

How is it that ye sought me

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev R.G.Mackay

- [0 : 00] Luke chapter 2 and verse 49. Jesus said to his parents, how is it that you sought me?
Wist you not or did you not know that I must be about my father's business? Wist you not. This is a very important verse in the whole plan of Luke's gospel because it's the first time in the gospel that we hear the Lord Jesus speaking and we hear for the first time what he has to say.
And I think that must be our first subsection in our meditation this evening. Just simply this. Jesus speaks.
And of course when Jesus speaks, when Jesus delivers his word, the word that comes from heaven, the word that brings knowledge, the word that brings wisdom, the word that brings enlightenment.
That's Jesus acting as God's prophet for our salvation. And here in Luke's gospel is the beginning of Christ's prophetic ministry while he is here in this world.
- [2 : 06] One of the aspects of Christ's salvation. And it's an aspect of Christ's salvation that Luke concentrates on quite a lot. The gospel of Luke is full, perhaps more full than the other gospels, of the sayings of Jesus.
And in this verse we have the test of them. Luke has already put emphasis on what people say.
And in chapter 1 and already in chapter 2 we've learnt a lot from what people say. The chapters have been full of it. And these people when they have spoken have very obviously been speaking under the power of the Holy Spirit.
God has been speaking through them. We've had the words of Zechariah. We've had the words of Elizabeth. We've had the words of Mary.
The words of the angels. The words of Simeon. The words of Anna. And they've all concentrated on the fact that Jesus was coming.
- [3 : 22] And that he was coming to do a specific work. And the first words that Jesus speaks are also about this work that he has come to do.
I must be about my father's business. The business that he has given me to do. I think it may be good for us right from the beginning to ask.
Why it is that Luke concentrates so much on the spoken word. That these different spokesmen and indeed spokeswomen of Jesus and of God bring into the story.
Why does Luke use so many sayings what people say? Well I think it's for this reason. It's really to emphasise how important the prophetic or the teaching ministry is in the work of salvation.
If we are to be saved. We must be taught by God. And when I say if we are to be saved.
- [4 : 39] I don't just mean if we are to be initially saved. If we are to be initially delivered into Christ's kingdom. But if we are to go on in the ways of salvation.
If we are going to grow as Christians once we are saved. If the salvation that has begun in us is going to continue and to be completed. Then part of God's work of salvation for us.

A very important part of that work. Will be the work of God teaching us. And enlightening us. And here you see is Luke.

Luke. And we have already discovered that Luke's gospel is a gospel for the nations. It's very different from Matthew's gospel.

That was initially for the Jewish people who had a great background of knowledge of the God who had sent his son Christ Jesus.

[5 : 41] But Luke's gospel is to be a gospel for the Gentiles. And we of course are Gentiles. Luke's gospel was to be the gospel for the man in the street.

The man who might not have much background. The people that we who are the Lord's people already have to try and reach in these days.

And so Luke's gospel ought to be very important to us in any evangelistic ministry. And as we've seen already. It's a gospel that begins with a lot of strange happenings.

They were strange happenings like these children that were born. One born to a woman who had been barren into her old age.

Another born at least conceived in the womb of a woman who was still a virgin. How could the man in the street possibly accept these things?

[6 : 42] The man in the street was no different in Luke's day from what he is in our day. And the man or the woman in the street rebels against such strange and wonderful happenings.

That can only be understood if it is accepted that here is the power of God entering into the history of this world and working most wonderfully. And so Luke understands as the Spirit instructs him and as the Spirit inspires him to write his gospel.

Luke understands that God needs to interpret what he is doing. If people are to understand and are to believe.

And so with the record of many wonderful events, there are the sayings of Jesus and others who were given a ministry of prophecy in these days.

to explain and to expound what was in fact happening. And here finally, Luke allows the final prophet.

[8 : 01] The perfect prophet. The prophet whom he has already told us, even while he is still a young boy, is full of wisdom at verse 40.

He begins to speak. Luke is really saying in these early chapters the same sort of thing but in a different way. The same sort of thing that the Apostle John said when much later he wrote down his gospel.

When he says at the beginning of his gospel that with the coming of Jesus, the word has come. The oracle has come.

The word of God has come. And when we come to Jesus, we come to the one who when we hear his voice, we hear the word of God himself with all its enlightening ability to come into the darkness of our minds and of our hearts and to enable us to see and to know what it's all about.

Jesus speaks. Jesus speaks. There perhaps can be no greater word of encouragement to the church in these days.

[9 : 39] The church that has the great ministry. We saw it this morning, didn't we? The greatest of all ministries that the church has is to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the people outside the church that they might hear.

And although we are not in any way delivered from the responsibility of using all the wisdom and all the ingenuity that God can give us to break that word down small, to find new ways, new avenues of causing people to sit up and take notice of what God has done in sending Jesus into this world.

We are not delivered in any way from the responsibility of seeking to understand the man in the street, to understand his difficulties, his problems, the barriers that he sees in coming face to face with the gospel of Jesus.

Yet we've got to understand on the other side that no matter how clever we are, no matter how ingenious we are, no matter how good we become at communicating, and some have great gifts of communicating.

Some in the church have been given great gifts of communication and we bless the Lord for them and we must pray, especially in these days, for those who have these unique gifts that are so important in the church.

[11 : 21] But what will our prayer be? Our final prayer will always be that God will use these gifts of communication, that God himself will speak through these mouthpieces, that we are encouraged to pray for ourselves also in our day-to-day contact with the people of the world to pray that God himself, that the exalted Jesus in heaven himself will speak.

And we have every authority from this gospel to believe that he can speak and that he will speak. He is the prophet. He is the one with the divine spiritual ability.

to bring the word of God into men and women and young people's hearts and minds with power so that they are enlightened to understand.

And so even, although so often, we feel that our words are so faltering, so inadequate, we must continue to speak.

We must continue to stand up for Jesus with our words. Because through us and with us and even despite our inadequacies and our sin, Jesus the Lord, the Saviour Prophet, is speaking and can speak so that people who were sinners, lost forever, can understand and come to believe and be changed.

[13 : 20] then I think we've got to remember too when we see that Jesus speaks. We've got to remember the importance in the ministry of the gospel of the authoritative word of preaching.

We've got to remember that both the Old and the New Testament make clear that the method of preaching, delivering an authoritative word from God is the most important means that God uses in his work of salvation.

For people to be saved, as we've already seen, they need to be prophesied to. They need to have a word from God.

And that's true of all of us and of course it's true of the person in the pulpit as well. I need always to be as one in the pew. Receiving the word of God as from him.

Seeing myself as you must see yourselves as people in need, as people who need to receive God's word, as people who are naturally foolish in our thinking.

[14 : 50] People who are naturally like sheep and we will go astray to our own way and we need the word of God to come to us with authority so that we will learn faith and trust and dependence.

this is the way of salvation. And so the ministry of the preached, the authoritatively preached word is a ministry that we see that God has consistently used.

And it's there still in, excuse me, in New Testament times. It was there all through Jewish history with the prophets coming again and again. But then, of course, the gospel goes out into all sorts of different cultures with the development of the New Testament church.

But still, the means of the preached word is very much at the center of things. and so we must pray for preaching and for preachers.

This word is to be preached with authority. And the first thing, and perhaps the only thing, well, maybe not the only thing, but certainly the first and the last thing about a minister or a preacher, whoever he be, preaching God's word with authority, is that he preaches it with the authority of a Christ-like life.

[16 : 34] How can a preacher preach with authority if he is not living under that authority? And that, you know, must be our first prayer for all preachers of the gospel.

that they be kept from the evil one, that they be delivered from temptation, and that their ministry is always with the authority of a holy life.

Because that's the end of all preaching, that's the goal of all preaching, to bring holiness by God's grace into the lives of the hearers.

What confusion! What an uncertain sound for the trumpet if the one who is speaking supposedly with the authority of God, calling men under that authority, is not living under that authority himself.

That ought to be your first prayer for myself, as the preacher in your congregation, as it ought to be the first prayer for all preachers of the gospel.

[18 : 00] We need to pray that the word would be preached. We need to have trust in the preached word. We need to be asking God to make the word preached a word that will be relevant to all sorts of people.

Our first prayer must be that the preached word would be the truth. And after that I think our prayer must be that it will be both understandable and relevant.

We want our times of preaching of the gospel, you see, to be times when we can bring others to hear that gospel. Because it's a method that God uses to help people to see what's to be the relationship with the living God if it's to be a right relationship.

it's to be under his authority. And we mustn't lose our desire to have the preached word, the means unto salvation that God has meant it to be.

it may often be that there has to be perhaps a softening up process without unconverted contacts before we can get them to come to a church.

[19 : 32] church. They have all sorts of hang ups about it. And maybe we'll have to do a lot of our pre-evangelism in their homes or in our home or in our place of work as we mix with them and seek to show them an example and speak to them about the things of Christ.

But it is a good and a right aim in all our evangelism to seek to bring them under the preached word, the prophetic ministry that is one very important aspect of the work of salvation.

And then our final application here must be this. We've had an application of encouragement. We've had an application of the importance of the preached word. We need also to the application of the importance of our response to the word of God.

This word, the word that brings understanding, the word that brings direction, the word that brings command, the word that brings encouragement, the word that brings promise, is right at the heart of God's work of salvation.

Jesus could never have been our saviour if he wasn't a prophet saviour. He also had to be priest and king, but he had to be our prophet. And so we need to see that in all the work of salvation in our hearts and in our lives, we will have to see as most important for our ongoing progress, our response to God's word.

[21 : 17] indeed we could say that this is what faith is. Faith that is saving faith.

Faith that is at the heart of the Christian life. What is it? How do we see faith? When do we know that faith is in action? Well, there might be a variety of right answers to that question, that here is certainly an answer that I believe to be true.

Faith is in action when we are making right responses to God's word. When we are believing it because it is the word of our saviour.

And when we are following out its instruction for Jesus sake, for his glory sake. God's word, and so when we come to the commands of God's word, we've got to ask ourselves, am I obeying these commands?

Commands demand a response of obedience. I'm not expressing the life of faith in this area of my life or in that area of my life if I'm not obeying the commands of God that refer to these aspects of my living.

[22 : 47] And then there are the promises of God's word. Am I full of doubts and fears? Am I living a miserable life or am I failing to obey because I am too afraid to obey, afraid of the consequences of obedience?

Well I need to react in faith to the promises of God's word. I need to believe them. I need to take them to myself.

So many of these promises are qualified promises. Go into all the world and make disciples and lo I am with you always.

That's one of the qualified promises of God's word. And I have to take that promise and I have to believe it and I have to trust in it because it's the word of God. It's the word of Jesus.

And I will find then that I receive strength to obey and to carry on. Do I heed the warnings of God's word?

[24 : 01] When the word of God says flee the wrath to come, God's love, God, am I doing something about it? When the word gives me warnings about the final judgment, is it affecting me?

Is it changing my life? Am I saying to myself in faith, this is the word not of any mere man, this is the word of the Lord Jesus Christ who showed himself so clearly when he was here in this world, to be none other than the eternal God, God the Son?

Can I live my life the way it is, living it for self, living on in my own way, doing my own thing, when I'm receiving these warnings? Mustn't I in faith take these warnings seriously?

And must I therefore flee from the lifestyle that brings down God's judgment? and must I not flee to the refuge that is in Christ, to follow him, to learn of him, to seek the power of his spirit to change and to transform me day by day?

That's one of the ways that we can describe faith when we see it at work in our lives. It's responding a right to the word of God because we see that it is the word of Jesus, the only saviour.

[25 : 42] Jesus speaks in our text. But then the next thing we see is that Jesus speaks about himself and his father.

It's really a very dramatic word, this first word of Jesus in the gospel of Luke. Here is his family, their faces filled with anxiety, his mother, and to all intents and purposes, his father, although not physically by generation, his father.

And they are there concerned. The family unit is there and he faces these concerned faces of his father and his mother.

Remember a young lad of twelve. And he says it would seem with some incredulity.

Did you not know that I must be about my father's business? Speaking obviously about another father.

[27 : 09] Because he had left his earthly father and there he was in the temple, the house of God. And it's there that he says did you not know that I must be about my father's business?

You see already Jesus is being prepared for his earthly ministry. And already he is seeing that in his prophetic ministry at the very heart of that ministry is to convince people about who he really is.

He's going to say that to the disciples 20 years later. He's going to say to them in Mark chapter 8 who do people say that I am?

Well there were a variety of answers. Although people had followed him listened to his words seen as miracles they hadn't really come to understand what was behind it.

And so Jesus goes on but what about you? Who do you see I am? And so Luke is making clear that at the very heart of the gospel of course he's made it clear already there's been all sorts of preparation to enable us to see that the identity of this child Christ Jesus is indeed unique we've had all the wonderful preparation we've had the amazing birth and now it comes out categorically in this first statement of Jesus I am the unique son of God oh still in veiled language but do you not see who I am did you not know I am God come in the flesh and we may also find it amazing

[29 : 24] I have to say that I did myself but Luke makes quite clear to us that the parents and this includes Mary who had shown such spiritual insight even before Jesus was born at verse 50 we read and they understood not the saying which he spoke unto them they didn't understand this fact and other facts has led many of the commentators to suggest that Mary may have been one of Luke's sources when he began to write his gospel and I think it's certainly highly likely it's interesting how he records that Mary remembered these things and Mary hid these things in her heart twice he says that in this chapter itself who could he have learnt that from if it wasn't from

Mary it seems highly likely and Luke would have been hearing the story after Jesus died and rose again after the ascension Mary understood later but she didn't understand to begin with and she remembers that humbly and it's recorded for us in Luke's gospel oh how we need all of us no matter how long we have been in the Christian way how we need to be humbled in our minds how we need like the other Mary to learn to sit at the feet of Jesus that we may learn that we may become convinced more and more that the

Jesus who has come is none other than the eternal son of God the one by whom and through whom and for whom the heavens and the earth were made and he has come near and he has come as a 12 year old child just one stage in his growing maturity that he might understand us that he might take our place and finally that he the eternal son might draw us into the family of God that's why we need to know that Jesus our saviour is the eternal son of God because then in his dying for us he is able to take away the barrier of our sin and he is able to bring us fully accepted into the very intimate innermost family of

God that's what he taught his disciples early on when they asked him to teach them to pray had any rabbi ever before started a prayer to Yahweh the holy unknowable other God and started a prayer by saying our father Jesus teaching his disciples my father and if you are truly my disciples your father as well and that was one of his last words to them to assure them before he ascended go to my brothers he said to the women at the tomb wasn't it go to my brothers and tell them I am returning to my father and your father to my

God and your God yes there is a way in which we will never be the son as Jesus was the son and is the son the eternal only begotten son but apart from that apart from that every privilege every blessing every promise that the son Christ Jesus new in this world is yours and is mine if you also through faith in Christ are a son or a daughter of the living God all the blessings of sonship that were

[35 : 03] Christ's while he was here in this world will be yours and will be mine and that must be the background of our assurance and of our strength in all the difficulties of living for God in this world Jesus speaks Jesus speaks about himself and his father and Jesus speaks about serving his father I must be about my father's business I must be at my father's matters I must be where my father's business is even at this young age the man Christ Jesus is learning that the way for him is the way of absolute obedience

Jesus is learning I believe at 12 what he was to learn in perhaps the most awful way at the beginning of his public ministry when the devil came to tempt him that there would be all sorts of means used to divert him from the father's business that we read of him of course that he set his heart as a flint towards Jerusalem and it was only when he was about to die on the cross that he said it is finished and that's the character of a son it was spoken of him in psalm 40 to do thy will I take delight oh thou my God that art yea that most holy law of thine

I have within my heart and Jesus did it all for us he didn't flinch he didn't flinch when he was 12 he didn't flinch when he was 33 and for all who trust in him all our weaknesses in the path of obedience he has fulfilled and he has overcome for us and his grace can bring us forgiveness for the failures of obedience in the past and his grace and power can strengthen us for obedience in the future that's what it is to be a Christian that's what the first words of

Jesus in Luke's gospel set himself and all who would follow him to to be about the father's business and I just finish with one thought for any who are neglecting the father's business in these days perhaps you are Christians and you are neglecting it or perhaps there are others here and you're thinking about the father's business but from afar off you're keeping your distance and you're thinking about it and it comes to you from time to time but you haven't committed yourself to it you're in a dangerous position be sure of that I must be about the father's business what business could be better for two reasons what business could be better first of all it's the father's business it's business that's enveloped in fatherly life sometimes it may be difficult business it always involves counting the cost we saw a little bit of that this morning that it's the father's business it's the work of following

Jesus and doing his will that will bring us more and more into the father's presence to learn of the father's kindness and the father's faithfulness and the father's ability ability to know us as a father knows his children to understand us to do what's best for us and the second thing is if it's the father's business it's our heavenly father's business it's work it's a way of life that will do us good for eternity there may be people here and you are men of business you are women of business whether you're in the professions or working in business working with your hands or whether your days of business and work are past and you are giving your time to other things but we all have these matters that concern us but we'll have to leave them all behind can't take any of it with us but if we live this life and we're about the father's business then it will take us to heaven and our works will follow us there and we'll be able to enjoy the glad service of the father for all eternity amen more anytime in the so that