experiences for your own to share with others, too.

A third question that I have for you is, **Are you ready for Jesus to change you?** The disciples in the boat that early morning heard the voice on the shore and yet they didn’t question the advice given, they did what they were told to do, and they received a huge catch of fish. They changed the way that they were fishing from the usual left side of the boat, using their strong right arm throw out the nets, and chose to go to the right side of the boat, using their weaker arm to throw out the nets. Though they relied upon the weaker arm to throw the nets, the catch was much greater, all because they were open to changing the way they did their fishing. Their change brought great reward.

With that in mind, consider this. “McDonald’s offers ‘combo meals.’ The company has made it easy for anyone to drive up and get a full meal by just saying a number. They have also trained their employees to take orders and always follow up with the question, ‘Do you want to supersize it?’ The

question basically implies that the customer is going to choose between taking a regular order or an oversized one.

“In the same way, God continually offers His children the opportunity to ‘supersize’ what He is offering to them. With just a little bit more of an investment of obedience and commitment on the part of the Christian, God will make so much more available”<sup>2</sup> to them as they just do as He asks them to do.

God wants committed followers of Jesus to obey His rules and commands so that He can work in a mighty way in and through them. But if we never act upon His calls in our lives, if we never change to do what He is asking us to do, our lives remain regular, and we never see the awesome power and work that He can do through us as we grow in our faith in Jesus Christ. Are we willing to let Jesus change our habits, our attitudes, our thoughts, our relationships, or even our churches so that we can remain true to His Word and bring about awesome results?

But realize this. We have to start with the simple obedience in the small things of our lives before God is going to trust us with the bigger things in life. Tony Evans says it like this: “God will always test you for the big things by looking at how you do the little things in your life. I knew at eighteen years old that God wanted me to preach. But, I started out on street corners and bus stops, not churches. I would go to bus stops and I would stand in front of the bus stop and there would be people waiting on busses and I’d go at it. There was no pay involved. There was no notoriety involved in that. In fact, I looked like a pure fool sometimes. But I was walking in what He wanted me to do. The church came later. A lot of us are waiting for this big blessing and God can’t get us to move out of the seat we’re in. If He can’t get you to do little acts of good works, why should He entrust you with greater opportunities for good works?”<sup>3</sup> We’ve got to be willing to do His work before He’ll call us to do it.

So the next question for you today is this: **Are you ready for Jesus to use you?** When we look at the fellowship of believers who had heard the teachings of Jesus through the disciples after the Holy Spirit had filled them following Pentecost, we heard in Acts 2:42, “*They devoted themselves to the*

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<sup>2</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, pg. 41, #92)

<sup>3</sup> (Ibid, pg. 42, #96)

*apostle's teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*" They had received the saving grace of Jesus Christ, they had heard His call in their lives, and they changed their lives to conform to God's ways of life rather than the world's ways of life. They determined themselves to follow the truth of the Gospel of Jesus, and they dedicated themselves to the service of the Lord God. But it didn't stop there.

We hear in just a few verses later how, "*they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need*" (Acts 2:45). They saw how blessed they were by God and they used their assets to touch the lives of those around them so that they could also hear and be transformed by the Word of Jesus. It was no longer collecting as much as they could for themselves, for their own use, but rather using all that they had available, to help those around them to find new life in Christ, too. God used them to build the early church and it went viral, spreading into the whole world, from right there in Jerusalem.

The followers of Jesus continued to meet together, to remember the grace given to them through Jesus' tremendous sacrifice for them on the cross, and they praised God for the great work of Salvation that Jesus had given to them (Acts 2:46-47). It was theirs' to share with others so that through them, the whole world might know of God's forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ.

But our world wants to turn that up-side-down and convince us that the only thing that matters is the great number of things that we have - the house, the toys, the 401k, the bank accounts, the retirement, the cars, the clothes, the jewelry - everything that the world can give to us. While it's not a bad thing to have those things, God calls us to use us with those things to bring honor and glory to Him as we use them to help others come into a relationship with Him. Can God use you with all that you have to bring a lost man or woman into the saving grace of Jesus Christ?

You are here today, being refreshed and nourished by God's Word and through this fellowship as we worship Jesus. But is this the only place where you have "*glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people*" (Acts 2:46-47)? Do you leave it all here when you walk out that

door of the Gathering Area to go to your cars and back home? How can you use what God has provided for you right here to impact the hearts and lives of those around you?

Because the followers of Jesus were intent upon giving themselves into the service of God, He blessed them abundantly as they gave of themselves. We're told, "*And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved*" (Acts 2:47). They were using all that God had provided for them to reach out into the local community to save others from the fiery pits of Hell. They cared enough about the ones around them that they were willing to do what it took to save them. And God blessed their work and an awakening took place, and people put their faith in the Lord Jesus. But we often get things mixed up.

"A little girl went to her father and asked him for a nickel. The father reached in his pocket, but he didn't have any change. All he had was a twenty-dollar-bill. He knew that was a lot of money, but he figured that his daughter had been a good girl. He decided to give her the twenty.

"The little girl said, 'Oh no, Daddy. You don't understand. I want a nickel.'

"No, honey, you don't understand. This is a bunch of nickels. This is a twenty-dollar bill.'

"But the little girl didn't understand. She said, 'Daddy, why won't you give me a nickel?'

"He tried to explain. He tried to tell her how many nickels were in a dollar, and how many dollars were in a twenty-dollar bill. She wasn't getting it.

"So she started crying and having a temper tantrum. 'Daddy, you said you were going to give me a nickel. Why won't you give me a nickel?'

"That's exactly what we do. We settle for a nickel when God offers us twenties."<sup>4</sup> We get so stuck on wanting what we want that we forget that God has so much more to give to us, if only we'll use what we have, receive His abundance, and then keep working for Him.

My last question that I have for you today is, **Are you ready for Jesus to live through you?**

The disciples of Jesus were joyful of all that God had done for them that they lived their lives for Him.

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<sup>4</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations*, pg. 43, #98)

They no longer conformed to the things of this world, but were transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:2) and focused on the things of God, instead. They no longer placed great value on the material possessions of this world, but saw how they could use those things to change the hearts and minds of those around them. The joy of the Lord became alive within them and they were filled with the confidence that they were a part of the family of God. Their lives changed to the point that those around them could see the difference in them as they lived generously, loved extravagantly and worshipped passionately. The light of Jesus Christ shown out of them like a candle in a dark room.

So when these followers of Jesus were arrested for professing their faith in Christ, they did not retaliate, but humbly endured the harsh treatment they received. They suffered for doing good (I Peter 2:19-25), and their witness convinced many more the value of having Jesus in their lives. Folks discovered that having Jesus in their lives was worth living for, and that a life lived in honor of Jesus was worth dying for. The world was not worthy of them as they lived like Jesus in all their ways.

Our world today needs followers of Jesus who are saved by Jesus, called by Him to work for Him as they find their lives changed by Him. Our world needs disciples who are willing to let God use them and live through them to bring about the fulfillment of His salvation for all people. Are you ready for Jesus to direct all your ways? Let's pray.

Father, Your Son, Jesus died that we might all be saved. He called each of us to be His disciple so that we might bring honor and glory to You. He offers us new life, so that we might be changed, heart, soul and mind, and to use our strength to finish Your work of Salvation for the whole world. So we ask that You would use each one of us as we open up all that we have to Your use. Provide us with opportunities to prove ourselves faithful to You in the small things, so that You might lead us to much bigger things to do for You. Let the light of Jesus Christ so live in us that we become like a lantern in our world, shining brightly the ways of our Lord and Savior so that all might see You through us. Give us the courage we need to seek You and follow You in all our ways, for Your glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.