

Communion Service - Rev Malcolm Maclean's Testimony

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Preacher: Rev Malcolm Maclean

[0 : 00] Well, a long time ago I was born into a Christian home, a free-penicerian home in Inverness.

And as a child I did the things that most children at that time did, as far as religion was concerned. I went to church and Sunday school and I learned the Catechism and many Psalms and lots of chapters from the Bible.

And today I'm very glad that that was done a long time ago. I went along with all that when I was in primary school.

I wasn't really aware of any other way of living, so I just went along with it. But when I went to secondary school I became aware of a far wider world out there.

And this was the swinging 60s and a whole new world was starting to dawn with a completely different attitude towards what people should be doing and what was acceptable.

[1 : 32] And the more I discovered about the new way of life, the more I liked it. And the outcome was that halfway through my teens I stopped going to church.

And I no longer believed any of the things I knew by heart. And I would have accepted that Jesus was a good man.

But at that particular time in my life I regarded him as dead. And that he, if possible, somebody could have found his body somewhere in the Middle East.

He basically regarded Christianity as completely irrelevant and no longer even worth considering for the modern world.

So that's where I was in my teenage years as I was looking ahead to leaving home and finding what life could provide.

[2 : 47] I think in all our hearts, minds, there's an inbuilt desire for satisfaction. We can't help it.

It just occurs. And we're constantly looking for something that's going to bring us fulfilment and an understanding of what life's all about.

And I was looking for that. And I tried it to find it in all different kinds of ways. No particular desire to mention the particular ways that I was looking for life.

But it's reasonable to say that I tried virtually everything. And the outcome of all these experiments was I discovered nothing.

I just discovered that what life can offer doesn't satisfy our inner heart.

[4 : 01] So then I thought, what do I do? So, one answer was to investigate religion.

I didn't think of trying Christianity. Because I thought I tried that. You may think, oh, this is totally bizarre. Because looking back, I think it is quite bizarre.

But I read almost every religious book in the Ornest Public Library. It's quite amazing what you find. Like the Book of Mormon contains statements by Shakespeare.

And all other kinds of intriguing things. But anyway, I read most of the books on religion in the Public Library. And that didn't satisfy me either.

I was going on in this search. And nobody actually knew about it, but part of myself.

[5 : 12] Because I wasn't publicising it in any way. But I remember when I was about 17 or something, some Christians in Inverness started to hold open air services.

And Inverness in those days was differently laid out from the way it is today. And in those days it was possible for people to gather at the town hall and have quite a reasonable sized crowd listening to whatever was being said by anyone.

I didn't really have that much interest in what they were doing. But God in his providence arranged for me to be at the town hall every Friday and Saturday night.

And the way he did it, the pub that I frequented was across the road. And I got barred from it. And I got barred from it for something I didn't do. So it was quite unjust. But my friends, out of total sympathy with me, continued to go there.

[6 : 37] So I had to wait for them. And the only place to wait was at the town hall. And who were there? Who was there?

With all these Christians. And as one would expect, they started to speak to me. And because I had learned all these Bible passages by heart, I was able to talk back to them.

And from my point of view, it became a mental game. We were, they were trying to convert me. I knew that.

And I was doing my best not to be converted. But they persisted. And, and, after a while, I started to look beyond what they were saying, but, to how they were saying it.

And there's a big difference there. It's easy to tell the truth. But it's very important, how we tell it.

[7 : 50] And, as I looked at these people, they were roughly my own age, it was fairly clear, that they were very concerned about me.

I had been corrected, many times in my life, by religious people. But, the effect of all their correction, at least in my case, was zero.

But these individuals, as they spoke to me, I could sense, that they really cared about me. and they wanted me, to be forgiven, and to, experience the eternal life, that they were claiming to have.

And, as I interacted with them, it did become, obvious, and I realise a lot of this is subjective, but, it did become obvious, that they were right.

Because, what they believed, affected them. and, their life, was in harmony, with what they said.

[9 : 14] That didn't, really convert me, but, it did, show me, that Christianity, was true. And, I do think, that's a very important thing, we should be doing.

Our lives, should be, letting people see, that, that Christianity, is, is real. I remember the, the night, very vividly, when I, realised that.

and you may think, that it's totally, crazy. But, this is the way it happened, so, that's it. Friend and I, were sitting at the town hall, at three in the morning.

You'll have to realise, that, a long time ago, Inverness didn't have, very much to do. So, sitting at the town hall, was kind of, what people did. We were sitting there, at three in the morning, there was pouring rain, and you can go to the town hall, there's no shelter.

Anyway, we were sitting there, talking about something, can't remember what it was, but this Christian, passed in his car, when the, one of the people, from the open air, and he gave us, a fairly, loud, toot on his horn.

[10 : 44] and kept driving. And we said to each other, that's what Christians do, they give you a toot.

Anyway, five minutes later, he appeared. He had gone, he's parked his car, in the pouring rain, and walked, wherever he parked it, and came and asked us, were we all right?

We were fine. We didn't mind sitting in the rain. But, that told me, Christianity is real. A very simple thing, but, done by a man, who, cared about us.

I was a long way, from being converted. I, didn't really understand, the gospel at all. Although, I suppose, if somebody had said to me, how do you get converted?

I could have replied, well you believe in Jesus. But, I had no idea, what the word, belief meant. I realised, it was more than, believing about Jesus.

[12 : 04] What else is required? And for the next, few months, God, started to deal with me.

I didn't realise, at the time that he was. I just thought, that I was, getting work. Because I began, to see things about myself. Up until then, I'd been blaming, everybody else, for my problem.

It was my, parents fault, for a fortune, religion, down my throat. It was society's fault, for doing this, that and the next.

Always somebody else's fault. But in this particular, period of, few months, I actually began, to realise, the fault was me.

And, it may have been, nothing was there to do, with what I was actually doing. the fault was inside. There was something, wrong with me, inside. Now, I know now, what was happening to me.

[13:18] I was being, convinced of my sin. But at the time, I had no idea, what was happening to me. Except, I was, discovering things, about myself, that I didn't like.

And, this went on, for a few months. And, as I say, I didn't really understand, what the gospel was. And all these Christians, that I met, they were, enthusiastically, saying to me, believe in Jesus. Jesus. But, what did that mean? The way, I discovered, the answer, to that question, is that, my father, had a lot of religious books, in this house.

And, one day, I, took hold of one of them, and started to read it. The book was, a set of sermons, by Spurgeon.

At that time, I had no idea, who Spurgeon was. I didn't even realise, he was dead. But anyway, the, I started to read, one of the sermons.

[14:38] And, before I started, to read it, I didn't understand, what faith in Christ was. It also took me, a quarter of an hour, to read it.

And, somewhere, while reading it, it dawned on me, what faith in Jesus was. So, it's kind of strange, but, Spurgeon had a convert, 60 years after he died.

But, since then, I discovered, he said, lots of converts, after he died. So, it's not particularly unique. But, the, I discovered it, faith is, trust, it's dependence, it's accompanied by, being sorry for your sin. And, an awareness, that Jesus, went to the cross. And, that may seem, like a lot of information, but actually it's not.

It just comes all together. So, I started the sermon, a non-Christian, and I finished it, a Christian.

[15:56] So, that's how, I became one. And, after, that happened, I, I joined the church, that, these, Christians, belong to.

It was, a, a, a, a, a, a, assembly. And, they taught me, lots of things, for which, today, I'm, I'm very grateful.

And, as I, interacted with them, I, I, saw, a group of people, that loved, to read the Bible.

And, that loved, to pray. And, who loved, to evangelize. And, I do hope, that, some of these, features, rubbed off on me.

After that, passage of time, some of the things, that I learned in childhood, from the Shorter Catechism, began to bother me.

[17:03] because, they weren't happening, in the Brethren Assembly. I mean, for example, baptism.

There was, two different views there. And, I began to think about them. And, there were other things too, like, what they believed would happen, at the second coming.

there. So, the, the, the outshot was, I had, two choices, basically. One is, to stay there, and argue.

And, the other is, to leave, and go somewhere, where people agree with you. So, I basically decided, that would be the best, the second one would be the best option.

And, just go back to, the church I've been brought up in. So, in the mid, late, what would be the late 1970s, I went back to the FPs.

[18:10] And, I was there, for 10 years or so. And, they were very nice to me. And, but then, they had a disagreement.

And, in 1989, I had to decide, one way or the other. Which group do I go with? I could have decided, to go to, go with neither.

But, that one didn't particularly, cross my mind. So, I, I joined the APC. And, life was, very good.

After, I was, converted, about, 1972 or something. And, I got a job, as a truck driver.

And, I regard the time, doing that, not the driving. But, the time doing that, as the most helpful time in my life. Because, the, I'd have to go somewhere, and, either, load, or, unload, or wait for somebody else, to load, or unload the, the truck.

[19:21] And, sometimes, and, sometimes, you have to wait for a few hours. And, during that time, I read, loads of religious books. I discovered, that I actually liked reading.

And, so I, just devoured, Christian literature. And, at the same time, I would have to drive, to, lots of places, that took several hours.

And, during these journeys, I listened to, lots of cassettes, about, from various, prominent, Christian preachers. And, so I, did that, for about, 15 or so years.

Maybe, 16 years. And, I regard that, as the time of my life, where I, learned most, of what, I know. in 1989, I got married, and, decided that, maybe I should get another job.

And, so, Christian Focus, put, an advert out, and they wanted an editor. And, I was reasonably good at English, and, I, love Christian literature.

[20 : 33] So, I applied for the job. And, quite, unexpectedly, got it. So, there I was, involved in Christian work.

At the same time, I, started, to preach, here and there. And, as, and as that kind of thing, developed, I assumed, I had found, what I was looking for.

As far as, life's, calling was concerned. I was involved, with Christian activities, during the week. And, preaching most begins.

But, something still, wouldn't believe me. And, it's, kept saying, this is not, what you should be doing. I resisted it for years.

But, eventually, I, succumbed. And, in, 2000, I, eh, we agreed, that, I should ask the free church, if they would, take somebody outside the free church, and allow him, into their college.

[21 : 47] and, they did. So, I went there, for a couple of years, and, after that, became a pastor, first in Scalpe, and, now in Great Prague.

I'm, very happy, where I am. I was very happy, in Scalpe as well. And, erm, and I wouldn't have, I wouldn't have left it, if I hadn't thought God was saying, go to Great Prague.

What I'm happy about is, I know I am, where God wants me to be. I look back, and I say, that God is very kind.

I mean, I, I deserve to be, cast off. As I mentioned earlier, from a child, I was taught the truth.

And, being a sinner, I totally despised it. There's no other word for it. I wanted the earth, to be rid of it.

[23 : 08] Thankfully, that won't happen. But, God was very kind. And, in the middle of my, spiritual darkness, he brought me into contact, with Christians.

Who showed me, what was like, to live for Jesus. And, I'm grateful for that. And, since then, he has showed me, many other things, through his people.

And, God is good, and kind. And, of course, he's given us all, a wonderful future. Whatever the future holds, it's what, he's planned, and, after life in this world, an eternity of glory.

And, I don't understand, why people are not Christians. Although, all you have to do, is say, look at yourself. It took you, a long time, to realise it.

But, if any of you, are not Christians, you don't know, what you're missing. Being forgiven, having, divine company, through life.

[24 : 20] not that you're conscious, of any kind of, shape, beside you, or that, but, you have divine company, through life, and, Bible lives, and there's, great promises in it, about the future, all designed, to help us, through life.

So, Jesus is the answer. No doubt about that. And, serving him, in the way, he wants you to serve, is the best way to live.

I realise that, most Christians, are not called to be ministers. But, wherever he wants you to be, that's the best place to be. So, that's my test.