

The Bridegroom Cometh!

Overview

Just give him a warm welcome right now. He may very well mention about a church out in Calgary because that's where they actually live. Rob and Gene live in Calgary.

So I was speaking this morning about all the people come in here from down Fort Erie and from Port Colborne and Dukes and one flew in from Calgary. So they're very involved in the church out there and I'm sure you're going to hear a little bit about that. It's an amazing story and it's all about Jesus.

I'm so glad you're here, Rob. God bless you. Take your liberty.

Thank you so much, Pastor Dave. Please give him a big hand. He is really an incredible leader.

I drove into Vineland this morning and really it was just, it felt like home. And this feels like family. And I could hear the ladies behind me singing away and I thought, wow, what beautiful voices.

I looked up on the stage and I saw the guitar player hugging his granddaughter. And I mean, where does that happen? That happens in Vineland. I mean, this is a special morning.

It's going to be a really, really good morning because the Lord is present here amongst us. And it is, it's just such a special thing when we have brothers and sisters in the Lord. There's just something that, well, the Lord connects us.

And when we're connected, there is something special that happens, not only now, but forever. Forever and ever and ever. And that is an amazing, amazing thing.

So Lord, as I go to you, as I present a little bit of your word this morning, Lord, will you be with us? Lord, may the words of my mouth and meditations of my heart be always acceptable in your sight. You are my rock. You are my redeemer.

You are Lord. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

I thank you, Lord. I thank you, Lord. I'd like for you to just maybe just to travel with me on a journey that maybe, all of our paths are a little bit different.

But I know one thing, and the Lord declares that, is that the Lord has a plan for each and every one of us. He declares that I have a plan for you. A plan to prosper you.

A plan to bring you no harm. A plan that will give you hope and a great future. That is an amazing thing that I, I still sit on every single day.

That the Lord has a plan for me. He has a plan for my family. He has a plan for each and every one of us.

Despite our age, the Lord has a plan for you today. And a plan for you tomorrow. It's pretty incredible how the Lord gives more and more and more.

Well, my journey started in a small little town called Blackwell, outside of Sarnia. Where they grow sugar beets, they grow corn, and they grow potatoes. And it's a nice little town with one, well it had one grocery store, it had one gas station, and it had one barber shop.

I think the barber shop was also a veterinary school. I think they cut dogs' hairs too as well. It wasn't too fancy, that's for sure.

But we survived in a small town. It's nice to drive into Vineland kind of with that same reminder. My dad played the organ for three different mainline churches.

The largest of the three churches was St. John's in the Wilderness. And it was smaller than this church. It probably, I think of the three churches, the average size was probably about, ranged between 12 and 20.

So as you can imagine, it was quite small. And my job as a kid was to turn pages for my dad. I was a page turner.

So as he was playing, I was turning pages. And the beauty of it, when I was 11 years old, I got to drive the car home. 11 years old, barely seeing over top of that steering wheel.

But it was a bit of a thrill because we lived in such a small town, there was really only one road, and I could drive home at 11. Beautiful, just beautiful. I managed to make it to age 18.

And on the very first day of our school at McMaster in Hamilton, the Lord directed me to my wife. And my wife is absolutely beautiful. And she's smart, and less smarter than I am.

And she loves the Lord. And we have been married now for 50 years. An incredible journey together.

We have had so much fun together, and we've had so much adventures together as well. One of the, I look back on it, one of the, well, when we first got married, we attended a campus church in London, Ontario. And the priest who was on campus, I went to him and I said, you know, I know who the father is.

I know who Jesus is, but who is the Holy Spirit? And he just looked at me, and he smiled, and he said, it's a mystery. The Holy Spirit is a mystery to the church. And out of respect, I said, well, okay, you're the expert.

I'm only asking the question. But I'm pretty sure the Lord was really kind of tweaking me, was really kind of, well, he had me on a plan. He had me on a plan that had a great future.

And I just needed to start opening up my eyes a little bit. But my eyes were not open. I had attended church pretty much all my life, but did not know the Lord at all.

Did not know the Lord. Because in our church, we didn't talk about the Lord. There was a kind of, there was a love of the church service.

And if you've ever attended a mainline church, you'll know what I'm talking about. You love the church service. You know exactly what it is every single week, because it's the same, pretty much the same prayers with a different sermon thrown in between.

But there's no relationship with the Lord. And so I didn't know otherwise. I was leading a good life.

I had a great life. I had a great job. At the time, my wife and I, we moved to the small town of Milton.

And we had three kids, beautiful wife. I mean, what more could you ask for? I had a pool in the backyard. I mean, this was really Canadian living.

I mean, at its best, it was just grand. It was just amazing. But then my life changed.

It was Christmastime. My brother-in-law, Tom, who everyone in this church knows. Tom is the most amazing guy.

Tom came over for a Christmas dinner. And he kept talking about Jesus. And I felt a little bit uncomfortable, I admit that.

But my wife said, Tom, why are you always talking about Jesus? And Tom looked at her, and he said, Gene, I know you read a lot. I'm not going to say anything to you. I know you read a lot.

And I'm going to give you some real thick books, and you can read up on it. And I'll come back to you after you've done that. My wife said, well, that's great.

So Tom is the most generous person in the entire world. He went out to his car and brought back 30 thick books. I mean, come on.

Seriously. Seriously. And I said, oh, thanks very much, Tom.

Have a really good Christmas, Tom. And Tom said, yeah, we'll see you after. I said to my wife, close the drapes and shut the door.

Shut the door. I'm not letting any neighbor of mine know I'm going religious. That is not going to happen.

Shut the drapes as soon as you can. And the place was as dark as can be. And my wife said, well, you think maybe we should open up the Bible? I said, yeah, it's probably a good start.

I didn't know because I didn't read the Bible. And we opened up the Bible. And to my amazement, John 3.16. Does anybody know that verse? Can anybody quote that verse right now? Okay.

Somebody stand up. This is a full engagement. We're family.

All right. What does that verse say? Poor God. So loved.

The world. That he gave. His only begotten son.

That whosoever. Believeth. In him.

Should not perish. But have everlasting life. Praise God.

We all know that verse. But I can tell you. If you just go back to the time when you first saw that verse.

And that was me. I saw that verse. And I said, I cannot believe.

I cannot believe that all of these years. Nobody has ever told me about that verse. It has been a hidden secret in my life.

Unbelievable. Incredible power. That God so loved the world.

The world. The entire world. That includes me.

And includes every member of my family. We're in this. And then there was another scripture.

And since I have such an eloquent Bible scholar at the back. My wife said, why don't we go to the next verse. And that was Romans 10.

9 and 10. Maybe we'll just do 10 and 9. Do you have that one on the tip of your tongue? Thou shalt confess the Lord Jesus with your mouth. And believe in your heart.

That God has raised him from the dead. Thou shalt be saved. When I saw that, I was in awe.

I was absolutely in awe of the word. Those two verses changed my life. So the next morning when we got up.

My wife was in one room. And I was in another room. Completely separate.

And we both asked the Lord to come into our lives. At exactly the same time. Exactly the same time.

Without knowing what each one of us were doing. And the peace of God. That passes all understanding.

Swept over us. And there was a quietness. That came upon us.

And there was a peace that we had no understanding of. But we knew it was real. And you can feel that peace right now.

It's right here. It's an incredible peace that never leaves you. When my wife and I first looked at each other.

We said, wow. Wow. The Bible is incredible.

It is alive. Wow. That peace I have never, ever felt.

My wife said the same thing. But there's more. There's more.

John 14 says. That Jesus said, I will go to the Father. And he will send you an advocate.

A comforter. The Holy Spirit. When I leave.

So the next day. I'm in the basement. And my wife is in the bedroom.

And we both ask God. To send us the comforter. Send us the advocate.

And fill us with. The gift of the Holy Spirit of speaking in tongues. And exactly at the exact same moment.

In different rooms. We both had a full language. The Lord empowers with this gift.

6

That we had never, ever heard in our entire lives. How do you explain that? I mean I didn't wait. I didn't even know what a Pentecostal looked like.

I didn't know what a Christian looked like. Nobody told me what a Christian looked like. And nobody told me what a Pentecostal looked like.

Nobody told me what tongues was all about. So we phoned our friends. And they said.

You better book yourself into the hospital really quick. Really quick. Because they had no idea what we had encountered either.

It was an incredible experience with God. In our own house. No pastor.

No priest. Nobody around us but the word. The word.

And it was Tom Murphy. That planted the seed. Planted the seed into our lives.

And right before. Right before his eyes. There was starting to be a new crop.

In our own house. So what do you do with that? We phoned Tom and said. You know what happened? He said.

With a big smile. And Tom is the only one that could do this. With a big smile.

Welcome to the family. And we were sure relieved to hear that. Welcome to the family of God.

Wow. So what do we do with this now? I thought maybe I should just maybe. I didn't know what to do.

I thought maybe I should just trade in my suits. And get a white gown and a pair of sandals and walk around. I had no idea.

Because nobody was around me telling me what to do. No idea. So we put an ad in the newspaper.

We put it. Well because we didn't know what a Christian looked like. Nobody.

This secret that you have has not been told to us. So we put an ad in the newspaper. And the ad read.

Come to our house and let's talk about God. Thursday night 6 o'clock. We didn't even know the word fellowship.

We could have been a lot more religious than that. We should have been a lot. We weren't.

Just come to our house on Thursday night at 6 o'clock. And to our surprise. 60 people showed up.

Every single week. For two years. But God wasn't done.

He was not done. Because I would go to work in the morning. And then I would come home at night.

And there would be a 48 foot truck. Parked in front of our house. And a Harley Davidson as well.

And there would be cars lined up along the street. And my wife would say come on in. Get saved and get filled.

Get saved. And get filled with the Holy Spirit. Because we hadn't been schooled enough to realize we had to go to summer camp to wait for all of this.

To happen. We thought, well we got saved and filled with the Holy Spirit in our own house. Is that not a natural thing? Is not that what God wants? And that's exactly what happened.

So for two years. People would come to our house. Park their cars.

Park their motorcycles. Or park their 48 foot trucks in front of our house. Come knocking on the door.

And my wife said, come on in. You want to get saved. You want to get filled with the Holy Spirit.

And all of them did. All of them did. Amazing.

Amazing. And after two years of doing this. Somebody said, are you teaching your kids the Bible? Because you obviously don't know enough.

And they were right. And so we said, okay. We need to get into a church.

And we were so thankful that we went to a church. That welcomed us right away. And it was an amazing, amazing journey.

Amazing journey. The Lord is so good. He is so good.

And all of you are on different journeys. I'm on a different journey. But the Lord has a future for us.

A great future for us. I'm old. I'm on the freedom 93 plan, I think.

Because it just keeps on coming. It just keeps on going. What do I do during the day? I'm still working.

I'm still talking to your kids and your grandkids about being courageous and strong. I'm speaking to thousands and thousands of young kids. In high schools, colleges, and universities.

About being strong and courageous. Be what the Lord has called you to be. Strong and courageous.

Have I hit a plateau? I'm old. I've got a little bit of energy. Not as much as Pastor Dave does.

Or Tom. They're energy guys. They are amazing.

I couldn't keep up with them. But the Lord has said, I'm not done with you. And so, at our church, my daughter, she and her husband are pastors in Calgary.

They thought they would like to maybe start a mission. A mission in Calgary. So they phoned the city of Calgary up and said, we'd like to offer our church as kind of a spot where homeless people could come.

And the city of Calgary said, absolutely. We need you here. We need you to start it up.

And so, my daughter looked at me and she said, I have nobody to help. I have nobody to run this thing. You look like you're unemployed.

Maybe you could do it. And so, I looked at her and I said, oh, I don't know. I guess, thank you, Jesus.

Thank you, Lord, help me out. And so, I said, let's just pray and believe that the Lord will send us 85 people the first month. The Lord sent us 100 people the first month.

The second month, he sent us 600. The third month, 700. The fourth month, 800.

800 homeless people coming to the church. And now, we have 2,000 people coming to the church. And the people in the church have gathered around it.

It's been an incredible experience. Because for those who aren't able to go to places and far off places as missionaries, they can actually come to the church and be a missionary and pray for people every single day. People are getting saved.

People are getting healed. People are getting fed. People are getting clothed.

And Jesus is walking there with us. What an amazing experience. What an amazing experience.

So, what am I doing at home? One thing the Lord showed me a couple years ago was to keep the conversation going about Jesus. Not let our young generation get away from us. So, we started to go to each one of our kids and grandkids and say to them, we're going to pray for you every single day.

But before we pray for you, we want you to write out your vision. Because in Habakkuk, it says, write out your vision and run with it. And I have noticed that really good leaders everywhere in the world have their own personal vision written out.

So, we ask our grandkids and our own kids to write out their vision. And it is quite amazing when you're able to sit with your kids and your grandkids and talk about the Lord and see how the Lord is working in their lives. The Lord helps them at school.

He helps them in sports. He helps them with their friends. He helps them with their relationships.

He helps them growing up. And keeps them healthy. I believe the Lord is alive.

I believe the Lord wants to keep us going and has a great plan for each and every one of us today. I believe the Lord is here right now though. And wants to help those who are in need.

So, I'd like to ask Pastor Dave to come back up and do what Pastor Dave does. He is the most amazing man of God. Servant of God.

Served all over the world. A man that I really love. Thank you, Dave.

I need Linda to come and help me, please. Thank you, Rob. That's an amazing story.

And what I like about the story is he's not the hero in his story. Jesus is the hero. We didn't hear about Rob and Gene today.

We heard about Jesus. And what Jesus does to someone who dares to open up their heart and to let Jesus make a difference. I liken Christianity to something that I did all of my traveling years.

I always tried to book ahead, organize ahead. That when I got to a certain community, a town, a city, that I wouldn't leave it to the last moment to find a lodging for the night. And so, I would make it my business to call ahead and organize.

So that when I arrived at a Days Inn, Motel 6 or something worse, that I'd say, Hey, my name's David Forrest. I believe I have a reservation. If you're in the kind of work that I was in full time, you better be organized and have things prepared.

You don't arrive at a motel and expect that they'll have a room for you. Heaven is as real as little green apples. Don't take a chance that you arrive at heaven's gate and just expect there's a place for you.

We already quoted the verses together today. If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that He died but He rose again from the dead. If you'll confess it with your mouth, you've made your reservation and heaven is waiting for you.

There's visitors today. I don't know everyone in this room, so I'm not going to be assuming anything. Except there might be somebody here today who would say, I'm not sure I've made a proper reservation.

And I sure would like to take care of that right now. Jesus is waiting for your call. He's waiting for your call.

The Savior is waiting to enter your heart. Why don't you let Him come in today? The Savior is waiting to enter your heart. Why don't you let Him come in? There's nothing in this world to keep you apart.

So neighbor, what's your answer? Not to me, but to Him. Time after time, He waited before. And now He's waiting yet again.

To see if you'd be willing to open your door. Oh, how He wants to come in. Time after time, He's waiting for you.

And right now, He's waiting again. To see if you're willing to open the door. Oh, He wants to come in.

I'm not asking you, do you want to join this church? Rob told you the story two years before I even considered a church. It's not about church. It's about you and your relationship to the one who died for you.

If you had bowed, please, in a solemn moment, because I'm going to pray a prayer in a moment. And my question to you is, are you willing to let me pray a prayer for you on your behalf? It's a privilege that only you can grant. So I'm asking today, Jesus is knocking on your door.

Can I pray? Can I pray with you today about your answering Him? If your answer is yes, just slip up your hand silently. Nobody else is looking. It's just you and me.

Just slip up your hand and say, I want to let Him come in today. If you confess with your mouth, believe in your heart. Praise you, Jesus.

Praise you, Jesus. I'll just wait another moment. I'll just wait one more moment.

Gracious Father, I thank you for Rob and Gene. They are precious friends, wonderful neighbors. And they're part of the family.

Thank you for the story that we heard today. It tells us that God's more interested in us than we could ever be interested in Him. This story tells us that the Lord is pursuing.

He's pursuing us. What a great story. So Lord, we pray right now for our grandkids, some of whom know the story, but this song should have been sung to them today because you want to get into their lives.

So we pray for our grandkids. We pray for our sons and our daughters. We pray for our sisters and our brothers.

Some of us today would be praying for their own parents. We pray, Lord God, that we would have the privilege and have the boldness to be an influencer as the Holy Spirit would lead us and guide us. Teach us wisdom in our reaching out and sharing our faith with others.

Teach us wisdom, Lord. We don't always get a second chance for we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.